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# Effective Marketing Strategies to Reach Mobile Users

Melissa R. Roy  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Melissa Roy

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Review Committee

Dr. Denise Land, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. John Hannon, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Julia East, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer  
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Effective Marketing Strategies to Reach Mobile Users

by

Melissa Roy

MBA, University of New Haven 2005

BS, Bowling Green State University, 1992

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2017

## Abstract

Reaching users on mobile devices has never been more critical for retailers given the ubiquitous use of mobile devices. U.S. consumers who shop online are using personal computers less and mobile devices more when doing so. The purpose of this single case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach mobile users effectively. Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory provided the conceptual framework for the study. Participants included a purposeful sample of 8 marketing managers employed by a Fortune 1000 retail organization in the Pacific Northwest. Data collected via in-person, semistructured interviews and a review of the marketing plan documents were thematically analyzed and methodically triangulated. There were 11 themes that emerged from the interviews and marketing plan document review. The results indicated that mobile marketing managers could focus their efforts on 3 of the 11 themes to reach mobile users. The 3 primary themes included getting close to their customers to learn about customers' preferences, gathering and using big data in an intelligent way, and tailoring experiences by sending messages and offers at times when users are most likely to transact. Results from this study may foster positive social change by increasing profits within the organization as a result of more effective mobile device marketing strategies. The profits retailers generate through effective mobile device marketing strategies could allow them to provide additional community support through charitable donations and provide additional support through the creation of new positions within the community.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family. My parents who taught me that anything is possible if you work hard and surround yourself with people who make the right choices. As a small child, my father, Bill, taught me that girls can do anything boys can do and to continue to learn. My mother, Gaile, taught me that women could be feminine, have a family, and a successful career. No one decides who you are but you. Bill and Janet, although cousins, you always treated me like one of your own and I know how blessed I am that you supported me through this process. Your girls are the sisters I never had. My brother, Bill, who I have always held in the highest regard as one of the most intelligent men I know. My husband, Brian, who has supported every minute of this journey and shows his unwavering support of women as partners, mothers, and business colleagues. Thank you for understanding my absence, both physically and mentally to complete this study. And of course, my children who inspire me every day. Our daughters, Kelly and Olivia, and our sons, Connor and Parker, you have already grown to be amazing young adults, and I am very proud of you each of you, and I look forward to the contributions you will make to all that you touch. My ongoing hope is you will continue to learn.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In Section 1, I explore the mobile device marketing strategies retail marketing leaders use to reach mobile device users by first methodically laying out the background of the problem, the problem, and purpose statement. As next steps, I outline the nature of the study by detailing the research and interview questions. I then explore the conceptual framework, the significance of the study, and review the academic and professional literature pertaining to the diffusion of innovation theory and mobile device marketing strategies.

### **Background of the Problem**

A median of 43% of the global population is smartphone users (Poushter & Stewart, 2016). With this proliferation of mobile devices, attracting and retaining customers through mobile marketing strategies is critical for retailer success (Yang, Chau, & Gupta, 2017). Marketers need to reach mobile users with their marketing strategies. Because of the increased use of mobile devices, marketers are changing the ways they attract and retain customers (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). For example, marketers emphasize application development and mobile-friendly websites. Adopting these changes is critical to the success of multichannel retailers (Yang et al., 2017). The strategies marketers use to reach customers in the digital world are increasingly important to the success of organizations' overall marketing campaigns (Kohli, 2016).

The effects of mobile devices on marketing strategies are so significant that the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) created a committee to investigate these trends and how marketing researchers might respond to them (Kumar, Keller, & Lemon, 2016). In

addition, the *Journal of Marketing* released a special edition focused on the need for marketers to leverage mobile technologies and pinpoint existing gaps in mobile marketing strategies (Kumar et al., 2016). These developments illustrate the importance of understanding how marketers reach users in this new digital world. However, existing research on the practical business application of mobile strategies is limited (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The purpose of this current study was to explore this gap in the literature on mobile device marketing strategies that retail marketing leaders use to reach mobile users effectively.

### **Problem Statement**

U.S. consumers who shop online are using personal computers less and mobile devices more when doing so (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). As of 2013, U.S. mobile device shopping generated \$24 billion in revenue (Wagner, Schramm-Klein, & Steinmann, 2013). As 85% of U.S. citizens have a mobile phone, businesses have an opportunity to increase market share by addressing the mobile applications market (Einav, Levin, Popov, & Sundaresan, 2014). The general business problem is that some marketers miss opportunities to increase market share by adopting mobile business applications. The specific business problem is that some retail marketing leaders lack effective mobile device marketing strategies.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach mobile users effectively. The target population included approximately 250 marketing leaders within a global

Fortune 1000 retail organization in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The organization's marketing leaders successfully used mobile device marketing strategies to increase consumer reach. Findings from this study provide marketing leaders with a better understanding of effective marketing strategies to reach mobile retail consumers. Marketing leaders could use the results from this study to reach more users who could increase profits for the use in supporting communities (Gautier & Pache, 2015; Lee & Jung, 2016). Increasing profits could allow organizations to use the profits to support their community through actions such as donating money to local charities or using the increased profits to develop new positions to hire new employees from the community.

### **Nature of the Study**

Researchers use three methods for conducting a research study: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). I first considered using a quantitative approach, which involves investigating the statistical significance of relationships and differences among predetermined variables (Belk, 2013). However, because my aim was not to examine relationships or differences between variables (e.g., participants' opinions or attitudes), I opted against using a quantitative method. I also considered a mixed method approach, which involves the use of qualitative and quantitative data. A mixed-method approach is suitable when researchers require both types of data to address research problems (Oppong, 2013). Because the aim of this study was to produce rich contextual data rather than to test for statistical certainty, quantitative data was unnecessary and a mixed method design was inappropriate. Finally, I considered a qualitative approach, which researchers use to reveal the perceptions or experiences of

individuals or groups in their natural settings (Venkatesh et al., 2013). A qualitative method was most appropriate for this study, as my focus was on examining retail marketing leaders' experiences with successful mobile device retail marketing strategies.

Qualitative studies include design approaches such as case study, narrative inquiry, phenomenology, and ethnography (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). After evaluating these possibilities, I selected a case study design for the current research. I did not select narrative inquiry, phenomenology, or ethnography. A narrative research design is most appropriate when researchers seek to understand the lives of individuals through their stories (Yin, 2014). In the current study, it was not necessary to explore the individual lives of participants because the focus was on the mobile marketing strategies that marketing leaders use within an organization, not participants' individual, personal experiences. Phenomenologists seek to contextualize individuals' perceptions and experiences with research phenomena and most often use in-depth interviews (Giorgi, 2015). The aim of a phenomenology is to understand individuals' perceptions and experiences relative to a particular phenomenon (Grossoehme, 2014). The goal of the current study was not to explore individuals' experiences. Therefore, a phenomenological approach would not support my design. Ethnography is the study of individual or group characteristics; researchers using this design submerge themselves in the culture of one or more groups (Yin, 2014). Because it is unnecessary to submerge myself in the culture of marketing leaders to investigate the research questions, I did not select an ethnographic design. After evaluating case study, narrative, phenomenology, and ethnography design approaches, the best alignment with my study purpose was a case study. A case study

design is flexible, permits the researcher to incorporate multiple perspectives from participants, and allows for deep data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). A single case study design allowed me to understand the mobile device marketing strategies retail marketing leaders used to reach mobile users effectively.

### **Research Question**

What are the mobile device marketing strategies retail marketing leaders use to reach mobile users effectively?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What are the mobile device retail marketing strategies you currently use with customers?
2. Within the past 5 years, what changes has your organization made to its mobile device retail marketing strategy?
3. What aspects of your mobile device retail marketing strategy have delivered the best results to the overall revenue?
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your mobile device retail marketing strategy?
5. What are the mobile device retail marketing strategies you have used that have been effective in reaching customers on their mobile device?
6. What part of your mobile device retail marketing strategy has been least effective in reaching the mobile market?
7. What additional information would you like to add that was not covered in the questions we discussed?



## Conceptual Framework

The objective of this study was to explore effective mobile device strategies that marketing leaders used to reach customers. The basis for the conceptual framework was diffusion of innovation theory, which was created by Everett Rogers in 1962 (Rogers, 1995). Scholars use this theory to explore how quickly society adopts an innovation by investigating how and why new technologies spread through social systems (Thomas, 2013). Thus, diffusion of innovation theory is appropriate for investigating how elements of mobile technology adoption could affect the effectiveness of mobile marketing strategies.

The diffusion of innovation theory served as a lens to guide my research on how the study site organization adopted mobile device retail marketing strategies. Rogers (1995) outlined four factors that affect how and why innovation is adopted: the innovation itself, social structures, communication channels, and time. The innovation elements include: advantageousness, compatibility, trialability, observability, and less complexity. Social structures refer to the perception of the innovation among social groups. Communication channel outlines how individuals share and communicate the innovation. The final factor of time refers to the rate of adoption by users.

Marketers will need to understand the effect of their mobile devices marketing strategies and user adoption. For example, user interaction and preferences can affect the user of mobile device marketing strategies. Each of the factors that Rogers identified influences user interaction and preference. Consequently, consumers' mobile device preferences and use can affect the rates at which organizations adopt new mobile

technologies (Achadinha, Jama, & Nel, 2014; Kohli, 2016; Rumbidzai, Jordan, & Rosemary, 2014). With the increase in the number of mobile applications and shopping transactions that occur through mobile devices, marketing leaders who seek to increase their share of the mobile market should modify their business marketing strategies (Tsao, 2013; Wang, Malthouse, & Krishnamurthi, 2015). Understanding the influence of innovations, social structures, communication channels, and time to adopt could be important to marketing leaders because these aspects affect the adoption of mobile devices. Thus, the diffusion of innovation theory was appropriate for exploring the *how* and *why* of effective mobile device retail marketing strategies used by marketing leaders.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Going digital:* Going digital is the use of an e-commerce technology that allows users to make payments from mobile devices (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlstrom, & Freundt, 2014; Tan, Ooi, Chong, & Hew, 2014).

*Location-based advertising (LBA):* LBA is a marketing strategy that allows marketers to advertise products based on an individual's location and proximity to products or services (Bauer & Strauss, 2016).

*Mobile marketing:* Mobile marketing is a compelling channel that allows marketers to reach customers through mobile devices (Groß, 2015; Watson, McCarthy, & Rowley, 2013).

*Mobile technologies:* Mobile technologies are technologies that are used for cellular communications (Hwang & Wu, 2014).

*Multichannel retailer:* A multichannel retailer integrates multiple channels into customers' shopping experiences; examples include having brick and mortar retail stores, online stores, mobile stores, mobile applications, and telephone sales (Lange & Velamuri, 2014).

*Perceived risk:* Perceived risk refers to mobile users' perceptions of risk associated with mobile e-commerce behaviors, such as data breaches and hacking of credit card information (Cozzarin & Dimitrov, 2016).

*Quick response (QR) codes:* QR codes are two-dimensional matrix barcodes that contain a variety of content and information, such as website addresses and media (Ryu & Murdock, 2013).

*Short message service (SMS):* SMS is a form of mobile device communication often referred to as *text messaging* (Leisenberg, 2016).

*Social media:* Social media refers to platforms for online social communication that leverage a variety of media, such as podcasts, text messaging, audio, and video (Wai San & Yazdanifard, 2014).

*Social structure:* Social structure refers to group patterns and individuals' perceptions of themselves in social settings (Foster & Heeks, 2013).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Solving a business problem requires an understanding of the issue and the necessities for solving the problem (Banerjee & Morley, 2013). When exploring business problems, issues exist related to study designs, instrumentation, participants, and sampling strategies. It is important that researchers acknowledge the inherent limitations

of any research project (Connelly, 2013). Accordingly, this component includes a discussion of study assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions refer to researchers' beliefs about characteristics of a study that cannot be proven (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Because assumptions can affect research decisions (Kirkwood & Price, 2013), it is important to disclose them. The current research had several inherent assumptions. First, I assumed that all interview participants were experts in the field of mobile marketing as identified by the organization leadership as such. Second, I assumed that all participants provided honest and truthful responses. Finally, I assumed that the selected design was appropriate for exploring the research question.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are obstacles that the researcher may be unable to address (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Limitations were present in the current research. First, although I took special consideration when choosing the participants, it was possible that the participants did not have extensive knowledge regarding the topic of interest. For example, it was impossible to know if participants had detailed experiences with different facets of mobile marketing until they were interviewed. Another limitation was the use of interviews. Although using interviews is a common practice in psychological science (Deppermann, 2013), a variety of factors can influence accurate responses. For example, participants might not disclose accurate information by only reporting information they feel the interviewer hopes to hear, might choose to be dishonest in reporting, or might

have inaccurate memories of events/information. Finally, the qualitative nature of the research limited transferability of findings to other organizations.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are factors that limit the scope of research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Although I considered a variety of theories and designs for this research, the scope of findings was delimited by the selected methods and framework. For example, there were other ways to collect this type of information besides the marketing strategy documents that I used in the current study, such as focus groups and company documents.

An additional delimitation was participant inclusion criteria and choice of the study site organization. The characteristics of study participants only included marketing leaders who successfully leveraged mobile marketing strategies to reach their customers.

Another delimitation was geographic location because I only included participants employed by a single organization headquartered in the Pacific Northwestern United States. Characteristics of the selected study site organization presented additional delimitations. For example, the selected organization was a large, established, and successful retailer. Thus, the marketing budget and strategies available to participants at the study site organization may not reflect those available to smaller organizations. In addition, the selected organization represented a single sector in the retail industry. Organizations in other retail sectors, such as houseware and apparel, may employ different marketing strategies from those leveraged at the selected study site.

### **Significance of the Study**

Findings from the current study have implications for practical business strategies, as well as social change. Online shopping is one of the fastest-growing sectors of consumer purchasing, making mobile marketing strategies an area of interest for marketing leaders wanting to remain competitive (Leeflang et al., 2014). Understanding how to reach users through mobile devices to make purchases is an important area for marketing leaders to explore.

Online spending in the United States surpassed \$354 billion in 2015, a 15% average increase over the previous year (United States Department of Commerce, 2016). The growth in online consumer purchases has resulted in the increased use of mobile devices to browse the Internet and make purchases. For example, Leeflang et al. (2014) reported that 87% of mobile users utilized mobile devices while shopping and two-thirds of the 140 million consumers surveyed who owned mobile devices were more likely to purchase from brick and mortar stores that provided mobile applications.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The trend of online shopping with mobile devices and consumer preferences for mobile retail experiences demonstrate the value of understanding how successful marketing leaders reach mobile users. Retail organization leaders who want to remain profitable must reach mobile users (Balasescu, 2013). Findings from this study provide a better understanding of successful marketing strategies used by marketing leaders to reach mobile retail consumers. In addition, study findings are of value to organizations as they develop mobile device marketing strategies.

## **Implications for Social Change**

The results of this contribute to social change by increasing profits driven by mobile marketing strategies, which organizations can use to contribute to individuals and communities. For example, increased profits can enable organizations to offer better employee health benefits (Stenberg et al., 2014) and make charitable contributions to communities (Gautier & Pache, 2015; Lee & Jung, 2016; Nwaneri, 2015). Improvements in company-provided healthcare have social and economic benefits regarding the prevention of issues related to childhood death and women's health (Stenberg et al., 2014). Similarly, charitable donations by profitable organizations can produce positive outcomes, such as improvements to the living conditions among members of a community (Gautier & Pache, 2015). This study did not focus on how mobile marketing strategy profits are used, but the processes marketing decision makers use when selecting mobile marketing strategies.

## **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies that retail marketing leaders use to reach customers. In this section, I aim to contextualize the study through a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of existing literature. The section begins with a description of my search strategy, followed by a detailed discussion of the study's conceptual framework. Next, I discuss mobile marketing strategies employed by retailers and considerations that marketing leaders must make when developing and employing mobile marketing. The section concludes with a brief summary and transition to Section 2.

The advancement of mobile technologies continues to drive business (Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Rahman, 2013) and change the ways retailers reach consumers (Einav et al., 2014). Mobile devices continue to proliferate in the consumer market. With the significant increase in mobile device use over the past decade, retailers must understand how to leverage this platform to attract new customers and increase profits (Einav et al., 2014). It is necessary for marketers to understand how to reach customers on their device of choice. Thus, mobile device marketers must stay abreast of consumers' purchasing preferences (MacKinsey, Meyer, & Noble, 2013) and available mobile technologies to bring brands into the hands of consumers (Rohm, Gao, Sultan, & Pagani, 2012). Customers have different devices and varying expectations in how a marketing message reaches their mobile device. With many different device choices and the advancement of mobile technologies and ways to reach the mobile user, marketers have an opportunity to reach users in a variety of ways. Much research exists on the organizational impact of mobile device technology and its use in the development and growth of business (Ferrer et al., 2012; Golovkova, 2014; Krotov, Junglas, & Steel, 2015; Picoto, Bélanger, & Palma-dos-Reis, 2014). Therefore, specific strategies that large retailers employ for profit remains an area of interest.

To identify relevant materials for the review, I used the following databases: FirstSearch, Google Scholar, ProQuest, Sage, LexisNexis, Gale InfoTrac, Journalology.com, Microsoft Academic, and Academic Search Complete. The website of the U. S. Department of Commerce also provided useful resources. My search terms included the following: *mobile*, *marketing strategies*, *mobile devices*, *online shopping*,



*mobile advertising, digital marketing, customer experience, innovation in marketing, customer expectations, mobile applications, and mobile profitability.* These search terms allowed me to explore related topics, such as types of mobile technologies, location-based services, social media, and the role of hardware in mobile device marketing. I researched important factors that mobile device marketers often consider, including consumers' ages and social influences, the relative advantage of the innovation, time to adopt, and compatibility with user expectations. Finally, I located scholarly sources that allowed me to create an in-depth review of theories relevant to the current research, including (a) the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003), (b) the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2011), (c) the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991), and (d) the technology acceptance model (TAM; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). The selected databases delivered many articles across the search terms and provided adequate resources for an in-depth review.

In the search process, I discovered a bevy of relevant articles, journals, seminal authors, and scholarly books. The significant number of resources required me to organize information by annotating, categorizing, and synthesizing articles. In this section, I present my comprehensive analysis and synthesis of this research. I include a review of the current study's purpose, a rationale for my selection of the retail industry, and in-depth description of the conceptual framework. There are 121 references in this literature review. Included in the references are 109 peer reviewed references that represent 90% of the references in the literature review. Of these, 112 are less than 5

years old, representing 93% of the total references. These references range from 1979 to 2017, spanning 38 years.

### **Conceptual Framework**

To explore retail mobile device marketing strategies, it was necessary to investigate multiple aspects of technology adoption and marketing. I considered several theories for the conceptual framework of this study, including the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003), the TRA (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2011), the TPB (Ajzen, 1991) and the TAM (Davis et al., 1989). In the following, I analyze each theory and offer my rationale for selecting the diffusion of innovation theory as the conceptual framework.

**Diffusion of innovation theory.** Rogers (2003) developed the diffusion of innovation theory to explore how and why technology innovations diffuse throughout societies. In the current study, I used the diffusion of innovation theory to explore how retail marketing leaders reach mobile users to increase profits through a mobile device marketing strategy. I selected the diffusion of innovation theory to explore how and why innovations spread. The four dimensions of the diffusion of innovation theory include innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems (Rogers, 1995). This multidimensional theory provided a helpful lens for exploring the research topic because achieving mobile adoption among a retail consumer population can be difficult and complex (Rogers, 1995).

**Theory of reasoned action (TRA).** Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) developed the TRA to predict how individuals behave in human situations, based on their preexisting attitudes and behaviors among their community group (Baskerville et al., 2014). The

theory is used to explore individuals' intentions and decisions. It can also be used to predict individuals' behaviors, based on their levels of motivation and their abilities to make decisions when required (Ajzen, 1991). The TRA was one of the first theories designed to explore the influence of beliefs on attitudes and intentions (Martins, Oliveira, & Popovič, 2014). Understanding the attitudes and intentions of individuals could prove useful for marketing leaders.

To deploy a marketing strategy with success, it is important for marketing decision makers to predict the behaviors of consumers. Thus, researchers have used the TRA to explore marketing and consumer behavior. For example, Kang (2014) used the TRA to predict the adoption of mobile device technology and discovered a possible link between the adoption of mobile technology and user-friendliness of the device. While the TRA is valuable for exploring the adoption of mobile technology based on users' prior experiences, it does not consider users' attributes or social factors, which may influence the mobile marketing strategies employed by marketing leaders. Recent researchers emphasized the importance of exploring additional attributes of mobile users, such as age (Eastman, Iyer, Liao-Troth, Williams, & Griffin, 2014), gender (Hyunjoo & Ha, 2016; Kim & Lee, 2015), complexity of the users' devices (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013; Muhammad-Bashir Owolabi & Alias, 2013), and the impact of using customers social networks in mobile marketing strategies (Risselada, Verhoef, & Bijmolt, 2014; Wai San & Yazdanifard, 2014). Because additional elements critical to understanding mobile adoption are not part of the TRA, I did not select this theory as the conceptual framework for this study.

**Theory of planned behavior (TPB).** One extension of the TRA is the TPB (Agarwal & Karim, 2015). Ajzen (1991) developed the TPB to suggest that an individual's beliefs can influence his or her actions. In the TPB, Ajzen applied prior research on the theory of attitude to the analysis of technology (De Leeuw, Valois, Ajzen, & Schmidt, 2015). I used TPB to incorporate the use of technology and extend beyond the beliefs and attitudes of the individual.

To develop effective mobile marketing strategies, it is necessary to understand how social norms and beliefs influence consumers' use of mobile applications (Risselada et al., 2014). The TPB can be used to investigate the link between consumers' beliefs and their behaviors (De Leeuw et al., 2015). For example, Carter, Yeo, and Yeo (2016) used the TPB to explore differences in perceptions and the use of mobile applications among undergraduate and graduate students. The researchers found that social norms had a stronger influence on mobile user satisfaction than did attitude or familiarity (Carter et al., 2016). Although the TPB allows for the exploration of individuals' behaviors, it cannot be used to address entire social systems or attributes among groups of users (De Leeuw et al., 2015), which is essential to investigating mobile device marketing strategies. The introduction of social norms and beliefs with TPB was an important gap to fill; however, there are additional considerations to make across a social system. The researchers in recent studies continued to outline the importance of social influence in buyer decisions on mobile (Herrera, 2015; Risselada et al., 2014). There are gaps in the research as retailers consider how to reach mobile users and the complexity of this

environment. The necessity to understand impact across a social system was the reason that I did not consider the TPB as the framework for this study.

**Technology acceptance model (TAM).** Another extension of the TRA is the TAM (Davis et al., 1989). Researchers use the TAM to investigate users' decisions to accept and adopt technology (Baskerville et al., 2014; Davis et al., 1989; Martins et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2014). Davis and colleagues introduced this model to explore the role of usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption. According to the TAM, individuals' beliefs regarding their abilities to use technology influence their adoption decisions. Researchers have used the TAM to explore technology adoption in a variety of industries (Martins et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2014). For example, Tan et al. used the TAM to investigate the adoption of a mobile application in the banking industry. Although the TAM can be used to address technology adoption, it is inadequate for exploring the social implications of technology adoption. Similar to the TRA, researchers often use the TAM to predict technology acceptance and the perceived ease of use (Martins et al., 2014). However, the TAM is insufficient for exploring business and social aspects of technology adoption (Baskerville et al., 2014). Because I considered the effects of social and business factors on mobile marketing decisions, I did not select the TAM for the conceptual framework.

### **Conceptual Framework Determination**

After exploring TRA (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2011), TPB (Ajzen, 1991), and TAM (Davis et al., 1989), it was clear that while each of these theories involved elements of innovation adoption, none incorporated the breadth of attributes included in the diffusion

of innovation theory. It is necessary to explore beyond consumers' intentions or technology adoption to understand how to reach mobile users for profit. Each of the theories mentioned above includes different attributes of innovation adoption (Baskerville et al., 2014). The TAM and the TPB are adoption-oriented theories (Humphreys, Von Pape, & Karnowski, 2013) and the TRA centers on adoption intentions (Wang, Liao, & Yang, 2013). However, the diffusion of innovation theory extends beyond the aforementioned theories by allowing researchers to explore *how* and *why* new technologies spread through social systems (Thomas, 2013). Thus, the diffusion of innovation theory is appropriate for investigating multiple elements of mobile technology adoption and use to increase consumer reach. For example, Groß (2015) discussed mobile shopping and several technology adoption theories, including the TRA, TPB, and TAM. In addition, Groß discussed the diffusion of innovation theory and its usefulness when exploring a broad range of attributes and their relationships.

### **Diffusion of Innovation Theory**

Rogers (2003) developed the diffusion of innovation theory to explore *how* and *why* technology innovations spread throughout society. In order for marketing leaders to successfully use mobile marketing strategies to increase mobile device reach, individuals in the target market must adopt the devices and technologies through which those marketing messages spread. For example, an app that employs banner ads or location-based advertising is only effective if individuals in the target market use the mobile devices compatible with those apps, and then download and utilize those apps that then expose them to the marketing messages (Leisenberg, 2016).

Researchers have used the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) to explore many facets of business, such as the length of time it takes for individuals to adopt a technology (Grewal, Roggeveen, & Nordfält, 2017; Rambocas & Arjoon, 2012) and their attitudes toward innovations (Dash, Bhusan, & Samal, 2014). For example, multiple researchers (Dash et al., 2014; Gupta & Arorab, 2017; Hadorn, Comte, Foucault, Morin, & Hugli, 2016; Rambocas & Arjoon, 2012; Yahaya, Hamid, Fauzi, Idris, & Haji-othman, 2016) used the diffusion of innovation theory to understand the impact of technology on businesses and the length of time it takes for consumers to embrace innovations. More specifically, Rambocas and Arjoon (2012) used the diffusion of innovation framework to investigate the advantage of Internet banking and its effect on customer loyalty. Specifically, the researchers used the theory to understand the level of loyalty among users of Internet banking, the effect of innovation ease of use, and the speed of adoption of the Internet site. Using the diffusion of innovation, Rambocas and Arjoon uncovered how multiple users attributes affected the adoption of Internet banking technologies, demonstrating the importance of considering user characteristics when developing mobile marketing strategies aimed at increasing company profits through increased consumer reach.

In another study, Dash et al. (2014) employed the diffusion of innovation theory to explore user adoption of a mobile application, mobile users' attitudes, and social factors. The researchers discussed how these factors aligned with Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory across innovations and social structures. Dash et al.

advanced the thinking around the additional attributes of the theory to understand factors that predicted users' adoption of new banking services.

Yahaya et al. (2016) used the diffusion of innovation theory to understand the effects of mobile innovation on banking services, specifically exploring the influence of relative advantage, compatibility, and complexity. The researchers explored different attributes of the theory to understand how to improve customers' adoption of mobile banking services. Results indicated that relative advantage, compatibility, and complexity significantly predicted users' likelihood of using mobile banking services (Yahaya et al., 2016). User preferences in mobile banking services appear to have a connection with the relative advantage of the services perceived by the user, compatibility, and the complexity of the service.

Researchers' use of the diffusion of innovation theory is not limited to the fields of business and technology. For example, Hadorn et al. (2016) used the theory of innovation to explore the influence of innovation on pain protocols and pain management. The researchers wanted to predict if nurses would participate in the innovation within the current scope of their jobs, and what, if any, effect the innovation had. Using the diffusion of innovation theory, Hadorn et al. explored the influence of innovation on a current set of users, in a specific business case where the innovation could change the roles of the nurses and deliver positive outcomes to the patients. Understanding the uses of the diffusion of innovation in other industries may shed light on how diffusion affects mobile marketing strategies.



There is an abundance of research on the use of the diffusion of innovation to explore the adoption of innovation and the *how* and *why* users accept innovations. I used the diffusion of innovation theory as the conceptual framework for this study to examine how retail marketing leaders reach mobile users to increase profits through a mobile device marketing strategy. I selected the diffusion of innovation theory because it allowed me to explore the communication of innovations, and the how and why technological innovations spread.

Within the diffusion of innovation, the four dimensions explored include innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems (Rogers, 1995). This multidimensional theory provided a helpful lens for exploring the current research topic because achieving mobile adoption among a retail consumer population can be difficult and complex. A key aspect of marketing strategies is the complex adoption of mobile devices as marketers try to reach users to sell more products through increased mobile device reach (Wang et al., 2015). The use of the diffusion of innovation theory afforded multiple areas of exploration.

During my review of the research on the theory of innovation theory (Rogers, 1995), I found that researchers described the adoption of mobile marketing to reach the mobile user for retail organizations across four areas of innovation. First, researchers discussed customers' perceptions and use of mobile device innovations in their shopping experience (Ross, 2014; Wang et al., 2015). The research review continued to surface articles that discussed the importance of the perceptions of the mobile users and the inclusion of innovation within their experiences. Other researchers described the potential

of mobile technologies to provide unique customer experiences and new communication channels for retailers (Bettencourt, Lusch, & Vargo, 2014; Nash, Armstrong, & Robertson, 2013). Consumers have individual needs and expect exclusive experiences. Another relevant factor discussed was the time it took to adopt technologies (Einav et al., 2014; Lam & Shankar, 2014). The complexity of mobile devices, the mobile applications used by retailers, and consumers' willingness to adopt innovations can influence the time to adoption. Finally, some scholars discussed the impact of social systems on consumers' use of innovations (Hagspiel, Huisman, & Nunes, 2015). During the research each of the four elements of the diffusion of innovation surfaced.

After reviewing the literature and developing a clear understanding of each of the elements proposed by Rogers (2003), I selected the diffusion of innovation theory for the current study's conceptual framework. In the following pages, I provide an in-depth review of the literature examined and its support of the conceptual framework. I discuss the four sections outlined by Rogers's theory, including innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems. I also provide a detailed analysis of the following five attributes associated with the adoption of an innovation: relative advantage, compatibility, compatibility, trialability, and social systems.

### **Mobile Device Marketing Strategy and Study Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore effective mobile device marketing strategies employed by retail marketing leaders to reach mobile users. With the increasing availability of a variety of mobile devices, marketers need to understand how to reach users of different mobile devices (Wagner et al., 2013). As

smartphones, tablets, and various other mobile devices increase in popularity, marketers should recognize the interaction among devices and ways to reach consumers (Wagner et al., 2013). The introduction of mobile technology and its broad acceptance by consumers allows marketers to deliver targeted, effective marketing in lieu of traditional mass marketing techniques (Dash et al., 2014). For a marketing decision maker to decide to invest in mobile marketing, he or she must first understand if mobile marketing is a viable channel to pursue. Mobile marketing is a compelling channel for marketers (Groß, 2015; Watson et al., 2013) and provides great opportunities for retail marketing leaders (Oh, Teo, & Sambamurthy, 2012) to improve sales.

Through mobile marketing, marketers can focus on creating and sustaining strategic advantages (Betterncourt, Brown, & Sirianni, 2013). Marketers have opportunities to extend current products and services to maintain competitive advantage, increase reach, and grow profits. Nawafleh (2015) found that the use of technology positively influenced customer reach and business growth. The integration of technology offers a great opportunity for marketing leaders in retail organizations (Oh et al., 2012; Pantanoa, Priporasa, Soraceb, & Iazzolinob, 2017). The consistent theme of the effect of technology on marketing suggests marketers include this element in their marketing strategies. The adoption of mobile devices affects the marketing strategies of organizations as they try to reach users to sell more products or services (Wang et al., 2015), which aligned with the current study's focus on the use of mobile device marketing to reach mobile users with the desire to increase company profits.

The adoption of mobile innovations is essential to mobile marketing. Van Leen (2013) discussed the importance of innovation in an organization's profitability. Specifically, it was suggested that introducing new products and offerings that leverage technology can help organizations become more profitable. A primary way an organization can stay ahead of its competitors and remain profitable is to adopt an innovation (Achadinha et al., 2014). The role of mobile technology is increasingly salient to organization's revenue models (Bonatti et al., 2014). Krčál (2014) discussed the relationship between profitability and innovation. Specifically, innovation can be expensive, and the impact of research and development (R & D) should be a consideration when implementing and providing a clear understanding of the impact to profitability. Therefore, marketing leaders should consider the balance between investment and use of innovation.

For mobile devices to affect profitability, marketing leaders need to believe that mobile devices can increase revenues. Rahimi, Ren, Liu, Vasilakos, and Venkatasubramanian (2014) suggested that reaching mobile devices could foster increases in commerce and growth of organization's business models. Furthermore, chief marketing officers are interested in determining if mobile marketing can extend past traditional broad offers (Grewal, Bart, Spann, & Zubcsek, 2016). Mobile marketing is a compelling channel for marketers as they seek to provide custom offers to potential customers (Groß, 2015; Watson et al., 2013). Thus, mobile shopping is also increasingly important in marketing and retailing to a consumer base.

Online consumers increasingly prefer shopping via mobile devices over personal computers as they seek customized shopping experiences and easy access to products and services (Wagner et al., 2013). Consumers' growing adoption of mobile devices affects organizational marketing strategies as marketers try to reach users to sell more products. Marketers have opportunities to reach and target mobile users with customized approaches that result in purchases. The internet has become one of the most powerful engines to foster retail sales (Leeflang et al., 2014) and marketers need to leverage it to access mobile users. Alongside the increased use of mobile devices are consumers' expectations that are buying experiences via mobile devices are similar to those on traditional home computers (Leeflang et al., 2014). Marketing leaders should consider the experiences across mobile and traditional online platforms.

The lines between physical stores and online retail blur as technology advances (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013). High customer demands and expectations of retailers to provide unique experiences will continue to increase technology adoption and innovation in the retail industry (Balasescu, 2013). For example, customers will demand seamless experiences from physical stores to digital services and online e-commerce shopping. Consumers perceive their mobile devices as personal devices from which they can control their personal interactions (Watson et al., 2013). Customer experience is a critical area of interest for marketers due to technological innovations (Nash et al., 2013) that provide marketing leaders with many options for delivering marketing messages and selling to consumers.

Although researchers have explored marketing opportunities provided by technology, little research exists on the challenges of *going digital* and how marketers capitalize on opportunities to reach users (Leeflang et al., 2014). Exploring a retail organization that effectively reaches mobile users to increase profits will provide useful information to other marketing leaders. The location of the retailer selected for the current study was in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The area was selected based on the adoption of mobile devices. According to Young, Holloway, and Swendeman (2014), it is best to conduct mobile device marketing strategies in regions where smartphones use is high. The U.S. mobile market is one of the largest in the world, and growth is expected to exceed \$150 billion by 2015 (Ghose & Han, 2014). Having selected a location to conduct the study, it was necessary to complete an exhaustive search of the literature to ensure the conceptual framework was appropriate and could provide a solid foundation for the research and interview questions.

### **Innovation**

Rogers (2003) described innovation as an idea, behavior, or object that is new to a user. The innovation of mobile technology provides marketers with opportunities to reach new customers (Leeflang et al., 2014; Nawafleh, 2015). Mobile technologies have advanced significantly over the past decade, allowing marketers to engage with a wide base of customers, drive brand recognition, and increase profits (Watson et al., 2013). Leaders that gain insights into the diffusion process and become familiar with the technology they are looking to deploy can create predictive models that allow for the trial and test of mobile marketing strategies to inform effective and timely decisions (Tsai &

Hung, 2014). Understanding how marketing leaders engage their technology counterparts informed the current study's analysis on how marketing leaders decide marketing strategies.

Prior research on information technology (IT) innovations failed to account for diffusion (Wu & Chiu, 2015). According to Rogers (2003), many attributes can influence the rate of adoption, including relative advantage to the user, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and social systems. Further, Rogers explained that innovation is inclusive of both hardware and software components, and one must understand both when exploring innovations. The diffusion of innovation model allows organizations to realize competitive performance by understanding the key drivers of adoption (Wu & Chiu, 2015). The different attributes that influence the adoption of innovations are one of the first areas that Rogers outlined.

A variety of attributes, which vary by user, can affect the rate of adoption. To explore effective mobile marketing strategies, a marketing decision maker needs to understand how different consumer attributes affect the use of mobile devices. For example, Hyunjoo and Ha (2016) discussed gender differences and the perceived attributes of the mobile application based on user preferences. The researchers found that gender differences influenced use and perceived enjoyment of an application. Gender differences have been found to impact not only the perception of value, but also the acceptance of certain technologies such as texting (Forgays, Hyman, & Schreiber, 2014). While gender is an important factor, it is not the only attribute that influences a users' willingness to adopt the technology. Other factors include users' brand preferences and

mobile engagement (Negi & Pandey, 2013). Thus, it is important to create multiple mobile marketing strategies to reach a broad spectrum of users. Kim and Lee (2015) provided a list of suggested mobile marketing strategies, including new offers, real-time reach with relevant content, offer differentiation based on the user attributes, and a user-specific delivery pattern.

In addition to user attributes, hardware and software attributes can influence users' adoption of innovations (Rogers, 2003). Mobile technologies differ by device types and service availability, so marketers must consider which platforms they will use and what services they will employ to reach users (Leisenberg, 2016). They must also understand the availability of services on specific cellular platforms; the development of mobile applications is increasingly difficult due to the plethora of available cellular platforms and differing levels of access among mobile device users (Dalmasso, Datta, Bonnet, & Nikaiein, 2013). The types of hardware and applications made available to different cellular platforms have a critical influence on customer reach (Heitkötter, Hanschke, & Majchrzak, 2012). More specifically, cross-platform application development is a suggested solution, given the fragmented mobile market. In addition to software development and platform decisions, marketers must consider network size. Dell'Era, Frattini, Ghezzi (2013) found that services launched on networks with many providers showed higher innovation survival than those launched with smaller networks.

User attributes also affect the adoption of innovations. Thus, it is necessary for marketing leaders to consider user attributes, as well as the platforms and applications they will employ to reach users. In the current study, exploring how marketing leaders



consider these attributes and platforms shed additional light on mobile marketing strategies employed by marketers to reach mobile users. I detail these five attributes as follows.

**Relative advantage.** Relative advantage describes a user's perception of an innovation's value (Rogers, 2003). Researchers often explore the perception of relative advantage to understand the effectiveness of mobile device marketing applications. A consumer's intent to use an application is often based on his or her perceptions of the mobile application's value (Wang et al., 2013). As customers increasingly expect individualized applications, marketers must provide customized experiences to mobile users (Achadinha et al., 2014). Using the diffusion of innovation attribute of relative advantage will allow me to explore perceived value when marketers reach out to customers with tailored offers or incentives.

One example of a valuable mobile device marketing strategy is e-commerce technology that allows users to make payments from mobile devices (Tan et al., 2014). The feature of mobile payments is increasingly available in mobile applications, and marketing leaders should understand its potential use. Mobile payment is an example of one of the emerging technologies in retail necessary for marketers to explore as users often find value in the innovation (Rodrigues et al., 2014). Researching examples of mobile innovation will provide insight on how innovation affect mobile marketing strategies.

Another example of mobile innovation is messaging in mobile (MIM). As stated previously, gender differences exist in the perceived advantages of mobile messaging

(Forgays et al., 2014). As such, perceptions of the relative advantage of MIM could tie to user preferences. Watson et al. (2013) explored MIM as a popular feature among users interested in the social media status of their friends and family, as well as a feature marketers could leverage to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Watson et al. found that MIM use correlated with higher levels of customer loyalty and satisfaction, and can influence perceptions of relative advantage.

**Compatibility.** Rogers (2003) defined compatibility in innovation adoption as the degree to which an innovation meets the needs and expectations of users. The perceived value of an application function is dependent on the expectations of mobile users (Rodrigues et al., 2014). Customers expectations will vary, as will the perceived advantage of the innovation. The greater the perceived advantage, the faster users will adopt the innovation (Rodrigues et al., 2014). Compatibility can affect user adoption.

Consumers' perceived value of an application influences their use of it (Wang et al., 2013). In addition, users' expectations influence their perceptions of an innovation's advantages (Rogers, 2003). Technology can foster positive experiences with brands, which in turn, can improve consumers' loyalty and perceptions of brands (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013). The attribute of compatibility allows for an understanding of how users' expectations can be leveraged to increase adoption. For example, Ghose and Han (2014) discussed users' expectations to transact in mobile applications without the intrusion of advertisements. Users are interested in making transactions through mobile applications without seeing advertisements. The ability to complete transactions within an application will increase use of the application; however, advertising within the

application is likely to decrease use (Ghose & Han, 2014). Marketing leaders should evaluate the perceived impact of attributes within their mobile device marketing strategies.

Users also expect innovations to be easy to use (Leeflang et al., 2014). The compatibility attribute of the diffusion of innovation theory can help marketing decision makers measure the effects that mobile marketing strategies have on reaching mobile users. For example, De Sa, Navalpakkam, and Churchill (2013) explored the relationship between user expectations and positive outcomes. The researchers found that animations during mobile experiences negatively affected users' preferences. The literature appears to support the exploration of user compatibility in retail mobile device marketing strategies to reach users and increase profits.

Another compatibility feature that marketers should consider is users' expectations of receiving *the right offer at the right time*. Reaching customers on their mobile devices with the right offer at the right time is a new area to explore in mobile marketing (Lin, Liang, Teh, & Lai, 2015; Liu, Shu, Jin, Ding, & Yu, 2013). In fact, Einav et al. (2014) found that many mobile purchases happened because the timing of an offer was *right*. Understanding when it is most convenient for users to make purchases, providing them with the right information to decide, and influencing their decisions can foster sales. For example, Lo et al. (2016) conducted a study to determine if promotions on a specific day of the week resulted in higher sales. The researchers found that promotions shared on Thursday for restaurant deals had the highest rate of return. These

types of studies support that idea that Rogers (2003) outlined in the diffusion of innovation theory on compatibility.

**Complexity.** One attribute Rogers (2003) outlined as important to the adoption of innovation is the ease of use, which he refers to as complexity. There are multiple ways that marketing leaders provide ease of use within an application. Complexity requires the consideration of hardware, as the ease of can be impacted by the device. Mobile applications should be easy to use, and marketers must consider the influence of complexity and device design on application adoption (Kang, 2014). For example, easy touch interfaces can create positive user experiences (Brasel & Gips, 2014). The elimination of technical complexity to provide a positive user experience provides an opportunity for marketing leaders.

As Rogers (2003) pointed out, both hardware and software applications can affect innovation adoption. Applications can be easy to use by design, but it is necessary for marketers to understand the limitations of the different mobile device on which multiple applications run (Malhotra & Malhotra, 2016). Kim and Lee (2015) discussed how hardware vendors determined the default browsers of devices, which impacts application performance.

Marketing interfaces can change interactions with customers as long as the interaction is simple and meets customers' expectations (Brasel & Gips, 2014). The complexity of devices and applications can impact users' adoption of innovations. Thus, marketers must consider such hardware and software complexities. Using complexity and ease of use in the conceptual framework supported by Rogers (2003) allowed me to

explore how marketing leaders integrated complexity into their mobile device marketing strategies.

**Trialability.** Providing users with opportunities to try an innovation in small increments can improve innovation adoption by helping stakeholders understand which elements of innovation are received positively (Rogers, 2003). The ability to test components of an innovation and adjust strategies based on user acceptance could accelerate innovation adoption. Levy (2015) used trialability to explore the usefulness of telehealth in the public sector. Dutta (2016) explored the differences between women and men and their acceptance of technology using trialability. In another study, researchers used trialability to understand the impact of mobile devices on nursing curriculums (Doyle, Garrett, & Currie, 2014). The use of trialability continued to surface in the studies where researchers were interested in understanding the impact of innovation in small trials.

Mobile payment is an application feature that retailers can experiment with without committing to a broader mobile device application platform (Rodrigues et al., 2014). Testing one feature of a potentially entire new experience through mobile purchases could affect the adoption of the mobile device application more quickly (Rodrigues et al., 2014). Mobile payments surfaced in the research multiple times as a feature to test with users to see if users' complete transactions on their mobile devices (Cozzarin & Dimitrov, 2016; Kujala, Mugge, & Miron-Shatz, 2017). The ability to complete the transaction within the application could increase use of an application

(Ghose & Han, 2014). Using trialability to explore one feature of mobile devices could prove valuable for researchers.

Another example of trialability is retailers' experimentation with mobile couponing. Consumers' intentions to redeem mobile coupons could show correlation with their willingness to engage with technology. A retailer could test coupon redemption to understand which types of users are most compelled to use coupons. The results of one study showed that perceived usefulness, ease of use, credibility, compatibility, and social factors affected the behaviors and intentions of consumers in using coupons (Agarwal & Karim, 2015). Lo et al. (2016) demonstrated the use of trialability in a study on the use of promotions at varying intervals to increase purchases and spending.

Researchers often explore mobile couponing in conjunction with location services. Location-based mobile services allow marketers to modify mobile coupons based on user location (Hui, Inman, Yanliu, & Suher, 2013; Kang, Mun, & Johnson, 2015). Location-based services allow retailers to target consumers and observe their mobile shopping behaviors in real time (Andrews, Luo, Fang, & Aspara, 2014; Holmes, Byrne, & Rowley, 2013). Location-based coupon targeting allows marketers to test the use of mobile coupons to determine *where* and *how* they affect purchase decisions. Location-based technologies are increasingly popular among marketers (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013). Trialability could be an important element of mobile device marketing strategies.

**Observability.** Rogers (2003) described observability as the ability to observe the results of innovation. Observability appears to be linked closely to trialability, as

marketing leaders seek to understand the effect of marketing decisions. With the focus of the current study centered on mobile marketing strategies used to reach mobile users, observability could be a valuable tool for marketing leaders in search of strategies to increase profits through the mobile engagement. Throughout my review of research for this section, examples of observability continued to surface. Marketers implementing mobile applications sought to understand the customer's intentions to buy. Kang et al. (2015) used mobile applications with location-based services to explore how the use of applications was affected by time, convenience, and the level of effort required to download it. Through technology, marketers can see the results of such marketing strategies to improve success. In a study with a similar approach, Ross (2014) used mobile couponing to determine if there was a positive effect on product purchases that might not otherwise have taken place. The researcher found that mobile couponing might have a positive effect on increasing purchases.

Two additional examples of mobile device management that outline the attributes of observability are data mining and tracking individual user patterns on mobile devices. Researchers employ data mining to analyze consumers' behavioral patterns to provide context-rich experiences for customers (Zhu et al., 2014). Having the ability to see data from a consumer and understand their behavioral patterns could help drive marketers to make decisions on how to present content and engage with customers. Similarly, the ability to observe mobile patterns of traffic, and analyze the network data to redirect the user to provide faster and more seamless experiences is important for marketing leaders to understand and build into their strategies (Razaghpanah et al., 2015). Understanding

the data that results from the mobile innovations continue to surface as necessary to ensure value can result (Nash et al., 2013) from a mobile marketing campaign.

Observability is included in the diffusion of innovation theory and has continued to surface during the research as having alignment with the goals of a marketing leader. Hyunjoo and Ha (2016) used the conceptual framework of observability in a study on the adoption of mobile coupons based on gender differences. In another study, Kang et al. (2015) explored the likelihood of mobile application downloads based on users' in-store preferences.

All the attributes outlined in the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) were present in the literature mined for this study. Mobile device marketing strategies will likely include many of these elements. The diffusion of innovation theory and its five attributes of innovation provided a solid conceptual framework for the current research.

### **Communication Channels**

Rogers (2003) defined communication channels as the sharing of information about an innovation among individuals and trying to find a common understanding. Most of the time, users of innovation have different attributes, which means their communication channels will differ. Wu and Huang (2014) suggested that providing proper communication channels can help improve the quality of products, and marketers should consider using innovation to provide communication channels. Innovation channels can include social media and MIM. Social media platforms such Facebook, Twitter, and FourSquare continue to grow in popularity (Andrews, Goehring, Hui, Pancras, & Thornswood, 2016) and provide powerful communication channels for



consumers to interact and share information on mobile applications and purchasing decisions, and provide persuasive messaging (Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015). Marketing leaders could consider the different communication channels based on user preferences to reach their customers.

The ability to communicate opinions on products and services has never been more possible (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013). Marketing leaders must address the communication channels to protect their brands (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013) and leverage social media to share and promote information on their products (Andrews, Fang, Luo, & Phand, 2013; Ramanathan, Subramanian, & Parrott, 2017). In addition to social media communication channels, in-application messaging and notifications allow retailers to communicate with consumers and change the way they engage (Zhu et al., 2014) by focusing on how the consumer wants to engage.

Communication is a core element of the relationship between customers and businesses (Sharma & Ranga, 2014). Social media and other innovations in mobile services allow for a different type of customer engagement. The diffusion of innovation theory includes communication channels as a vehicle to share innovations and can influence innovation adoption. Shankar et al. (2016) discussed the organizational value created through the implementation of proper communication channels and utilization of processes to influence and control messaging on those channels. It was necessary to include this element in the framework to understand mobile marketing strategies and determine what types of communication channels mobile marketers use to reach the mobile user. The communication between customers and businesses is a core element of

managing an effective marketing strategy (Negi & Pandey, 2013), which can affect the relationship with the customer.

### **Time Variable**

Rogers (2003) discussed the variable of time in understanding the adoption of innovation. There are three ways to measure time to adopt: (a) time to adopt once the user is aware of the innovation, (b) time to adopt based on the adoption rate in the social system, and (c) the total number of users that adopts at any given time (Rogers, 2003). Measuring time in these ways can help marketing leaders understand its effect on the adoption of mobile applications.

The arrival rate of technology is ever changing (Hagspiel et al., 2015). Technology is advancing quickly. The speed of innovation, user adoption, and the number of users that adopt the technology in an entire system can affect time to adopt (Taylor & Levine, 2014). There are multiple impacts in the variable of time. Hagspiel et al. (2015) found that adoption rates could impact the next innovation release based on the users' perception at that time. Users perceive time differently. Risselada et al. (2014) found that social circles could also affect user adoption; thus, many organizations use social systems to increase adoption rates. Jwaifell and Gasaymeh (2013) used the diffusion of innovation theory to understand the time variable associated with a teacher's adoption of a smart board. The researchers found that early adopters of innovations can influence others through the user adoption cycle.

Van Der Boor, Oliveira, and Veloso (2014) outlined the importance of early adopters in influencing time to adopt an innovation faster. Influencing the time for a user

or a social system to adopt a mobile application can influence the overall impact of an application (Taylor & Levine, 2014). The element of time appears to influence the success of mobile applications. During the current study, the element of time emerged as a factor in mobile device marketing.

### **Social Structure**

Rogers (2003) described the potential effect of social structures on innovation adoption. A social structure is the pattern of individuals in a group and their perceptions of themselves in social settings (Foster & Heeks, 2013). Diffusion occurs within social systems, and the structure of social environments affects the rate of diffusion (Rogers, 2003). Typically, individuals in a social system will group themselves with like individuals, and system norms can prevent the adoption of innovations. Thus, it is important for marketing leaders to understand the potential effect of social structures on innovation adoption.

Understanding how mobile marketing diffuses through society can help marketers modify their mobile device marketing strategies to prevent or minimize negative reactions to innovations. Many researchers have explored the role of millennials in diffusion, the impact of their interactions within social structures, and their selection and use of mobile applications (Eastman et al., 2014; Ordun, 2015; Parry & Urwin, 2011). For example, millennials are likely to leverage the opinions of individuals in their social circles to make decisions and social peers exhibit less influence over older generations (Eastman et al., 2014; Wai San & Yazdanifard, 2014, respectively). Understanding your customer age groups is central to choosing a successful marketing strategy.

Similarly, Nazari, Khosravi, and Babalhavaeji (2013) used the diffusion of innovation theory to investigate the influence of social structures on the adoption of online databases. Wai San and Yazdanifard (2014) discussed the differences in generations and social structure effect on the acceptance of innovations. Understanding the role of social structures in the adoption of innovations appeared throughout my research on the adoption of the mobile device innovations, especially among retail studies.

### **Consequences of the Innovation**

Rogers (1995) outlined the consequences of innovation, including direct desirability, indirect desirability, anticipated effects, and unanticipated effects. Despite the intent of innovation, users' reception and perceptions of it often vary and result in different consequences. For example, Chang, Lu, and Yu (2013) discussed the influence of culture and consumers' perceptions of a retailer's ethics on their attitudes toward innovations. Chang et al. also posited that the intent of innovation does not have the ability to insert influence over individuals' perceptions. An area that continued to surface in the research around consequences of innovation was the effect of social media on the adoption of innovations. Retailers deliver innovation with the intent of adoption; however, consumers' reactions and interactions are not predictable (Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, & Hughes, 2013). Retailers must understand the social structures of the groups they are trying to reach because social media and other social networks can influence customer loyalty (Rapp et al., 2013). Social structures and the effect of social media could affect the success of a marketing strategy.

Miranda, Kim, and Summers (2015) leveraged the diffusion of innovation framework to understand the effect of social media on an organization's brand, and how the organization leverages social media content for feedback. Risselada et al. (2014) spoke of the effect of social networks on the adoption of technology, especially the effect of marketing targeted at specific social structures. The impact of direct marketing diminishes once a product has been introduced. The effect of social influence is complex and often delivers results that are unexpected (Risselada et al., 2014), reinforcing the need to choose effective marketing strategies that will deliver clear results.

### **Strategies**

Mobile device marketing has radically changed the marketing and advertising landscape. As Hofacker, de Ruyter, Lurie, Manchanda, and Donaldson (2016) explained, customers have traditionally entered retailers' physical spaces, but mobile devices have made it possible for retailers to invert this paradigm and, instead, enter the customer's environment. The strategies employed during mobile marketing campaigns vary and are constantly evolving (Leisenberg, 2016; Yang, 2013). In the following section, I discuss mobile marketing strategies commonly used by advertisers, including mobile websites, mobile apps, banner ads, gamification, mobile coupons, location-based advertising, SMS, mobile affiliate marketing, and QR codes.

**Mobile websites.** Perhaps the most common mobile marketing strategy is the development and deployment of mobile websites. Mobile websites differ from traditional PC websites because of their customizable content and technical formats to the specific characteristics of each mobile device (Rempel & Bridges, 2013). Mobile websites

employ *responsive design*, which automatically adjusts page layout and other settings according to the requirements of different mobile devices (Lee, Trimi, & Kim, 2013). Building responsive websites allow mobile marketers to make sure websites are easy to navigate from mobile devices to reduce bounce rates and increase conversion (Leisenberg, 2016), providing a richer user experience.

Advertisers can consider a number of factors when developing mobile websites. The responsiveness of mobile website can influence users' purchasing behaviors (Ou, Perng, Hsu, & Chiou, 2015). For example, Dou and Sundar (2016) investigated how swiping, tapping, clicking, and scrolling interactions on mobile websites influenced individuals' intentions to use websites. The researchers found that swiping increased users' interaction with websites by making the experience more enjoyable. The advantage of adding swiping interactions to mobile websites was increasing users' enjoyment. Thus, Dou and Sundar recommended that marketers pay attention to what functions of mobile sites increase users' enjoyment the most because users' who perceived enjoyment on a website were more likely to use the swipe technique.

In addition to enjoyment, marketers should consider what design factors increase user satisfaction (Ou et al., 2015). According to research by Amin, Rezaei, and Abolghasemi (2014), perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are essential to ensuring consumer satisfaction and engagement with mobile websites. Accordingly, the researchers recommended that designers consider various customer preferences to design mobile sites that consumers find satisfying and engaging. Responsive web designs for mobile devices, therefore, are a strategy that mobile marketers can use to improve users'

use, enjoyment, and engagement with retailers' websites (Amin et al., 2014; Dou & Sundar, 2016; Ou et al., 2015) to provide a web experience across different size devices.

**Mobile applications.** Another common mobile marketing strategy involves the development of apps, or applications, which are found primarily on mobile devices (Leisenberg, 2016). Mobile applications are often used to deliver an experience or type of service to the mobile user. Mobile apps describe end-user software applications designed for use on mobile devices (Yang, 2013). The mobile apps are the interface with the user on the mobile device. Mobile apps are specifically created to adapt to different types of devices and operating systems and tailored to the goals of a mobile marketing campaign (Leisenberg, 2016). In-app marketing is the use of non-marketing apps to disperse marketing information, through strategies such as banner ads or affiliate programs. Lee and Shin (2016) posited that in-app advertisements are a driving force behind mobile marketing. Although costlier than mobile websites, the advantages of apps include offline use, speed, easy installation and use, and more efficient hardware sensors improving the user experience (Leisenberg, 2016). The mobile apps allow the marketing leaders to engage with the user through the mobile device.

Researchers have explored users' behaviors with mobile applications to improve usability and engagement. In line with the technology acceptance model, research indicates that perceived ease of use and usefulness are predictors of engagement with mobile apps (Yang, 2013). Echoing findings from Amin et al. (2014) regarding enjoyment of mobile websites, Yang (2013) found that users' enjoyment of mobile apps significantly influenced their intentions to use. Similarly, Lu, Liu, and Wei (2017) found

that users' enjoyment was a primary driver for the continued use of mobile applications. Coupled with satisfaction and mobility, perceived enjoyment was responsible for over 60% of the variance in users' attitudes after engaging with a mobile app. Accordingly, Lu et al. suggested that advertisers focus on increasing user satisfaction with mobile apps to encourage continued engagement. Well-designed mobile apps are a common and effective way to implement a mobile marketing strategy allowing rich user behavior data to analyses and improve understanding.

**Banner ads.** Among the mobile marketing strategies available to advertisers, banner ads can be among the least effective and most antiquated (Barreto, 2013). Research indicates that mobile users are increasingly desensitized to banner ads, creating what Barreto (2013) referred to as "banner blindness" (p. 120). For example, Barreto conducted a study to assess banner blindness on Facebook among a sample of 20 participants. Study findings indicated that banner ads garnered less attention from participants than did recommendations from friends. The researcher posted that banner blindness attributes to ads falling outside of users' visual ranges. Consequently, Barreto recommended that brands rethink their online marketing strategies to emphasize recommendations rather than banner ads. For organizations that choose to utilize banner ads, ad placement (Jiang, 2017) and repeated exposure (Yeu, Yoon, Taylor, & Lee, 2013) may increase individuals' awareness and engagement with these advertisements.

**Gamification.** Gamification, which refers to the use of persuasive gaming technologies in non-gaming contexts, is an emerging strategy employed by mobile device marketers (Xu, Tian, Buhalis, Weber, & Zhang, 2015). Hofacker et al. (2016) defined



gamification as using game design elements to increase consumption, loyalty, and product advocacy in non-game goods and services. Through gamification, advertisers can create fun, individualized interactions between users and marketing materials.

Gamification could also allow advertisers to capitalize on the known behavioral effects of video games, including increased arousal (Poels, Van den Hoogen, Ijsselsteijn, & De Kort, 2012) and social interaction and learning (Albuquerque & Nevskaya, 2016).

Hofacker et al. provided an example of gamification where the retailer used a reward system for their mobile app users that allowed the user to pay thru, increase their status, and increase their benefits through an app driven star level system.

**Coupons.** Marketers could offer discount codes or coupons for products and services as a part of mobile marketing campaigns. Mobile coupons or *m-coupons* can incentivize mobile users to make online or in-store purchases (Bartoli & Medvet, 2016). Users can redeem mobile coupons in stores for discounts on products or services. As Gonzalez (2016) explained, mobile coupons can be effective communication and sales tools as people across all demographic groups grow increasingly aware of the benefits of using their mobile devices to make purchases. A benefit of coupon codes is that advertisers can easily create and send individualized offers to users while they are shopping. In addition, marketers can use mobile coupons to connect with consumers and obtain data on their purchasing behaviors at anytime (Andrews et al., 2016) to drive better analysis of user shopping behavior.

**Location-based advertising.** One of the most common and effective mobile marketing strategies used by advertisers is location-based advertising (LBA; Shin & Lin,

2016). Businesses have long used LBA, in the form of roadside billboards and signage, to advertise products specific to an individual's proximity to where consumers purchase those products. Modern LBA is a mobile device marketing strategy often used in shopping centers, airports, and hotels. Because mobile devices often contain global positioning system (GPS) functionality, advertisers can use mobile marketing to send information about products and services to consumers when they are in a physical location close to an advertiser's products (Bauer & Strauss, 2016). LBA via mobile devices allows advertisers to address consumers individually, in real time, and based on their specific locations. Mobile device LBA also allows advertisers to update inaccurate or expired information quickly and remotely (Bauer & Strauss, 2016; Fong, Fang, & Luo, 2015) using real-time and ubiquitous platforms. As Fong et al. (2015) outlined, there are no limits to physical location as the mobile technologies give retailers the capability to have a presence anywhere.

According to a finding from a meta-analysis on LBA research (Bauer & Strauss, 2016), engaging consumers at opportune moments are more likely to perceive LBA positively. Opportune moments include times of leisure and situations in which individuals are open to consumption (for example when shopping or during lunch breaks). Consumers are also more likely to react positively to mobile device LBA when they are in public places, rather than at home or work. Similarly, consumers are more likely to perceive LBA negatively when it is employed at times when they are not primed to consume (Andrews et al., 2014). Another interesting finding from Bauer and Strauss's (2016) analysis was that consumers are more likely to value and respond positively to

LBA that employs coupons or discount codes than just informative advertisements. This finding is supportive of research by Andrews et al. (2016) and Gonzalez (2016), who reported on the effectiveness of mobile coupons. Thus, the combination of LBA and mobile coupons could be a particularly effective mobile marketing strategy.

Bauer and Strauss (2016) also reported that consumers often use location-based services out of enjoyment, so entertaining advertisements could be perceived more positively by consumers than informative ads. In this way, the effectiveness of entertaining mobile applications or games (Hofacker et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2017; Yang, 2013) may increase when combined with LBA strategies. Mobile device LBA has proved particularly effective for food, travel, and transportation products and services.

Bauer and Strauss's (2016) findings regarding the importance of considering location and timing when delivering mobile campaigns echoed those reported by Andrews et al. (2014) and Luo, Andrews, Fang and Phang (2014). For example, Luo et al. found that time of advertising and the customer's proximity to the services and good could significantly influence consumers' purchasing behaviors. Advertisers can also combine LBA with different levels of discounts and competitive locational targeting to maximize purchasing behaviors of mobile consumers. Fong et al. suggested that competitive locational targeting using mobile LBA could help retailers extend their reach, but should be used intermittently instead of a consistent tool across all targeting efforts, due to the deep discounts required to entice purchasing behaviors. In the current study, when participants discussed the use of LBA to compare the study site organizations use of LBA to the strategies described by Fong et al., Andrews et al. (2014) and Bauer and

Strauss (2016), I used probing questions to gather rich use details on how they employed these strategies.

**SMS.** Short message service (SMS) is a mobile marketing strategy that allows advertisers immediate access to mobile users. SMS is also known as text messaging (Leisenberg, 2016). As Leisenberg (2016) explained, 95% of the time text messages are read within 5 seconds, making it an effective way to reach customers. Users typically associate text messages with urgent messages rather than spam, and marketers do not have to worry about ensuring messages display correctly on different devices. Another benefit of using SMS to market is that users do not need an Internet connection to receive messages, as data transfers occur via users' cell phone service. Finally, SMS allows advertisers to reach mobile users, irrespective of time and space (Aamir, Ikram, Ali, Hasnu, & Zaman, 2013). SMS significantly increases an advertiser's reach to consumers who have provided permissions to receive mobile marketing messages.

**Mobile affiliate marketing.** Mobile marketers can also employ affiliate marketing as part of their ad campaigns (Leisenberg, 2016). During affiliate marketing, advertisers pay commissions to partners for the generation of sales. Affiliates could place banner ads on their websites or provide positive reviews for a company's products or services. When a user clicks on the banner ad or affiliate link and makes a purchase, the affiliate earns a commission on the sale. In this way, organizations can use affiliates to advertise for them, while providing a commission on sales.

**QR Codes.** Quick Response codes, also known as the *QR codes*, are another strategy often used by mobile marketers (Cata, Patel, & Sakaguchi, 2013). QR codes are

two-dimensional matrix barcodes that can contain a variety of content and information, such as website addresses and media (Ryu & Murdock, 2013). Marketers can print codes on products and advertising, which users then scan using mobile devices and code reader software in order to access the information stored in the code. QR codes are attractive to mobile marketers due to their low cost and ease of use. QR codes can be affixed to objects and conventional media such as television commercials and print ads, allowing advertisers to instantly connect with customers online and adjust content as needed for each user (Ryu & Murdock, 2013). However, the likelihood that consumers will utilize QR codes depends largely on their perceived usefulness and ease of use (Ryu & Murdock, 2013), thus supporting the TAM (Davis et al., 1989). Thus, when leveraging QR codes as part of a mobile marketing campaign, advertisers must be conscious of consumers' perceptions of the codes' usefulness and ease of use.

In this section, I discussed the different marketing strategies implemented across different mobile marketing leaders. Strategies continue to vary as the number of consumers who carry mobile devices continues to increase (Yang, 2013). Understanding the behaviors of marketing leaders and the strategies they employ is critical to understand as there are many different approaches to the technologies available on mobile.

### **Considerations in Mobile Marketing**

In addition to selecting the most effective strategies for mobile marketing campaigns, advertisers must also consider a number of user-related factors that can influence the effectiveness of mobile campaigns. Mobile users engage with their device having different expectations of the engagement. Users are unique individuals who have

different perceptions and intentions that could influence their likelihood to engage with a retailer on their mobile device. In the following sections, I discuss a number of these factors, including perceived risk, differences in usage, consumer demographics, access to technology, shopping experiences, and consumer attitudes and behaviors.

**Perceived risk.** Perceived risk is an important factor that advertisers must consider when creating mobile marketing campaigns. In the context of mobile marketing, perceived risk describes consumers' perceptions of risk associated with making purchases through their mobile devices or using mobile consumer applications (Khasawneh, 2015). With the rise of data breaches and hacking, placing personal credit card information online to complete transactions is accompanied with a degree of risk. Thus, individuals' perceptions of risk influence their willingness to engage in e-commerce (Cozzarin & Dimitrov, 2016). Understanding perceived risk helped me examine the use of marketing strategies in the current investigation.

**Differences in usage.** Other factors that advertisers must consider with mobile marketing are differences in mobile device usage and access among various population segments. For example, rapid technological advances have made fast data transfer speeds and powerful operating systems available via mobile technology, fueling growth in mobile marketing (Lam & Shankar, 2014). However, heterogeneity in the adoption, use, and access to more advanced devices make it important for marketers to understand what technology is available to certain groups and how those groups take advantage of different device features. By considering segmented differences in mobile device usage, advertisers might more effectively plan mobile marketing campaigns (Goneos-Malka,

Strasheim, & Grobler, 2014). Demographic variances and differences in access to and adoption of technology can reflect differences in peoples' attitudes and behaviors. Two main factors that drive differences in usage are (a) the level of mobile technology available to them (the sophistication of their devices) and (b) their levels of proficiency using mobile devices (Goneos-Malka et al., 2014). In addition, generational differences (Kim, Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2016) and culture (Lee et al., 2013) can influence adoption and use of mobile technologies. For example, Lee et al. (2013) found that individuals in individualistic, type 1 cultures such as the United States, were more likely to adopt technology based on innovation effects than were individuals from a collectivist, type 2 cultures such as China and Korea.

**Shopping experiences.** To ensure the efficacy of mobile marketing campaigns, advertisers should also consider how mobile devices affect shoppers' emotions and buying experiences. For example, shoppers may feel more secure and confident in their purchasing decisions when armed with mobile devices while shopping (Spaid & Flint, 2014). Mobile devices can allow shoppers to look up product reviews, locate coupons, compare prices, and seek out opinions and advice from members of their social networks. Research indicates that consumers often use mobile devices to look up product information before making purchases (Holmes et al., 2013), so mobile devices can alter shopping experiences by creating more informed shoppers.

**Consumer attitudes and behaviors.** To maximize the efficiency of mobile device marketing, advertisers must also consider consumers' attitudes toward mobile marketing. Researchers have explored user acceptance and adoption of mobile e-

commerce and consumer attitudes toward mobile marketing (Holmes et al., 2013). Findings from previous investigations indicate consumers are more likely to use their mobile devices to conduct research on goods and to conduct pre-purchase activities and are less likely to use their devices to make actual purchases (Holmes et al., 2013; Spaid & Flint, 2014). Consumers' attitude and behaviors toward the mobile marketing strategy can impact consumers use.

As mentioned previously, consumer demographics can influence mobile shopping behaviors and attitudes toward mobile marketing (Goneos-Malka et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2013). Acknowledging the influence of individual demographics on attitudes toward mobile marketing, Varshney and Joy (2015) explored attitudinal differences based on occupation, nationality, and gender among a sample of college students. Echoing findings from other investigators regarding the importance of timing and consumer location when sending mobile marketing messages (Einav et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2013) respondents in Varshney and Joy study had more favorable responses to mobile marketing messages when they were specific to their locations and sent at times when they were most likely to make purchasing decisions.

This conceptual framework section provides an overview of the literature and the selection process that led to the diffusion of innovation theory. After a review of multiple theories, I selected the diffusion of innovation theory. Diffusion of innovation is a complex and multi-faceted theory that allows for the exploration of mobile device marketing strategies retail marketing leaders use to reach mobile users effectively. The diffusion of innovation allowed me to explore how to communicate innovations, and the



how and why technology spreads. Within the diffusion of innovation, the four dimensions of innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems, allowed for in-depth study of the mobile device marketing strategies retail marketing leaders use to reach mobile users effectively.

This section began with a detailed review of the conceptual framework and the diffusion of innovation theory. I discussed how populations adopt an innovation, the time it takes to adopt, the consequences of adoption, and how mobile marketing strategies may encourage the adoption. I then discussed a variety of strategies that marketers often use with mobile marketing, as well as considerations they must make to ensure mobile marketing strategies are most effective. Understanding the end user and their preferences on mobile can influence marketing leader decisions. A review of multiple conceptual frameworks and potential approaches to address the research question led to my selection of the diffusion of innovation theory for this study.

### **Transition**

Mobile marketing can significantly influence consumers' purchasing behaviors (Einav et al., 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies that retail marketing leaders use to reach mobile users effectively. With the proliferation of mobile devices into the market, many mobile marketing leaders find it necessary to understand how to reach mobile users (Leeflang et al., 2014). This section included a discussion of the study's problem, purpose, nature, research questions, and interview questions. The research question aligns to the study purpose to explore the mobile device marketing strategies used to reach users.

In addition, I detailed the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance. In the conceptual framework, I explored and synthesized existing literature on mobile marketing strategies. I discussed the diffusion of innovation theory, which I selected for the current study. According to Thomas (2013), the diffusion of innovation theory allows researchers to explore *how* and *why* technologies spread through social systems. Thus, the diffusion of innovation theory is appropriate for investigating multiple elements of mobile technology adoption and use. I provided several definitions to ensure a proper understanding of the study. The significance of the study is provided for both business application and social benefit. The study outlines the benefit for practical business use given the increase in purchases from the mobile device, and the potential to use profits from effective mobile device marketing strategies for contributions to the community and increased employment within those communities.

Section 2 includes details of the current research, including the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and methodological decisions, such as the population and sampling strategy. The section also includes a discussion of ethical considerations and strategies for data collection, organization, and analysis. In Section 3, I present study findings and their application to professional practice. In addition, Section 3 includes implications for social change and recommendations for future research.

## Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I detail the anatomy of this study on the use of mobile device marketing strategies to increase consumer reach. The section begins with the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and a description of study participants. I also discuss the research method, ethical considerations, data collection, instrumentation, data organization, data analysis, reliability, and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach mobile users effectively. The target population included approximately 250 marketing leaders within a global Fortune 1000 retail organization located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The organization's marketing leaders use mobile device marketing strategies to reach mobile users effectively.

Findings from this study provide a better understanding of successful marketing strategies used to reach mobile retail consumers. Stakeholders could use results from this study to contribute to social change by increasing profits driven by mobile marketing strategies, which an organization can use to support communities (Gautier & Pache, 2015; Lee & Jung, 2016; Nwaneri, 2015), benefiting both employees and nonemployees.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative studies, it is appropriate for the researcher to serve as the primary data collector (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thus, my role as the primary and only researcher of this study was to collect and analyze study data via semistructured

interviews and a content analysis of the study site marketing plans. As a professional in the marketing field, I help marketing executives develop mobile applications to increase customer reach and company revenues. As part of this study, I selected a retail organization that leveraged mobile marketing strategies to increase consumer reach on mobile devices. Although I did not have a professional relationship with the study site organization or its leaders, I did have access to the organization through my professional contacts. Following the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and with support from the selected retailer's project sponsor, I gained study site permission by providing the project sponsor with a detailed description of the data collection process and documented approval from Walden University's IRB. Consent from the organization and permission to conduct the semistructured interviews occurred with written signatures from the retailer project sponsor to validate the requirements of participation.

After obtaining cooperation from the organization, I solicited recommendations for the interview participants with the support from the sponsor. The potential participants selected for the study were experts in their field. I treated them as experts during semistructured interviews and made no assumptions based on my personal experiences. I ensured no conflicts of interest by only including participants with whom I had no past personal or professional relationships. In addition, I maintained participant confidentiality and ensured all participants that participation was voluntary and free of coercion. Eight marketing leaders participated in individual, semistructured interviews.

Because the interviews were short and did not quite indicate saturation, I interviewed an additional three participants. Thus, the total number of participants was eight.

According to Chapman-Novakofski (2011), open-ended questions during an interview help researchers elicit deep understandings of participants' perspectives and experiences. I developed the interview protocol (Appendix A) to align with the research question under exploration. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), interview protocols can help improve the quality of the data. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested that interview protocols can ensure alignment with the research question and increase consistency in the data gathering process (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I evaluated data from the semistructured interviews and the mobile device marketing strategies delineated in the company leader's marketing plan.

Ethical conduct is imperative to any research (Brakewood & Poldrack, 2013). A researcher can ensure ethical practices by adhering to the standards of ethics described in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979) including respect for participants, justice, and beneficence. I followed the requirements as outlined in the Belmont Report to ensure ethical practices in the current research. The requirements outlined in the NCPHSBBR included respect for the individual, ethical treatment of participants, ensuring informed consent, and assurance that I would not benefit personally from the research.

In addition to following ethical practices, the mitigation of researcher bias was critical to the current research, given the experience I have with this topic. I took

measures to prevent personal bias from influencing data collection. I set aside my personal biases and opinions by performing bracketing and epoché. Bracketing and epoché involve the awareness and suspension of personal beliefs during all phases of data analysis and collection (Moustakas, 1994). Awareness of my personal beliefs and an understanding to not bring these biases with me to the process helped to ensure ethical practices. Martirano (2016) studied the use of bracketing in marketing research and found it was an effective strategy for removing researcher bias from the data collection and analysis processes. Hauptmann et al. (2016), who interviewed elderly patients to understand the mobile device capability of certain pitches of sound to evaluate the use of the mobile device in hearing impaired users, also used bracketing to eliminate bias. Stake (2010) suggested that bracketing could help eliminate bias. As with other mobile devices and marketing strategy studies that used bracketing to eliminate bias, this study leveraged bracketing to eliminate bias.

Before data collection, I had the interview questions reviewed by a panel of three experts. The panel included two retail marketing leaders not employed by the study site organization. The third panelist was a marketing leader at a consulting organization that provides retailers with assessments of mobile device marketing strategies. All three of these panelists were considered experts in this domain, as they had successfully deployed effective mobile marketing strategies within their organization. A review of the interview questions by this panel of marketing experts ensured the questions were appropriate to address the research question.

In addition to interview question validation by the expert panel and bracketing, I mitigated bias by following an interview protocol, practicing member checking, ensuring data saturation, and eliminating personal judgment. Researchers can further reduce the potential for bias by following a strict interview process (Cronin, 2014). Performing semistructured interviews can mitigate bias (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Member checking allows researchers to ensure interview data properly reflect participants' sentiments (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). I used member checking to validate research findings via follow-up phone conversations with participants to ensure I captured their responses accurately. Data saturation helps ensure that researchers capture all key themes related to a topic (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Further, I had two data sources in the data collection process. Data collection processes that include multiple sets of data are less likely to include bias (Sangster-Gormley, 2013) as compared to a single data source.

In the current study, I gathered participants' responses to interview questions and developed understandings of mobile marketing strategies used by marketing leaders to reach mobile users. As described in this section, I employed multiple practices to mitigate potential biases related to my personal and professional experiences. These practices included bracketing, following a protocol during the semistructured interviews, member checking, and ensuring data saturation.

### **Participants**

I purposefully selected study participants from a single retail organization in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. I selected this particular retail organization due to its demonstration of effective use of mobile marketing strategies. I had access to

this organization this retail organization through my professional career. Also, the selected organization successfully implemented mobile marketing strategies to increase the reach of consumers on mobile devices.

Eligible participants included marketing leaders who worked for the selected retail organization and were responsible for implementation of successful mobile marketing strategies. Mobile marketing is an important part of a retail organization's competitive strategies (Kang et al., 2015; Rumbidzai et al., 2014; Strom, Vendel, & Bredican, 2014). The selection of participants from an organization with characteristics that aligned with the study was appropriate because participants serve as representatives of the larger group (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Sangster-Gormley, 2013; Yin, 2013). Brindley and Oxborrow (2014) used a similar approach with a single case study by selecting participants from an organization's marketing department to determine effective, sustainable supply chain to green marketing.

To gain access to the retail organization, permission to conduct the study, and assistance selecting participants, I met with the executive sponsor of the selected organization's marketing department, whom I found by working with the organization to identify the individual who oversaw the organization's mobile device marketing strategies. The executive sponsor for the project had the authority to give organizational permission for the study. I reviewed the retailer's corporate procedures and policies regarding outside research to make sure I understood the approval process and protocols necessary to conduct this research. Next, I secured study permissions from the executive sponsor. I then asked the executive sponsor to provide a list of 20 marketing leaders in



the company who implemented mobile device marketing strategies that increased profits. After I obtained the email addresses of these prospective participants, I sent them each a study invitation, via email, that described the purpose of the research and participation requirements, and included a consent form.

I followed recommendations from other researchers to develop a rapport with study participants. For example, Holmberg and Madsen (2014) recommended that researchers provide private interview environments that permit casual conversation. A private setting helps interviewers communicate interest and facilitates deep, detailed participant responses (Wolgemuth et al., 2015). Accordingly, during the face-to-face semistructured interviews, I developed rapport and encouraged forthcoming responses by detailing the study purpose, establishing eye contact, asking follow-up questions, and providing a private environment that allows for relaxed conversation. These strategies helped me communicate my level of interest to participants while creating an environment that facilitated open and honest responses.

## **Research Method and Design**

### **Research Method**

The current study involved the use of a qualitative research method, which researchers can employ to explore participants' experiences with a study problem or phenomenon (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Qualitative methods allow researchers to have open discussions with participants regarding phenomena under investigation (Patton, 2015). In qualitative designs, researchers draw conclusions from data, such as interview transcripts, to unearth common trends and themes among participants'

responses (Yin, 2014). A qualitative method allowed me to gather rich, meaningful data on the mobile device marketing strategies employed by marketing leaders to increase company profits. Part of the process of determining that a qualitative approach was appropriate for this project study included the evaluation of quantitative and mixed methods approaches.

Quantitative studies are structured, provide less depth than qualitative methods (Yin, 2014), and involve statistical tests (Hoe, 2013). Quantitative researchers employ deductive processes (Venkatesh et al., 2013) that involve the formulation and testing of hypotheses through structured, empirical investigations (Yin, 2014). Statistical analysis was not necessary to answer the current study's research question. Rather, qualitative methods allowed me to capture the necessary data to find common themes related to successful mobile device marketing strategies.

Before selecting a purely qualitative method, I also considered a mixed methods approach, in which researchers utilize both quantitative and qualitative data (Heyvaert, Hannes, Maes, & Onghena, 2013). Mixed method research provides researchers with deeper understandings overall because mixed method analyzes data from both qualitative and quantitative research methods, which helps compensate for the shortcomings of each method (Venkatesh et al., 2013). In a mixed methods study, it is necessary first to examine qualitative data, followed by a quantitative analysis (Caruth, 2013; Harrison, 2013). My aim of the current study was to understand mobile device marketing strategies used to reach mobile users and increase profits. To accomplish this, it was not necessary to utilize statistical data, nor was it appropriate to limit the data gathering process to a

quantitative structure. It was not suitable to use quantitative data, as I sought rich data that reflected participants' experiences with mobile device marketing strategies. Because a quantitative method was not suitable for this study, I did not select a quantitative or mixed method design. Rather, I selected a qualitative approach to reveal a set of standard mobile device marketing strategies used by marketing leaders to increase profits.

### **Research Design**

The current study followed a single case study design. Before determining a case study was the most appropriate design, I also considered other qualitative designs, including ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative analysis. I discuss each of these designs and provide a rationale for my design selection, as follows.

In ethnography, researchers provide a cultural understanding of entire cultures (Yin, 2014). As Almagor and Skinner (2013) explained, ethnography involves formal descriptions of people in their native habitats. In addition, ethnography requires extensive, long-term work in the field (Rashid, Caine, & Goetz, 2015). In the current study, I did not seek to explore cultures or conduct research in the field; therefore, ethnography was not appropriate.

Phenomenology involves the exploration of individuals' perceptions and interpretations of experiences (Roberts, 2013). The focus of phenomenology is individuals' lived experiences of phenomena, which is often explored via qualitative interviews (Giorgi, 2015). Using data from these lived experiences, researchers may develop themes and subthemes related to the topic of investigation (Tracy, 2013). While an exploration of individuals' experiences was part of the current study, I also employed

content analysis, which exceeds the methodological scope of phenomenology. Thus, I did not select a phenomenological design for the current study.

I also considered narrative analysis, which involves longitudinal data on participants' life stories (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The narrative analysis allows researchers to explore research questions by gathering narrative information via participant interviews (Vyver & Marais, 2015). This type of research uses individuals' personal stories to explore aspects of personal and social lives (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). While narrative analysis is useful for investigating a variety of social and psychological topics, it was not aligned with the business problem of the current research. Thus, I did not select narrative analysis for this investigation.

Finally, I considered a case study design, which can be used to investigate complex business situations over time (Taylor & Thomas-Gregory, 2015). The main features of the case study are defined cases aligned with a study's intent, and multiple data sources and analysis procedures (Patton, 2015). Case studies consist of key themes, issues, and conclusions (Yin, 2014). The case study allows researchers to employ multiple data collection strategies, such as interviews and document reviews (Yin, 2014). In the current study, case study design allowed me to capture key themes related to successful mobile marketing strategies employed at the study site organization. Also, this design allowed me to gather data from multiple sources. The current case study involved one retailer located in the Pacific Northwest. By gathering data from multiple sources within the same organization, I obtained deep and rich data on the mobile device

marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach customers and increase profits.

Several previous researchers employed case study designs to investigate mobile marketing strategies. For example, Dash et al. (2014) conducted a case study to explore factors that facilitated customer adoption of mobile banking services. Haenlein (2013) used a case study design to explore the effects of social engagement on customer retention strategies. Similarly, Neuhofer, Buhalis, and Ladkin (2015) used a case study design to explore smart technology gaps in the tourist industry. In each of these studies, researchers used a qualitative case study method to explore a business problem using different data types to discover key themes (Dash et al., 2014; Neuhofer et al., 2015). Similarly, I employed a case study design to explore mobile device marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach customers and increase profits.

An essential element of qualitative research is data saturation, which is indicated when categories and themes begin to repeat, and no new information emerges (Patton, 2015). The repetition of themes indicates the researcher has captured all ideas related to the phenomenon under investigation (Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2013). Saturation is not an exact science, and it is difficult to predict how long it will take to reach; as such, it is necessary to continue semistructured interviews until saturation occurs (Patton, 2015). I used member checking to ensure I had captured the key themes of the interviews and that there were no additional themes that surfaced. Member checking allows researchers to validate their understandings of interviews and ensure key themes are captured correctly (Cope, 2014; Morse, 2015). Because new themes continued emerging after the five

interviews, saturation was not indicated. Thus, I interviewed an additional three marketing managers at the same organization. After analyzing these three additional interviews, I reached saturation. In the current study, data saturation was necessary to ensure I captured all key themes and categories related to the study site organization's mobile device marketing strategies. The use of two data sources allowed me to explore the study phenomenon from multiple angles.

### **Population and Sampling**

I selected a purposeful sampling method for this study. Purposeful sampling allows for the criterion-based selection of a subset of participants who meet specific inclusion criteria (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2015). Through purposeful sampling, researchers can select participants who are experts in their fields (Cope, 2014). In the current study, participants included marketing leaders employed by the study site retail organization, who successfully deployed mobile device marketing strategies to reach users and increase profits during the previous year.

Eight individuals participated in individual semistructured interviews. There are no strict guidelines regarding the number of participants required to reach saturation in qualitative research (Robinson, 2014). O'Reilly and Parker (2013) suggested that the number of participants selected for qualitative interviews is less important than the selection of participants with experience aligned with the topic of study. When designing qualitative studies, rigorous methodology is more important than sample size decisions because the collection of rich, meaningful data is the desired outcome (Cleary, Horsfall,

& Hayter, 2014). Focusing on meaningful data through a rigorous methodology is more important than sample size.

Qualitative research samples are often smaller when participants have direct experience with study phenomena (Caruth, 2013). A small set of experts in the field of study is recommended to explore a study topic in depth (Morse, 1994; Tracy, 2013). Huh, Verma, Rayala, and Bobba (2017) achieved saturation with interviews during their study on security concerns while using Apple pay. The authors of the study used a small sample for their interviews to understand the user perception of a mobile application (Huh et al., 2017). The approach taken by Huh et al. (2017) is similar to the approach in the current study, as the number of interview participants was small and the researchers sought to explore experiences related to mobile device use. Another study with a small interview sample involved individual elderly patients undergoing rehabilitation that involved mobile technologies to track their progress (Mertens et al., 2017). The researchers sought to determine if the technologies helped to deliver positive outcomes (Mertens et al., 2017). Data from the semistructured interviews provided Mertens et al. (2017) with common themes needed to reach saturation and determine the impact of mobile applications on rehabilitation outcomes.

Based on the recommendations from previous researchers (Huh et al., 2017; Mertens et al., 2017; Morse, 1994; Tracy, 2013), I selected a sample size of five participants for the current study. I validated the accuracy of study themes via member checking. Because new themes continued emerging after the five interviews, saturation was not indicated. Thus, I interviewed an additional three marketing managers at the

same organization. After analyzing these three additional interviews, I reached saturation. When participants begin to formulate the same replies, and no new information emerges, saturation has occurred (Lohle & Terrell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and researchers may conclude data collection.

The eight marketing leaders selected for this study provided me with the opportunity to explore the research question in depth, and the rigor established through the interview questions helped ensure data saturation. Part of the process of developing interview questions was to ensure their alignment with the study topic. Limiting the scope of the interview questions helps researchers ensure saturation by capturing only the most relevant experiences and perceptions (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). I designed an interview protocol to focus on the research topic and foster saturation. The consistent use of interview protocols fostered saturation. To be included in this study, individuals had to be marketing leaders who had delivered successful mobile marketing strategies at the study site organization. When interviewing qualitative research participants, the selection of experts in the field allows researchers to explore topics in detail (Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2013; Yin, 2013). Choosing participants with the right expertise allowed for the production of richer, more meaningful data.

In addition to selecting the participants and developing interview questions, researchers must consider the settings in which semistructured interviews occur. I held each interview in a private meeting room. The eight individual interviews took place in person, at separate times, in the same meeting room. The meeting room was within walking distance of the retailer's offices. I selected the meeting room location because it



was outside of participants' place of employment and near the location of the study site organization. As recommended by Doody and Noonan (2013), I selected a location that was convenient, private, and quiet. Providing an environment that allows for casual conversation and creates a sense of privacy may encourage participants to provide more information (Holmberg & Madsen, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). The selection of the interview and focus room was purposeful to encourage privacy and rich discussion.

### **Ethical Research**

An essential element of research is the assurance of ethical practices during data collection and analysis (Taylor & Thomas-Gregory, 2015). To protect the rights of the participants, I followed procedures outlined in the Belmont Report (NCPHSBBR, 1979). I also completed training with the National Institute of Health and obtained the National Institute of Health Office Research Certificate of completion. Regulations exist to protect participant rights (Yin, 2014), such as obtaining informed consent, providing participants with the right to withdraw, and clearly describing any incentives provided to participants (Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Although participants reserved the right to withdraw at any point, all eight individuals maintained their participation. The process of informed consent added assurance of ethical practice.

One of the ways to ensure ethical treatment of participants is to secure informed consent that outlines study procedures and participant rights (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Accordingly, I ensured ethical research by obtaining informed consent from all study participants. The consent form included a description of the purpose of the study and participation requirements. The form also detailed participants' right to withdraw at any

time, which is a primary concern in ethical research (Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I did not provide study participants with any incentives to participate.

My process for ensuring ethical practices began with the study invitation, which I emailed to prospective participants. Once a participant agreed to the study, I randomly assigned him or her to an individual interview. Next, I sent the individual a consent form and a copy of the interview protocol (Appendix A). I asked the participant to return the signed consent form to me, via email or fax. Securing a participant's consent to take part in the interview, including reviewing the risks and voluntary nature of the participation is part of ensuring quality research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I ensured receipt of participant consent form by asking participants to email me back to indicate they have received the information. At that time, I also scheduled semistructured interviews at the designated location and addressed participants' questions and concerns.

The protection of participant confidentiality is critical to ethical research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). To ensure confidentiality, I used pseudonyms, selected by each participant, in lieu of participants' names in all study materials. Also, I stored all study materials on my personal, password-protected computer, to which only I have access. Study materials included the interview recordings and transcripts, the study site organization's mobile marketing plans, and all analysis-related documentation. Walden University requires the storage of all data for 5 years. As recommended by Opalka-Bentler (2016), I will store all study data on a cloud server for 5 years following the research. Following the 5 year period, I will hire a professional data destruction company to destroy all study documentation, including digital and hard copies of data. I

ensured participant confidentiality by obtaining a signed confidentiality agreement from the professional transcriptionist I hired to transcribe interview data. Finally, prior to gathering data I secured the Walden IRB approval number. Walden University's approval number for this study is 06-02-17-0527189, and it expires on June 1, 2018.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

I acted as the sole collector of data for this study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), qualitative researchers are the primary data collection instruments in qualitative investigations. As the primary data collection instrument, I gathered data from semistructured face-to-face interviews and a content analysis of the retailer's marketing plans. As recommended by Irvine, Drew, and Sainsbury (2013), I opted to conduct semistructured interviews in-person instead of over the telephone to reduce distractions and increase focus among participants. In addition, face-to-face semistructured interviews allow researchers to be closer to the data than do telephone semistructured interviews (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Kim and Lee (2015) took a similar approach to the current study, gathering data from face-to-face semistructured interviews for their research on marketing insights from mobile advertising.

Qualitative researchers frequently use multiple data sources (Stake, 2010). Accordingly, my data collection process included multiple forms of data to increase validity and reliability. Data sources included individual semistructured interviews data collection process and content analysis of the mobile marketing plans used to increase profits. A common qualitative data source is the individual interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Jamshed, 2014; Lach, 2014). Semistructured interviews allow researchers to

explore research questions through rich feedback from interviewees (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Exploring the data from eight individual interviews comprised of similarly experienced retail marketing leaders allowed for rich comparison of the data. A content analysis of organizational marketing plans enriched the analysis. Securing data from multiple sources can increase the depth of the data collection process and foster methodological triangulation (Morse, 2015). In the current study, the two data sources allowed me to observe differences between marketing plans and the mobile marketing strategies described by interview participants.

The interview protocol used throughout this process included outlining the reasons for the study, organizational consent procedures, describing the study's purpose, and securing the consent of each participant. The interview protocol, which was necessary to ensure data collection adhered to the identified process and procedures, also included a description of participant rights. Consistent interview protocols aid in the reliability of the study (Lam & Shankar, 2014).

I followed the same data collection process for each interview, which began with ensuring I had a signed copy of the consent form from each participant and read the form aloud to participants. Next, I explained that semistructured interviews would be audio recorded, and I asked participants if they have any questions before I began data collection. After answering all questions, I turned on the audio recording device and began data collection.

In addition to ensuring proper protocol use as described above, the data collection process includes assurances for validity and reliability. While gathering interview data, I

took field notes to enhance data validity and capture any additional information I wanted to remember, such as participant body language and other non-verbal cues. Taking field notes during the interview process is also referred to as journaling (Cope, 2014). According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), field notes can help researchers remember important details for later. At the conclusion of the semistructured interviews, I thanked each participant for their contributions and explained that I would follow up with a phone call to verify the accuracy of the analysis and interpretation. Within 1 week, I converted all field notes to digital files.

To help ensure the validity and reliability of study data, the process of data collection included two data sources, member checking, and journaling. The primary data sources for this research included individual semistructured interviews and organizational marketing plans. A review of organization marketing plans allowed me to note any discrepancies with interview data. Triangulating primary and secondary data sources can improve the reliability and validity of data (Cronin, 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Cho and Lee (2014) discussed using interviews and visual material as a way to accomplish triangulation. In addition to methodological triangulation, I employed member checking to ensure validity and reliability.

Member checking is the process of validating the accuracy of the interview analysis with interview participants (Koelsch, 2013). A review of the data output to ensure the researcher captured an accurate representation of participants' responses is member checking (Cope, 2014; Morse, 2015). Following the interviews, I had audio files professionally transcribed and conducted the initial analysis and interpretation. Upon

completion of the analysis and interpretation of the interviews, I contacted participants via email to set up a phone call to review the analysis and interpretation of the interview. Member checking revealed no discrepancies.

### **Data Collection Technique**

I collected data via face-to-face semistructured interviews and a content analysis of internal marketing plans. The use of semistructured interviews in this study allowed for open-ended questions and discussion. In-person, semistructured interviews are productive discussions that allow researchers to explore research topics in detail (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). According to Fink (2000), a benefit of in-person, open-ended interview questions is that they allow researchers to capture the experiences of participants. Another significant advantage of in-person interviews is that they allow researchers to gain additional context through conversations when observation alone is insufficient (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013). In addition, semistructured interviews provide participants with opportunities to modify or adjust questions and their responses to them (Uribe-jongbloed, 2014) while placing the researcher close to the data (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013).

In the current study, I used face-to-face, semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews allow researchers to ask follow-up questions to ensure all key ideas are captured (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker, & Korcha, 2015; Vallano, 2015). Facilitating face-to-face interviews for this study was cost efficient and convenient, given the proximity of the study site organization to my home. I prepared the questions ahead

of time, facilitated the discussions, and asked necessary follow-up questions to reach saturation.

Although there are many benefits to in-person, semistructured interviews, there are also inherent challenges with this form of data collection. For example, it can be difficult for participants to make time for semistructured interviews, and it may be challenging for researchers to accommodate participants' schedules (Rahman, 2015). The marketing leaders selected for participation had to find time in their schedules to accommodate the interviews. Differences in power between the interviewer and interviewee can also create disadvantages regarding linguistic formality and convention (Irvine et al., 2013); however, this was not an issue in the current study due to participants' high levels of education and professional experience. According to Irvine et al. (2013), it is also possible that visual cues provided to researchers during face-to-face interviews can negatively impact interactions. However, research conducted by Shapka, Domene, Khan, and Yang (2016) indicated that visual cues had little effect on interview data quality.

I audio recorded each interview session. After completing data collection and obtaining a confidentiality agreement from the professional I hired to transcribe all data, I created summaries of each participant's responses to each interview question. Next, I performed member checking through a telephone call to review the initial analysis and interpretation of the interviews. Member checking helps researchers ensure they captured the essence of what participants intended to communicate in their responses (Houghton et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Morse, 2015).

In addition to collecting data through face-to-face interviews, I conducted a document review of the marketing plans to validate marketing strategies reported during the semistructured interviews. I secured the written marketing plans from the marketing executive who sponsored the study. The main benefit of document analysis is that data consists of existing written text that requires no obtrusive collection methods. Thus, document analysis is free of unwanted interactions that can occur during semistructured interviews (Cho & Lee, 2014). For research conducted within organizational settings, document analysis can provide insiders' perspectives (Owen, 2014) while allowing researchers to explore data across multiple groups and geographic locations. Finally, organizational documents provide context as they represent the strategy of the organization, making them useful resources grounded in the real world (Gross, Blue-banning, Turnbull, & Francis, 2015). Collecting the organizational written marketing plans was an efficient way to gather information to assist in analyzing the interview results.

Despite the many benefits of document analysis, this type of data also has potential disadvantages. For example, document analysis can be time-consuming and inappropriate for exploratory research (Cho & Lee, 2014). In addition, the recorder of analyzed documents may selectively include or exclude information; thus, data recorded in context cannot exist in a pure form (Owen, 2014). A focus on the disadvantages will mitigate potential risks.



### **Data Organization Technique**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach mobile users effectively. Collected data included hard and digital forms. I used the same audio recording device to record the semistructured interviews digitally but saved recordings as separate files. I also took field notes during the semistructured interviews, which can help researchers remember important details for later (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Upon completion of the semistructured interviews, I transferred field notes from my journal into a word processing document.

I saved the notes from my journal in a file on my computer, labeled “field notes.” All the data collected throughout the study provided an audit trail. An audit trail allows for verification of data and the opportunity for reflection (Cope, 2014). Together, with the other data, I developed an electronic database of all study data on my personal computer, as is common for doctoral research (Kindling & Science, 2013; Schöpfel, Malleret, Južnič, & Češ, 2016). Based on discussions about qualitative data management presented by previous researchers (Arora, Ba, & Connors, 2016; Kindling & Science, 2013; Schöpfel et al., 2016), I developed steps to organize and create the electronic database of study data. Regarding the audio recordings, I uploaded them onto my computer from the digital recording device and sent them to the professional I enlisted to transcribe the recordings. Once the transcriptions were completed and sent to me, I saved them each as a separate file on my computer in a single folder labeled “interview transcripts.” I saved each interview transcript by the pseudonym of the participant, for example,

“[Pseudonym] interview.” Finally, I obtained digital copies of the study site organization’s marketing plans. I saved these files in a separate folder on my computer, which I named “marketing plans.” As recommended by Opalka-Bentler (2016) and as required by Walden University, I will store all study data on a cloud server for 5 years following the research. Following the 5 year period, I will hire a professional data destruction company to destroy all study documentation, including digital and hard copies of data.

Using a framework to organize the data is helpful in interpretation (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). As I began to analyze study data, I organized data collected from the semistructured interviews and content analysis into themes that aligned with the study’s purpose. I organized data as categories emerge. The categorical organization makes data easy to reference (Yin, 2014) and streamline the analysis process (Gale et al., 2013). Storing data categorically allows researchers to identify common themes across the data (Elo et al., 2014; Gläser & Laudel, 2013). Storing the data in a database will help keep the information organized and easy to reference (Yin, 2014). A data organization framework fostered easier data analysis.

In addition to the manual thematic coding and categorization described above, I used NVivo to help organize the data. Computer software can help researchers identify themes and categories in large quantities of data (Patton, 2015). Although the software does not perform analysis, it was useful for organizing data and helping me ensure I did not miss any pertinent themes during the manual coding process.

## **Data Analysis**

To analyze the data for this qualitative study, I employed thematic analysis. Corbin and Strauss (1998) published a qualitative analysis framework to help researchers unearth key themes in qualitative data. Organizing data into key themes is helpful for data interpretation (Gale et al., 2013). According to Corbin and Strauss, the process of thematic content analysis begins with reading the data to develop an in-depth understanding of it. The next step is to create categories of the data as key themes start to emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). After developing a preliminary list of categories, the researcher should reconcile the data to eliminate unnecessary categories. Next, the researcher must look for similarities between categories to organize them into themes and subthemes (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). The thematic analysis enabled me to cluster common themes and ideas for interpretation.

I leveraged two data sources, and the methodological triangulation of the data helps me to validate the study (Patton, 2015). Having the data in one location allowed me to see the categories across all two data sources. In addition to the manual thematic coding and categorization described above, I used NVivo to help organize the data. NVivo is useful for organizing data for analysis because it allows researchers to assign searchable markers, flag text, and create data clusters (Edward-Jones, 2014; Sleney et al., 2014). NVivo is useful in uncovering common themes among the data (Byrne, 2013) which enhanced my manual analysis. It is important to note that NVivo does not perform any data analysis, but can help researchers identify categories and themes, and effectively organize clusters of information. The categorizing strings of text into thematic clusters

can help determine if there are gaps in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Following these best practices through an established product like NVivo helped me focus on the study and key analysis.

To explore the mobile device marketing strategies used by the study site organization to reach mobile users to increase profit, I focused on the key themes that surfaced from the data collected. I leveraged Corbin and Strauss's (1998) process of theme abstraction, which allows researchers to sort data into key themes. I continued to iterate on the themes as I assessed the data across the semistructured interviews and internal marketing plan documentation. Assessing multiple data sources provides depth into a research topic (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). Evaluating the key themes and filling in gaps is part of the process of developing a code system to determine key themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015). Leveraging previous experience on how to determine key themes will reduce or remove any unforeseen complications with code system.

Part of the process of iterating on the main themes included evaluating the data against the conceptual framework, as well as findings from similar studies. The conceptual framework for this study was the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 1995), which drove the thematic analysis to deliver a greater understanding of the marketing strategies used to reach mobile users and increase profits. Based on this conceptual framework, I anticipated themes related to the dimensions of the diffusion of innovation theory to emerge, including innovation, communication channels, time, and social systems (Rogers, 1995). A similar approach was taken in two studies that

leveraged the diffusion of innovation theory to guide the researchers' iterative thematic approach to content analysis (Leggott et al., 2015; Zhang, Yu, Yan, & Ton, 2015).

Understanding how prior studies utilized the diffusion of innovation theory improved understandings of the marketing used by participants in this study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity checks allow for a consistent and accurate collection of data (Morse, 2015). Reliability describes the processes employed to ensure data are consistent. Dependable processes for member checking, bracketing, and methodological triangulation can help ensure reliability (Morse, 2015). Validity is the degree to which findings are true. The validation of data collected from semistructured interviews can occur through member checking, bracketing, and methodological triangulation (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). Validation of data from the current study also ensured transferability. In this study, I ensured reliability and validity by consistently following data collection and analysis processes, interview protocols, and data collection and validation techniques.

#### **Reliability**

In the current study, I achieved data reliability through the consistent use of interview protocols, recording semistructured interviews, journaling throughout the study, transcribing the interviews, and ensuring consistency in the process to provide reliable data. Adhering to consistent interview protocols can improve the reliability of the study (Lam & Shankar, 2014). Recording the semistructured interviews and journaling throughout the current study ensured a consistent process that allows for replication

(Grossoehme, 2014; Yin, 2014). In addition, documenting the data collection process via journaling can ensure reliability (Gross et al., 2015; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013).

Implementing these reliability practices also ensured interview details did not become diluted over time.

In the current study, I used bracketing and methodological triangulation to ensure the reliability of the data. Bracketing can help researchers focus on the research topic and provide consistency during data collection and analysis (Chan et al., 2013). I collected data from two different data sources to ensure methodological triangulation, including semistructured interviews and a review of the retailer's marketing plans. Methodological triangulation allows researchers to ensure the reliability of the data across multiple datasets (Patton, 2015). Outlining the two data sources provided consistency in the study and allowed for reliability.

Methodological triangulation increased the dependability of the data. Part of the process included the transcription review and member checking. I reviewed interview transcriptions make sure they accurately reflected audio recordings. Transcript review can aid in the dependability of the data (Houghton et al., 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The member checking process allows researchers to ensure responses captured represent participants' intents (Houghton et al., 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Morse, 2015). Using both transcription review and member checking aided in the dependability of the data.

## **Validity**

Ensuring credibility, transferability, and confirmability can add to the validity of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Methodological triangulation of data sources adds to the credibility of the data by allowing the researcher to review multiple sets of data (Houghton et al., 2013). Ensuring credibility is critical to allow other researchers to leverage the study findings and transfer the data of their research. Every piece of data collected throughout the study, including field notes, data summaries, member checking, and analysis procedures will provide an audit trail and allow for reflection of the data and study findings. An audit trail allows for proper decision making and a verification process for key themes (Taylor & Thomas-Gregory, 2015). Audit trails are a useful component to ensure validation (Cope, 2014). Member checking also allows the researcher to validate data interpretation (Grossoehme, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Understanding these learnings is the first step to ensuring a high level of validity in this study.

Adhering to strict protocols and processes throughout the study can allow for transferability (Houghton et al., 2013). Transferability describes the extent to which findings from my research can be applied to other settings or groups (Elo et al., 2014). While it is up to reader's judgment to determine whether or not results are transferable, I improved transferability via a clear, detailed data collection, analysis, and reporting process. Accordingly, I adhered to the protocols and processes for data collection, analysis, and reporting described in this project. As Elo et al. (2014) explained, the

trustworthiness of data increases when researchers' present data in a way that fosters alternative interpretations, thus improving the potential for transferability.

I adhered to the interview protocol, a stringent data gathering process, formal process for thematic data analysis, and member checking. Closely following study protocols and processes may allow other researchers the ability to repeat the study (Gale et al., 2013; Houghton et al., 2013). Study credibility, dependability, and confirmability can help ensure transferability (Houghton et al., 2013). In addition to ensuring transferability, I worked to confirm the data output was accurate.

Confirmability allows the researcher to validate the participant's data output with the removal of personal bias (Cope, 2014; Morse, 2015). Confirming the output of the interviews can help remove personal bias as it allows the participant to review the interpretation of their words. Having an audit trail and ability to reflect on the study findings could aid in confirmability (Houghton et al., 2013). In the current study, I ensured data were credible through the implementation of an audit trail. I used data saturation to validate findings were an accurate reflection of the participants' views on the best mobile device marketing strategies retail organizations can use to increase profit. Ensuring data saturation is an important step in qualitative research (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Houghton et al., 2013). Confirming the data has been heard before aides with data saturation. Ensuring data saturation will help address the research question, and the findings are valid (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). In the current study, I interviewed eight marketing leaders in order to reach saturation.



### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach mobile users effectively. In Section 2, I outlined the (a) the study purpose; (b) my role as the sole researcher; (c) criteria for participants; (d) rationale for my selected design of a single case study; (e) population, sampling strategy, and the ethical procedures I will follow; (f) data collection instruments and thematic analysis techniques; and (g) reliability and validity. After collecting and analyzing data, I completed Section 3. Section 3 contains: (a) presentation of the findings, (b) professional application, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendations and further studies, and (e) my personal reflection and conclusion.

### Section 3: Application for Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore mobile device marketing strategies used by retail marketing leaders to reach mobile users. I gathered data via a purposeful sample of eight marketing managers employed by a large retail organization in the Pacific Northwestern United States. Data included marketing manager semistructured interviews and the organization's marketing plan. There were 11 themes that surfaced (data gathering; behavioral targeting; getting close to the customer; tailored experience; dynamic content; geolocation; multiple screen strategies; consistent brand experiences; ease of use; what does not work; and the Four Keys: permission, relevance, location, and convenience). Results indicated that mobile marketing managers could focus their efforts on three areas to get close to their customers: learn about customers' preferences, use big data intelligently, and send tailored messages and offers at times when users are most likely to transact.

This section includes a thematic presentation of study findings. In addition, I discuss the application of findings to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and future research. Finally, the project closes with my reflections and conclusions.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

The following question guided the study: What are the mobile device marketing strategies retail marketing leaders use to reach mobile users effectively? A total of 11 themes emerged from the eight participant interviews and the review of the

organization's mobile device marketing plans, including (a) data gathering, (b) behavioral targeting, (c) getting close to customer, (d) tailored experience, (e) dynamic content, (f) geolocation, (g) multiple screen strategies, (h) consistent brand experiences, (i) ease of use, (j) what does not work, and (k) the Four Keys: permission, relevance, location, and convenience. In this section, I discuss and compare each main theme and corresponding subthemes to findings from previous investigations.

### **Data Gathering**

Data gathering was a prominent theme mentioned by all eight participants and discussed in the organization's mobile device marketing plan documents. Participant F discussed, "The trick is how do you understand what to watch for and adjust in order to deliver more revenue. How does one break down all the data we have to try to drive more revenue." In order to create effective mobile marketing campaigns, marketing managers must understand their customers by intelligently using data gathered through mobile applications and other online sources. In addition to gathering data on individual users to tailor mobile experiences, marketing managers gather data to fine-tune marketing strategies through a series of trial and error. Mobile platforms can be useful for collecting data from customers (Watanabe, Hirano, Asami, Okada, & Fujita, 2017).

Data gathering described by participants aligned with information provided in the study site organization's marketing plan, "Analytics allow you to look at each granular metric and see to which parts the user is responding. Armed with the metrics, you can tailor ongoing and future mobile efforts more effectively." Marketing managers use data gathered from mobile users to assess the effectiveness of mobile marketing campaigns.

Thus, three subthemes that emerged under the theme of data gathering were (a) users' preferences and behaviors, (b) trial and error, and (c) assessment of campaign effectiveness.

**Users' preferences and behaviors.** Six participants discussed using data to assess users' preferences and behaviors. Participant F explained, "The key is understanding through customer behavior data the more we understand this, the better job we can do making the right adjustments." Marketing managers strategically develop marketing campaigns using data gathered on customers' behaviors, preferences, and demographics aligned with the information provided in the study site organization's marketing plan, "Understanding the preferences of the customer allows you to reach them effectively." Mobile applications, or apps, provide marketing managers with particularly rich sources of data on existing and prospective customers. The richness of mobile applications as a source is reinforced in the organization's marketing plan, "Mobile offers an unprecedented amount of data, insights, and behavioral cues about consumers." For example, many apps require users to enter their preferences or share demographic information after downloading. After acquiring initial data from users, apps then track users' purchasing behaviors, which are automatically reported back to marketing managers and used to create detailed snapshots of individual users. From these snapshots, marketing managers can tailor and fine-tune mobile marketing strategies. Indeed, data gathering is the basis of mobile marketing. Without it, marketing managers would be unable to create tailored mobile experiences, which, as revealed by this study, are fundamental to mobile marketing success.

**Trial and error.** In order to assess the effectiveness of different mobile marketing campaigns, three participants described testing out different strategies and techniques. Accordingly, trial and error was a subtheme that emerged under the theme of data gathering, as participants described experimenting with different mobile strategies to determine which were most effective. As Participant A explained, “I think you just have to keep trying it, and learn and see what works.” The exercise of learning through trial and error was also present in the organization’s marketing plan, “sift through those insights and make adjustments to improve the performance of future campaigns. By testing your way into success, you’ll be in a position to continuously improve the ROI of your mobile marketing programs.” Similarly, Participant B described the importance of using trial and error to test users’ experiences and determine which strategies provide users with experiences that result in the most conversions, “We really have to think about ways to test the experience that our users have.”

Participant C provided a specific example of trial and error, describing it as a technique used to assess the effectiveness of mobile coupons sent to consumers inside of a store. Participant C explained that marketers might send one coupon to a certain group of users, and another to a second group, and then compare which coupons had the biggest response. Marketers can use data in real-time to make adjustments to offers, such as increasing a discount to maximize the efficiency of the coupon and obtain the greatest number of transactions. Participant C explained, “We can see if that increases the transactions in that site or not, or, if it’s not enough of a discount or enough of an offer to entice them we can change that and then learn from there.” The aim of trial and error, in

this example, was to determine which strategy would result in the greatest number of transactions while providing the smallest incentive or discount possible, thus maximizing revenues from each transaction.

**Assessment of campaign effectiveness.** All eight participants discussed using data to assess the effectiveness of mobile marketing strategies, and also described in the mobile marketing plan document. The importance of mobile serving as a strong way to track your campaign effectiveness is reinforced in the organizations marketing plan, “Mobile is digital in nature, which makes it a perfect tool to track and measure the effectiveness of your campaign.” Study participants assessed the effectiveness of mobile via a number of metrics, but the ultimate indication of effectiveness always came back to increased revenues. For example, Participant A explained that marketing managers assessed the effectiveness of mobile strategies based on the number of people who used an application as well as the acquisition of new customers through different mobile techniques. Participant B explained that the effectiveness of a given campaign was assessed based on the number of customers driven to a sale or particular mobile experience, along with the resulting revenues. Participant B elaborated, “We really assess our effectiveness of that mobile marketing strategy based on new users, customer acquisition, and then our loyal customers,” adding that marketers must ask themselves how they can simultaneously increase the number of transactions as well as the revenues per transaction.

Participant C stated that the effectiveness of a mobile marketing campaign was assessed via the number of consumers who installed and used an app and how quickly the

app was used to complete a transaction. The emphasis on time is consistent with the time variable of Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory. Participant E shared that the amount of time a user spent shopping or the items he or she saved in an online shopping cart can also provide data used to assess campaign effectiveness. Participant F explained that success was measured via the acquisition of new customers and increases in the number of transactions, "If we are getting new customers to find and buy, and we are getting existing customers to buy more, that is the ultimate success." Participants D and F described revenue and customer reach as the primary data points used to assess the effectiveness of a campaign. Participant G shared that effectiveness was assessed via the number and size of transactions as well as the acquisition of unique users. Participant H echoed Participant G's sentiments, explaining that success was ultimately indicated by the number and size of transactions.

Ultimately, regardless of what type of data was gathered by mobile marketers, participants explained that the effectiveness of mobile marketing strategies was determined by how much a strategy increased company revenues. As Participant D explained, regardless of the product, the effectiveness of a campaign was measured by increases in company revenues. Participant E echoed this sentiment, "At the end of the day, all of our metrics that we measure are all about getting back to generating revenue." Similarly, Participant H said that while the company used indicators, such as the number of applications downloaded or how many times a user interacted with an app, revenue was always the overall indicator of success. Participant H described the launch of an app that was considered particularly effective due to its high number of downloads.

Data gathering is integral to mobile marketing campaigns because it allows marketers to learn about individual customers; they can then use that information to tailor their messages to individual users. As Participant E explained, “It’s not just about having big data, it’s about what you do with that big data that allows you to understand each customer as an individual and then give them the right experience they want.” While “big data” helps marketers tailor their messages to ultimately create more effective mobile campaigns, the overwhelming amount of data from individual users across an ever-increasing number of devices and platforms can make data analysis challenging. Therefore, participants explained that marketers must not only develop ways to gather data on mobile users, but also understand how to analyze that data and use them in meaningful ways.

The emphasis that participants placed on the concept of time when gathering and analyzing data on customer behaviors aligns with the time variable of Rogers’s (2003) theory of the diffusion of innovation. According to Rogers, the time variable describes users’ rates of adoption in three different ways: (a) time to adopt once the user is aware of the innovation, (b) time to adopt based on the adoption rate in the social system, and (c) the total number of users who adopt at any given time. In this study, participants discussed time in terms of (a) and (c) above.

That is, they used time to assess the effectiveness of a campaign by examining how many existing users adopted an innovation, such as downloading an app, using a mobile coupon, or engaging with a mobile website or social media. Time was also used to assess campaign effectiveness based on how many new users adopted a particular



innovation. For example, the number of new users who downloaded an app or engaged with a mobile website could shed light on how effective a particular strategy was at attracting new users, not just retaining existing ones.

Users' time to adopt is essential to the success of a mobile marketing strategy and can influence the overall impact of a specific strategy (Taylor & Levine, 2014).

Participants in the current study understood that time was essential to mobile marketing success and employed a variety of strategies to ensure the rapid adoption and integration of innovations. Many of the themes surrounding mobile marketing strategies used by participants related to time in some way. Marketing managers gathered data to target customers' behaviors better, create tailored experiences, offer dynamic content, and get close to customers; a common goal of all of these data points and strategies was the assurance of quick, efficient adoption of mobile innovations.

Mobile users have come to expect instant information as mobile technologies have improved (Ahmad & Margam, 2016), and a mobile marketer's failure to meet that expectation can result in the loss of a customer. For example, if a responsive website takes too long to load or an app runs slowly on a user's mobile device, he or she is unlikely to adopt and may move onto a competitor's app or website. Mobile marketers have a very small window of time during which they can convert someone into a user of their innovation, which will then provide them with opportunities to sell to that user. The data gathering techniques described by study participants were essential to the use of the time variable in Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory.

In addition to the time variable, data gathering strategies described by study participants indicated an awareness of the effect that social structures have on the adoption of innovations. According to Foster and Heeks (2013), social structure is the pattern of individuals in a group and their perceptions of themselves in social settings. By gathering and analyzing data on the demographic characteristics of users, participants in the current study were better able to understand how social structures may influence the adoption and use of innovations. For example, demographic data could shed light on how gender, age, geographic location, marital status, income, and personal preferences can correlate with adoption behaviors. Mobile marketers can then use those data to fine-tune their mobile strategies and tailor them to individuals' preferences based on the influences of their social structures. Understanding how mobile marketing diffuses through society can help marketers modify their mobile device marketing strategies to prevent or minimize negative reactions to innovations (Eastman et al., 2014; Ordun, 2015; Parry & Urwin, 2011).

### **Behavioral Targeting**

Understanding users' behaviors through data collection and analysis allows mobile marketers to perform behavioral targeting (Briz-Ponce, Pereira, Carvalho, Juanes-Méndez, & García-Peñalvo, 2017), which was another main theme to emerge from participant interviews and the organization's marketing plan, "Behavioral targeting allows you to tailor your message based on captured mobile habit data." Behavioral targeting is a strategy in which mobile marketers tailor apps to users' behaviors and preferences based on data gleaned from their activities within apps (Yu et al., 2017).

Information in the study site organization's marketing plan supported the behavioral targeting strategies described by participants. In the marketing plan, behavioral marketing was discussed as follows:

More than ever, mobile gives our brands freedom to identify and connect with distinct user moments, exactly at a time that can be called the mobile moment of truth. Strategies should be tailored to the moments we want to get brands in the hands of consumers.

Six participants described the use of behavioral targeting strategies to develop and improve mobile marketing campaigns. Participant C described the use of behavioral targeting as a way that marketers could "better serve" customers. As Participant A explained, behavioral targeting allows marketers to learn about individual users and understand them based on users behaviors within apps. By learning users' mobile habits, such as how they use their devices while traveling or when they first wake up, Participant A explained that marketers could learn how to better interact with users during different points of the day, based on their changing behaviors.

Marketers also described paying attention to users' behaviors inside of applications to see if they trend toward certain products or services, and when those behaviors occur. Participant A shared, "If the device is used in the evening or early in the morning, then it's more likely to be a certain demographic, and we try to target." Knowing when certain demographics are typically more primed to make purchases can help marketers target their offers and interactions with mobile users at those times. For example, if the targeted demographic includes individuals between the ages of 25 and 30,

and behavioral targeting indicates this group is most likely to make purchases in the evenings on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, mobile marketers can create and send messages during these prime times to maximize the effectiveness of their campaigns. Fong et al. (2015) described success using behavioral data to determine the timing of mobile messages that were most likely to prompt consumers to make purchases.

Participant C elaborated on the importance of using data to target users' behaviors in ways that foster sales. The participant explained that marketers must be "real smart" about how they use data on customer purchases, such as the times and locations when purchase is made. In addition, Participant C explained the importance of using behavioral targeting not just to close an initial sale but also to capture consumers as repeat buyers by either initially selling them something that was disposable or immediately enticing them to make additional purchases. Participant H also described the importance of repeat customers, explaining that mobile marketing strategies should ensure customers have good, convenient experiences that encourage them to "buy more" and "come back."

Participant F described behavioral targeting as an essential use of big data gathered from mobile applications:

How does one break down all the data we have to try to drive more revenue? The key is understanding through customer behavior data. The more we understand this, the better job we can do making the right adjustments to figure out how to make it more convenient and then do more behavior targeting for other customers. The aim of behavioral targeting is to allow marketers to get closer to their customers and provide them with tailored experiences, which increases the likelihood of purchases.

Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory aligned with the theme of behavioral targeting. According to Rogers's theory, the diffusion of innovation describes how and why technology innovations spread throughout society. For marketing leaders to successfully use mobile marketing strategies to increase mobile device reach, individuals in the target market must adopt the devices and technologies through which those marketing messages spread. Users are more likely to adopt these technologies, such as mobile apps, if marketers utilize behavioral targeting to tailor messages to individual users.

### **Getting Close to the Customer**

Through mobile devices and online technologies, mobile marketers have opportunities to get closer to their customers than ever before. The ability for mobile to provide this ability is reinforced in the organization's marketing plan, "Mobile is the gateway to getting closer to your consumers worldwide." Using data gathered from apps to perform behavioral targeting helps mobile marketers get closer to their customers. Getting close to the customer emerged as a theme in the study site organization's marketing plan, as well as six participant interviews. The organization's marketing plan contains, "The closer you can get to your customer the better." This aligned with data from participant interviews. As Participant G stated, "With technology and mobile, it means marketers can follow customers, build an online community for them, and forge a tighter relationship with them than ever before." This level of closeness helps marketers enter users' lives in a way that was not previously possible. Many participants discussed "getting close" to customers as a strategy for gathering data as well as sending messages

and offers based on microlevel data gathered on users' behaviors within apps. For example, Participant G shared that mobile marketing strategies were not just about developing apps or mobile brand presence but also about how to get close to customers and deliver the best mobile experiences possible. Participant H reiterated the idea of getting close to customers as the ultimate goal of all mobile marketing campaigns, "The closer we get to the customer's needs, the more likely they are to transact." When describing the use of innovation in mobile marketing campaigns, Participant H reiterated that a primary goal of mobile marketing is to determine the best strategies for getting closer to customers. By engaging with a customer, Participant D explained that marketers are better able to simultaneously get meet customers' needs and increase organizational revenues.

Other participants described the utility of getting close to customers as providing marketers with greater opportunities to interact with customers. For example, Participant D described the company's marketing strategy as one led by the questions of how marketers could get closest to their customers in order to better engage with them. Participants consistently used the term *engagement* to describe getting close to customers. As Participant D explained, "If I have the customer engaged, and they make a purchase they might not otherwise have bought, then I have changed the outcome for my business." Similarly, Participant F explained that the organization's marketing strategy must be able to adapt to individual users' needs in order to enhance their mobile experiences and increase engagement. Essentially, if mobile marketers are not learning about their customers, targeting them, and tailoring the mobile experience, they are less

likely to make sales and increase profits. The idea is that mobile devices are small and personal; therefore, mobile marketing needs to be small and personal, too. Previous scholars reported that mobile apps are a particularly effective tool for fostering engagement and getting close to customers (Lu et al., 2017; Yang, 2013). Lu et al. (2017) suggested that advertisers focus on increasing user satisfaction with mobile apps to encourage continued engagement.

According to the organization's marketing plan, mobile marketers must endeavor to understand their customers in a variety of ways, including how they engage with a brand and mobile content, what customers seek when they engage with a brand, and what kind of experiences they expect. Understanding the customer also involves gathering data on the types of devices they use, what their purchasing mindsets are, how they interact with a brand (whether through browsing, buying, or making comparisons with other brands and products), and where they are when they engage with a brand. Understanding customers' locations when engaging with content relates to the concept of location, which emerged as another major theme from participant interviews. The theme of geolocation is discussed later in this section as a major theme that emerged from this study.

In addition to being supported by the previous literature, the theme of getting close to customers is reflective of Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory. As participants in the current study explained, getting close to customers allows marketers to understand their customers' behaviors, preferences, and needs. By using feedback from mobile app usage or geolocation technologies, mobile marketers can enter into the user's

world to better understand elements that may influence his or her usage and acceptance of mobile technology. The two principles of Rogers's model that are most salient to this theme of closeness are innovation and communication channels. By getting close to customers, mobile marketers can understand what prompts a user to accept and engage with an innovation. For example, a specific update to a mobile application or website may result in a higher level of engagement and usage among users of a certain demographic. Marketers can study rates of adoption that occur after an innovation is introduced or updated as well as how usage rates may influence transaction rates. In addition, mobile marketers can draw upon microlevel data to examine how certain characteristics, such as gender or age, may influence users' preferences (Hyunjoo & Ha, 2016) and mobile engagement (Negi & Pandey, 2013).

In addition, mobile marketers must consider which communication channels are most effective for getting close to their customers (Kneidinger-Müller, 2017). Communication channels, which Rogers (2003) defined as tools for sharing information about innovations among individuals and developing common understandings, are essential to getting close to customers. If mobile marketers do not select effective communication channels, they may fail to attract their targeted demographic. In mobile marketing, innovations such as apps, mobile websites, and social media platforms are often used as communication channels (Andrews et al., 2016).

### **Tailored Experience**

Another major theme that emerged from all eight participant interviews and the marketing documents was that of tailoring experiences to mobile device users. This



theme followed from the previous themes of data gathering and behavioral targeting, as the goal of both of these strategies is to help marketers create individualized user experiences. By tailoring experiences, mobile marketers can get closer to their customers and improve the likelihood that users will complete retail transactions.

Tailored online experiences were described as some of the most powerful and effective strategies for increasing company revenues. The marketing documents authors describe tailored experiences as, “Get inside the mind of our user. The first step for any mobile app is to understand how our user will engage with the app.” Data from participant interviews aligned with this aspect of the study site organization’s marketing plan. Participant G explained, “The unique experience and what is delivered allows the user to complete a transaction.” That is, by creating customized experiences, marketers are more likely to prompt customer purchases. Later, Participant G added, “I would say the most effective elements of our mobile device marketing strategies are the aspects that differentiate the experience by the user type.” When asked about the strategy that resulted in the most revenues, Participant G shared that customized offers and apps were most effective. While the company had begun to use games and videos within their apps to entice customers, Participant G explained that customized offers provided the highest rates of conversion. Similarly, Participant H explained that individualized experiences most consistently drive traffic and increase the size and number of transactions.

It is worthwhile to note that gamification was only mentioned by two participants, who did not believe it was a particularly effective mobile strategy. Previous scholars discussed the benefits of integrating games into mobile apps to capitalize on the

behavioral effects of video games, such as increased arousal (Poels et al., 2012), social interaction, and learning (Albuquerque & Nevskaya, 2016). However, games are very expensive to develop, and data from participants from the current study suggest that mobile marketers may be better off using marketing budgets to gather data on users and create tailored experiences than to spend it on expensive and flashy games that provide much lower rates of conversion.

Participant A shared that, “Main strategies include the understanding that we have relevant content that relates to our end users.” By providing customized, tailored experiences, marketers can more effectively engage with their customers, in their settings. Effectively, customer engagement with mobile apps, for example, provides marketers with invaluable entrance into participants’ worlds, which then foster purchasing behaviors. Participant D explained, “The experience needs to be customized based on the needs of the customer. The more I can meet the needs of the customer, the more likely I am to [prompt the customer to] complete the transaction.” In addition, the better marketers become at creating individualized experiences, the more likely they are to keep customers coming back. In this way, tailored experiences not only promote initial purchases but also increase the likelihood of repeat transactions.

Participant H shared an example of a successful marketing strategy that involved a targeted app:

We released an app that had over 500 downloads on the first day. Of those 500 customers that downloaded the app, we had 13% conduct a transaction within

seven days. The app was targeted and presented different products based on the user type; we had never seen that high of a return before.

Participant H's example provides a strong example of how targeted apps customized to the user can be extremely effective and profitable for organizations.

Two subthemes emerged under the main theme of tailored experience, including segmentation and relevance.

**Segmentation.** The concept of segmentation emerged as a subtheme of tailored experiences. Three participants described segmentation as targeting specific messages to segments of users based on common demographics. Traditional segmentation, such as targeting users who fall into the age ranges of 18 to 35 years old, has been replaced with more specific, targeted segmentation called *micro-segmentation*. For example, Participant A explained,

Targeting adults 18-35 doesn't work anymore, we are trying to get down to the micro-segmentation where you are a 22 to 24-year-old who is a graduate of College X and you are a student with these habits that we want to know about, and present content that is relevant to that specific person.

In this way, Participant A explained that through such microsegmentation strategies, mobile marketers might more precisely tailor the mobile user's experience to be more effective in prompting desired consumer behaviors, such as using applications or making purchases.

**Relevance.** Another subtheme of the tailored experience theme was relevance. This theme emerged from six of the interviews. Participants consistently spoke of

creating content and experiences that were relevant to mobile users. Most of the participants discussed the importance of relevance, which Participant B described as “making the content and the way that I engage and the experience that I provide relevant.” By creating tailored experiences based on customers’ individual preferences and behaviors, mobile marketers can significantly increase the likelihood that the messages they send to individual users are relevant as well. Participant F explained that the failure to send relevant messages could result in the loss of customers, “We have to make sure we are delivering relevant value through our mobile experience. If it’s not relevant, then our customer will go elsewhere.” According to participants, the potential loss of customers from sending irrelevant content can occur because users have become conditioned to expect tailored, individualized mobile experiences and messages. Because mobile users regularly inundated with messages and content, they are not only desensitized to irrelevant content but can also become annoyed by it.

Participant B drew connections between company profitability and the importance of tailoring the customer’s experience via relevant experiences:

Figuring out how to provide a customized mobile experience at a time that’s relevant to the customer, allowing them to continue to allow us in through that experience will change our profitability, it will change our reach. I think it’s a game changer, and it will only continue as we think about technology and the way that you engage with mobile.

Participants also described the importance of ensuring mobile marketing messages were delivered at times when customers were most likely to complete a

transaction. According to Participant A, content must not only be relevant but also provided to users “at a time where they are interested in that specific content.” By sending messages that are tailored to individuals’ preferences, at times and locations when it is convenient for them to make purchases, marketers can increase the relevance of individual marketing messages, offers, and coupons.

Participant C also described the importance of relevance in the organization’s marketing strategy, taking care to “give the customer what they want when they want it.” In this way, Participant C thought that it was marketers’ duties to deliver messages and content that is tailored and relevant to individual users, helping marketers serve their customers. Users are more likely to engage with content and apps that are relevant to them, which in turn, provides marketers with more opportunities to get their marketing messages across to users and prompt transactions. The key to relevance and convenience are that they help customers feel marketers are trying to help them accomplish different goals or tasks – as if the marketer is on their side and in service to them. Users do not want to feel like they are being bombarded by marketing messages through apps. If customers perceived the sole purpose of an app is advertising, they are less likely to download or engage with it. Conversely, if customers perceive an app as useful in their daily lives, they may engage with it, which then provides marketers with easy, on-going access to their customers.

Participant H described how the organization used customer data gathered through apps to tailor messages and experiences to be as relevant to the user as possible, sharing the following:

An example may be a sports enthusiast that we know runs in every race, and we know their purchasing behavior and when the races are, so we can upsell for additional clothing based on the weather and send them good luck notes with the option to sign-up for checkpoints throughout the race through the app.

Of note in Participant H's example is that the goal of the tailored and relevant messages was not just to prompt an initial sale but also to provide marketers with the opportunity to "upsell." This is noteworthy because, throughout the interviews, participants spoke of revenues in terms of initial transactions as well as through upselling and garnering repeat customers.

An important benefit of tailoring users' mobile experiences is that they are more likely to be open and receptive to individualized messages than of broad, generalized content or messages. Since mobile apps, social media, responsive websites, and in-app messages are essential communication channels, as described in Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory, providing effective communication channels and content that users are receptive to can increase the likelihood that customers share or interact with mobile marketing content (Andrews et al., 2016). Marketing leaders should consider the different communication channels based on user preferences to reach their customers. The communication between customers and businesses is a core element of managing an effective marketing strategy (Negi & Pandey, 2013), which can affect the relationship with the customer. Findings from the current study indicate that marketers understand the importance of communication channels as an essential tool of diffusion.

By tailoring users' mobile experiences according to their individual preferences and getting close to them, mobile marketers can better understand the consequences of a mobile marketing innovation. This supported Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory. According to Rogers (1995), the consequences of innovation include direct desirability, indirect desirability, anticipated effects, and unanticipated effects. Regardless of an innovation's intent, users' reception and perceptions of it often vary and result in different consequences. By tailoring experiences and then gathering data on users' engagement with mobile innovations, marketers can better understand how well a strategy is working and how they may change it to improve its effectiveness.

### **Dynamic Content**

The theme of dynamic content presented in five interviews. Successful mobile marketing strategies also involve the creation of dynamic content. The pace at which mobile content must change and adapt is very different from that of more traditional marketing channels, such as print or television commercials. As Participant A explained,

We used to have advertising in print or on television; we even had stagnant website content that we changed maybe monthly. With mobile marketing, that content is dynamic and it changes with every click and based on the location of the customer.

Mobile marketers must stay abreast of constantly changing mobile environments, not just in term of what types of devices are being used, but how they are being engaged with. Just as users expect individualized experiences and tailored content, they expect apps that are up-to-date and aligned with the ever-changing facets of social media and online

technologies. This finding supports the communication channel principle of Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation model, which posits that social media and online technologies provide powerful tools through which marketers can disseminate their technologies and marketing messages. Mobile marketers must quickly respond to changes in consumer behaviors, online technologies, and mobile devices and applications. Much of the information needed to respond quickly and accurately to the dynamics of mobile marketing is available via data gathered from applications.

Participants explained that it is essential for mobile marketers to use gathered data quickly to make necessary changes to applications or marketing strategies. The failure to adapt quickly can be detrimental to mobile marketing campaigns, as Participant A explained:

One of the worst things you can do is wait and decide to react later down the line.

Mobile marketing cannot be an 18 months down the road kind of plan. It's an iterative process and you have to react fast.

The theme of dynamic content that emerged from participant interviews was supported by information in the study site organization's marketing plan. For example, text in the marketing plan read, "You must provide consumers with dynamic content and allow the user to control by offering, a choice to opt-in or to opt-out, so they are able to decide whether they are comfortable with the use of their data in marketing efforts." Previous researchers (Dou & Sundar, 2016; Leisenberg, 2016; Ou et al., 2015; Wang & Kim, 2017) also discussed the importance of quick responses to change and the creation of dynamic content, particularly through the development of *responsive* websites.



Responsive websites are those that automatically adjust page layouts and other settings according to the requirements of different mobile devices (Wang & Kim, 2017).

Responsive websites allow mobile marketers to create websites that are easy to navigate from mobile devices, thus reducing bounce rates and increasing the number of transactions (Leisenberg, 2016). Previous scholars reported that the responsiveness and adaptability of mobile websites influenced purchasing behaviors of users (Dou & Sundar, 2016; Ou et al., 2015).

**Immersion experience.** A subtheme of dynamic content was the concept of immersion. Two participants explained that marketers must not only create dynamic content and quickly respond to changes, but they must also create dynamic content that *immerses* users in brand experiences. The importance of immersive content was supported by the organization's marketing plan, "The common thread among the rules of content was a desired and immersive set of interactions with the content." Participant E elaborated on this idea, describing immersion as an experience in which consumers could become fully immersed in information and ideas surrounding a product. Marketers strive not only to connect with customers and inform them about their products but also to surround them with the *feel* of a product.

Participant E shared the following example, describing immersion as an experience, "You can actually go up to something in the store and use your mobile app to scan it and get information on how it's created and information on where in the world the materials come from, how it's assembled, ecofriendly, and environmental information." In this way, immersion allows marketers to provide a multi-faceted view of a product,

helping users to experience it by learning about it from multiple angles. Ultimately, this creates more selling points for marketers. The experience of immersion also allows mobile marketers to connect a variety of online sources to create a full experience surrounding a product. For example, mobile marketers may use interactive videos, social media, and online reviews of a product to increase consumer confidence in a product, and thus, his or her likelihood of purchasing it.

### **Geolocation**

Location was a prominent key theme discussed by all of the participants and referenced multiple times in the marketing playbook. The study site organization's marketing plan contains information on geolocation, explaining that location-based services (LBS) allow marketers "to send our message to users based on a number of geographic indicators." With apps that integrate global positioning system (GPS) and location features, marketers can send tailored offers to users based on their exact locations, whether inside a store, in the vicinity of a store, or on the other side of town (Tussyadiah, 2016). Using LBS, marketers can also increase the relevance of their messages by sending them at times when customers are in the vicinity of a retail store. Because data from LBS help marketers get closer to their customers and create more individualized and relevant messages, it can be a powerful mobile marketing tool for increasing revenues. Accordingly, Participant F described LBS as the most effective strategy of mobile marketing campaigns. Participant B explained,

Really understanding where the user is, what type of experience they're expecting –whether they're standing in a store or whether they're sitting at home or they're

engaging on a soccer field while they're watching their child play, but they're trying to make a purchase or learn some information about products.

As Participant B illustrated in the above example, the ability to detect customers' locations allows marketers to tailor their messages in ways that promote transactions.

Participant C explained that the study site organization used geolocation in a variety of ways:

There's the broader geolocation, so kind of where you are in the world, which is where this field kind of started a couple of years ago. But, now we can get down to the point where, "Are they specifically inside of our retail experience?" both on our e-commerce site and in our physical store presence.

Using geolocation, mobile marketers can ensure that their messages are relevant to users at any given time. Participant F explained,

We can deliver dynamic offers through our location targeting, which can reach out to customers with relevance both outside our stores to give them an opportunity to come in, and inside our stores give us new opportunity for increased revenue.

**In-store.** In addition to alerting marketers when customers are outside of a store or in its general vicinity, the geolocation technology on mobile devices gives marketers the ability to gather precise data on consumers' behaviors when they are inside retail stores. Accordingly, five participants discussed the subtheme of in-store geolocation. Whereas, previous forms of geolocation only allowed marketers to detect consumers'

general movements around the vicinity of a store, they now can observe precise details of consumer behavior within stores. Participant C elaborated on this:

You can actually see across all these different devices they have where they are in your store and what they're viewing and how much time they spend there, and maybe what they pick up off the shelf and don't pick off the shelf to look at, and you can use that to really assess their behaviors and understand how to serve them better based on what they're actually doing as individuals, not as some broader mass market group.

Participant C described this type of geolocation as "microlevel," in which marketers can observe what things inside of a retail store are capturing consumers' attention and how consumer traffic flows throughout a store and around its retail displays. Such microlevel, real-time data also gives marketers opportunities to instantly tailor customers' in-store experience to ones that will make them more likely to complete transactions. Given data on a consumer's behavioral history and real-time information on his or her whereabouts inside a retail store, marketers can actually transform the retail environment to meet the individual's preferences. Participant C provided a helpful illustration of this strategy:

We can say, "Oh, they like the red shoes versus the blue shoes," and we can actually change digital signage in the store around them to show the shoes they want and then all of a sudden present them with an offer that says, you know, they can have a "Buy One Get One" discount or they can have a straight discount on this one because we know they like this type of product.

Marketers can also use microlevel data to create a message in mobile (MIM) to send customized offers to consumers as they walk through a retail store. The organization's marketing plan contains the importance of using geolocation to deliver targeted offers, "key mobile media paths include direct messaging, targeted ads via geolocation."

Additionally, Participant C explained,

You have your mobile device walking around the store, we know where you are in the store, and if we know who you are and where you are we can pull information based on your preferences and what you like and then we can send you a message directly, a mobile message on your phone that says, "Here's an offer," or, "Here's something we want you to try out," or have a coupon or some way to entice the customer to pick up that product off the shelf and go buy it.

MIM, or in-app marketing describes the use of non-marketing apps to disperse marketing information, through strategies such as banner ads or affiliate programs. According to Lee and Shin (2016), MIM as a key element of mobile marketing campaigns.

**Weather/events.** Two study participants also described the use of geolocation to increase the relevance of mobile marketing messages, based on the weather at customers' locations, or even popular events that may be going on in the vicinity. For example, Participant G explained how geolocation is used not only to customize offers based on customers' proximity to a retail location but also based on the real-time weather at customers' locations:

Location services help us understand where the customer is at any given time.

Depending on the technology, we can see a consumer in-store, or we know they

are outside, and if we have access to the right data, we know it's raining or hot outside. This type of information impacts what offers we would send to the user and how we reach them.

Thus, geolocation is another tool that mobile marketers use to increase the relevance of messages and more finely customize them to individuals' preferences, behaviors, environments, and experiences at any given time.

Previous researchers discussed the use of geolocation, or LBS, at length in studies on mobile marketing strategies. In addition to providing marketers with opportunities to gather microlevel, real-time data for sending messages that are tailored and relevant, advertisers can also use LBA to update inaccurate or expired information quickly and remotely (Bauer & Strauss, 2016; Fong et al., 2015) through real-time and ubiquitous platforms. In this way, previous scholars reported that LBA can be used to create more responsive and dynamic content. Further, by tailoring content using LBA, mobile marketers can engage users at times when they are most likely to perceive marketing messages in a positive light (Bauer & Strauss, 2016). Andrews et al. (2014) found that consumers are more likely to perceive LBA negatively when it is employed at times when they are not primed to consume. Luo et al. (2014) found that time of advertising and the customer's proximity to the services and goods could significantly influence consumers' purchasing behaviors.

The geolocation theme also aligned with information from the study site organization's marketing handbook. The handbook urged mobile marketers to make sure offers sent to users were always relevant based on location. The handbook emphasized

the importance and value of geolocation strategies, describing them as having the potential for unprecedented outreach when used effectively.

### **Multiple Screen Strategies**

The dramatic increase in the types of mobile devices among U.S. consumers has created challenges for mobile marketers who need to ensure their marketing messages adapt to users' devices and platforms. All eight participants mentioned multiple screen strategies, which aligned with information in the study site organization's marketing plan. The marketing manual stated, "Your job as marketers is to go where the consumers are and get there first, so you can be ready to tackle the mobile future." A multiple screen strategy is particularly important for ensuring the consistency of brand messages. As Participant H explained, "users expect to have the same experience on screen as they move between devices. Keeping brand integrity and the brand presence across the screens can be difficult unless you truly understand your brand and the perception of users as they move between screens." Because of the constant changes in mobile platforms, marketers must be willing to evolve their messages alongside the technology through which content is delivered.

Participant E also explained that ensuring continuity of messages and mobile experiences across different screens and devices creates significant challenges for mobile marketers:

If my screen size is a little bit different than what kind of a standard or what was tested on, then my experience in the app is not going to be very good, and people

are gonna go somewhere else or they're gonna do something else, and we're gonna lose customers pretty quickly.

Participant G also described multiple screens as a challenge in mobile marketing, "It's a challenge with so much data and so many experiences across multiple devices, it's difficult for some of the world's greatest marketers." Mobile marketers must work to ensure their messages are viewed in consistent and uniform ways across different platforms; the experiences should be "controlled" and "very effective."

Although multiple screens create challenges for mobile marketers, they are also a valuable source of opportunity because it provides marketers for multiple entry points into mobile users' lives. For example, Participant A explained that the most effective mobile marketing strategies are those that employ multiple screens:

Multi-screen, multi devices is the most effective. You have to be everywhere, you can't just pick one ecosystem or one way to reach users, and that even broadens out to all the different social channels – Facebook, Twitter, all of them, you have to be everywhere.

By "being everywhere," marketers can create more immersive brand experiences.

Participant B echoed this sentiment, explaining that multi-screen strategies were the most effective for increasing company profits, "I would say multiple mediums across multiple mobile devices to create and finish a transaction certainly helps." Participant A explained, "Not only has the number of devices grown exponentially, not only the devices themselves, but [also] the manufacturers who create those devices, which increases the ways you can reach the consumer through all of those devices and apps." While



marketers must be cognizant of all the different interfaces through which mobile device users may access a company's content and messages, this versatility also presents marketers with multiple ways to access users.

Interviews indicated that participants at the study site organization recently placed more attention on multiple screen strategies. When asked about recent changes to the organization's mobile marketing strategies, Participant F described multiple screen strategies as the most important evolution:

We were have invested a lot of time and capital in the our ability to drive marketing campaigns across devices and screens, and be able to deliver and transition the user's experience across those screens as they naturally transition between devices in their day-to-day lives. From mobile to computer, both in-store and out-of-store. This is something that was impossible 5 years ago, we would have treated the same customer as a different person when they were on their different devices.

The multiple screen strategies discussed by study participants aligned with information in the organization's marketing plan. Information in the marketing plan states that 90% of mobile users move between multiple screens. Thus, ensuring consistency of experiences across multiple screens can help ensure the consistency of brand experiences, which emerged as another major theme in this investigation. Prior researchers discussed the importance of providing a seamless experience across devices and the traditional home PC (Leeflang et al., 2014; Wagner et al., 2013). The multiple screen strategy for

marketing leaders to provide a seamless experience across many screens is critical in order to address customer expectation (Ailawadia & Farris, 2017).

### **Consistent Brand Experiences**

Another theme to emerge from participant interviews that were supported by information in the study site organization's marketing plan was *consistent brand experiences*. The marketing plan contains, "We need to make our brand mobile ready." According to participants, one of the reasons why an effective multiple screen strategy is so important is to ensure the consistency of users' experiences with brands. Six participants described the importance of creating consistent brand experiences for users, which has become more challenging as the number of available devices and interfaces increase. Participant B elaborated on this challenge, "With the number of devices that have entered the market, and really understanding how we reach different customers, having that consistency in brand has been a bit challenging."

Participant C also described the importance of consistency in mobile users' experiences:

So, if you are on your phone and you have a very unique experience that's tailored towards you in the same way that if you're shopping on our e-commerce site at home, or even if you're just walking around the store and you're trying to understand what's in our products, we want everything to be very similar for any kind of digital signage we have, or anything in-store – the way you interact with the person you checkout with, is all the same way in all the same style and format that we use inside of our mobile experience.

The importance of consistent brand experiences was also contained in the study site organization's marketing handbook, which explained that mobile users must have a consistent brand experience, no matter how they access the brand. In addition to ensuring consistency across devices and platforms, the marketing plan also contains the importance of consistency across markets and categories of users. However, while examination of the marketing plan emphasizes consistency, it is important to acknowledge the differences between *consistency* and *individualized experiences* that were described. While the brand message and experience should be consistent across users, the information and offers provided to those users should be tailored to their unique preferences. Interview data from participants aligned strongly with the marketing plan, "Strategies should be tailored to the moments we want to get offers in the hands of consumers based on their individual tastes."

### **Ease of Use**

Ease of use was a theme that emerged from all eight participant interviews to describe mobile marketers' advertising strategies. By ensuring that mobile content is easy to interact with, marketers can reduce users' resistance to it and increase their engagement. Participant A shared, "Simplicity and ease of use will allow consumers to come into our world and understand they are different from the person next to them, and you have to be able to treat them that way." The importance of your mobile experience being easy to use by fingers and thumbs was detailed in the organizations marketing plan, "Many visitors to your mobile site will be navigating with their thumbs or fingers, so design with that in mind Large, easy-to-press links and buttons ensure a smoother user

experience.” In this way, it is not only important for a mobile application to be user friendly but also to provide users with a tailored, individualized experience, as described previously. Participant D echoed this sentiment, explaining that marketers must “make sure the experience is easy, what we want to accomplish with our mobile strategy has to include convenience.” Participant F cautioned that if mobile marketers do not ensure the mobile experience is convenient, they can quickly lose customers.

Participant D explained that a primary characteristic of effective mobile marketing strategies was convenience, coupled with relevance. When marketers provide messages that are relevant to a consumer’s given time and location, and are easy to use or respond to, that consumer is more likely to engage with the message and respond with the behavior the marketer is attempting to prompt. One strategy to increase convenience is the “one-click buy.” Participant D explained,

It is all about convenience, one-click-to-buy. Giving a customer the option with a tailored suggested sale and allowing them to buy with one click changes everything for us as a retailer. I can increase overall revenue and change the experiences for our customers. Convenient, fewer clicks, and increasing sale size.

Participant G also described the value of the one-click buy, explaining that providing customers with the convenience to complete a transaction in one click, “is really turning transactions around quickly which helps our bottom line.” One-click buys are possible when customers allow apps to store their payment information or access online payment accounts such as PayPal. By providing customers with an “easy, simple experience” that delivers “fast technical services” and “allow them to find the product they want.”

Participant E explained that mobile marketers can increase the profitability of their campaigns. Participant F shared that, “If we don’t provide relevant value to the customer and make it easy for them to interact with our mobile experience, we will have no chance of them giving us their hard-earned money.”

The theme of ease of use and convenience was strongly connected to the concept of time. Participants seemed aware that many of their mobile users may be pressed for time, have busy lives, and expect mobile experiences to be fast and convenient. Spending excessive time configuring apps or figuring out how to complete a transaction may prevent users from making purchases. Mobile marketers want to capitalize on the impulsivity of a customer’s desire to make a purchase and complete that transaction before they change their minds. Participant E explained that mobile marketers want to drive consumers to make purchases and keep their focus on completing the transaction, rather than forcing them to figure out how to use an application to do it. Thus, any offers or messages that marketers send to mobile users must allow users to complete quick, easy, immediate transactions. Participant E elaborated on this:

We really try and drive down in the mobile apps specifically how to very quickly and effectively get them to go from seeing something they want and actually checking out and being done with it, and not having to go through a bunch of steps, so they actually purchase the product or transact the product.

By creating apps that are easy to use and convenient, mobile marketers can actually convey a message of respect toward users, implicitly acknowledging that

customers have busy lives with many things to do, and lack the time to mess with apps or deal with irrelevant marketing messages. Participant E explained that marketers must:

Constantly think about that, that our customers are carrying around our user experience on their device, in their hands, and they have so many different places to go and so many things to do with their time, that we have to be very cognizant to give them that perfect experience every time so they come back.

Participant F echoed this sentiment, “People’s lives today are too busy, everyone’s professional and personal time is full, and there is no time to waste trying to discover and then evaluate products they want and then spend a lot of time to buy it.” The easier marketers can make it for customers to engage with apps and complete transactions, the more successful a mobile marketing campaign will be.

This theme of ease of use aligned with findings from previous scholars, who reported positive associations between the ease of use of mobile websites and applications and conversions. For example, Amin et al. (2014) reported that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were essential to ensuring consumer satisfaction and engagement with mobile websites. Accordingly, researchers reported that dynamic and responsive mobile websites and applications were essential to the development of mobile marketing strategies that customers find convenient, enjoyable, and engaging (Amin et al., 2014; Dou & Sundar, 2016; Ou et al., 2015). This theme also aligns with Rogers’s (2003) diffusion of innovation theory because the more engaging and easy an innovation is to use, the more likely a user he or she is to adopt it.

Ease of use was consistently discussed in the organization's marketing handbook, indicating strong alignment between interview data and the organization's marketing plan. Described as *convenience*, making content easy to use was one of the four essential keys discussed in the marketing handbook. A discussion of those four keys appears later in this section.

### **What Does Not Work**

While most of the information participants shared related mobile marketing strategies that *do* work, all eight participants also discussed strategies that tend to be less effective for increasing company profits, such as the use of broad, generic campaigns. Information from the study site organization's marketing plan supported this theme, reiterating the need for specific engagements and describing the need for customer interaction, "Releasing an app is not a strategy, you need to understand how to engage with the customer." An app alone is not sufficient was supported in the organization's marketing plan, "An app is not a mobile strategy." Additionally, Participant B provided a detailed discussion of what does not work:

The thing that appears to be the least effective is when we do generic branding.

Kind of that very broad, "Hey, let's push out an experience like we did in media, or like we've tried on television ads, and let's just show that branding," and maybe we'll show or tell a story where the customer can relate.

Participant B went on to explain the reason that broad, generic strategies do not work, "The customers have a higher level of expectations and they expect this customized experience." Customers expect marketers to know who they are, what they want, and

what their preferences are. Messages and experiences that are not tailored to individual users can be interpreted as annoyances. Similarly, Participant C explained that mobile marketers are moving away from the use of mass coupons or generalizing offers to users based on geographic location, alone, explaining, “It’s not very effective because we’re just kind of broadcasting that out there and that just becomes noise for the customer.”

When asked about mobile marketing strategies that do not work, Participant F also thought that broad, general campaigns are no longer effective. Users expect to be treated as individuals, “Being able to truly treat customers as individuals based on their behaviors and not a broader segment is key to the future of retail.” Participant H stated that “blind offers” and “weekend coupons or promotions that are not tailored to the user” are ineffective mobile marketing strategies.

Previous scholars discussed the value of offering coupons through mobile devices, which can incentivize users to make online and in-person purchases. Coupons can be effective communication and sales tools as people across all demographic groups grow increasingly aware of the benefits of using their mobile devices to make purchases (Gonzalez, 2016). However, scholars have also acknowledged that for coupons to be effective, the offers should be tailored to the user (Andrews et al., 2016). These findings align with data from the current study – that participants believed mobile coupons are useful only if the offers are individualized, and blanketing a large, heterogeneous group with broad, general offers is unlikely to provide the same return.

Failure to provide a customized experience was described by Participant D as a shortcoming of mobile marketing campaigns. Marketers have to understand their



customers, via data gathered on their behaviors and preferences, and then tailor their offers and marketing strategies to consumers based on that data. In this way, Participant D also described generic strategies such as mass couponing as particularly ineffective, “We have tried strategies of pushing out mass couponing or advertising, or reaching message in mobile and contacting in a generic way, and our customers find it irritating.” Similarly, Participant G explained that mass coupon efforts were ineffective, “We tried a few mass marketing efforts through mobile a couple times, but they didn’t result in much revenue.” When marketers send out messages or offers that do not meet customers’ expectations for tailored and individualized offers, they interpret it as “noise” and find it “irritating.” As stated by Participant F, “Any message or experience that does not contain relevance and convenience will just become part of the noise and ignored.” As Participant E explained, by learning the preferences of individual customers, “We can understand better what they like and don’t like, and we’re not wasting their time by trying to give them information about products that they don’t have any interest in.” By tailoring messages to individual users, mobile marketers can reduce the “noise.”

### **The Four Keys**

Overall, data from eight of the participant interviews aligned strongly with the plan described in the company’s written marketing handbook. The mainstays of the written marketing plan included the following *four keys*: permission, relevance, location, and convenience. Throughout the interviews, participants consistently discussed mobile marketing strategies in terms of these four keys. They explained that marketers must gain users’ permission to enter into their worlds via mobile devices in order to build trust,

connection, and to avoid creating a sense of intrusion. The importance of trust with the customer was supported in the organization's marketing plan, "Making consumers feel secure that you respect their privacy and safety is the critical first step." By first gaining users' permission and respecting their privacy and safety, users' are more likely to engage with mobile marketing content. This connects with the theme of getting close to customers. While the marketing plan contains the importance of privacy rights extensively, participants limited their discussion of permission to vague mentions of being granted permission by users to enter their mobile experiences.

Relevance, which emerged as a subtheme of the tailored experience theme, was also discussed extensively by participants. Participant F summarized the importance of relevance to the organization, "If it's not relevant then our customer will go elsewhere." As found in the marketing plan, mobile marketers must ensure that the content sent to users is relevant to their individual needs, preferences, characteristics, and experiences. Analysis of the marketing plan shows content should meet users' needs at different times, "Mobile enables brands to deliver relevant content that responds to consumer needs/wants at the precise moment of desire." and locations that correspond with their desires at a given moment. By doing this, marketers can connect with users and increase the likelihood of consumer purchases.

Location, which emerged as a major theme from participant interviews, Participant F stated, "One of the ways our mobile strategy helps us deliver relevance is thru location services." The theme that marketers should serve users based on their location at a given time was also emphasized in the marketing plan, "Mobile offers

unprecedented ability to serve geolocation relevant content to your consumer.” In this way, the overlap between *relevance* and *location* existed. Marketers can increase the relevance of a message by tailoring content based on a user’s location. In practice, the marketing handbook contains that marketers should generate enough unique content tailored to specific locations to be able to maximize the relevance of messages to the greatest number of users. By having an extensive database of tailored messages based on different location differentials, such as proximity to a retail location or entertainment event, messages can be automatically sent to users when they enter into a certain geographic zone. Because every participant discussed location as fundamental to mobile marketing success, this theme was significantly aligned with the marketing handbook.

Finally, the key of *convenience* aligned strongly with the ease of use theme that emerged from participant interviews. Participant H explained:

Lastly, but most important, the experience must be convenient. If we have the customer’s attention, have given them a mobile experience that gives them relevant value, we must give them a convenient way to interact with our mobile experience or we will lose them.

According to information in the organization’s marketing handbook written by the marketing department, marketers must ensure that messages and content are easy to engage with and that there is not friction that may dissuade customers from engaging with content, “[By] keeping things simple and direct, and providing immediate solutions, your brand will be able to meet the consumer.” By increasing mobile users’ ability to engage

with content, mobile marketers can better understand the consequences of a mobile marketing innovation. This supported Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory.

### **Application to Professional Practice**

Results from this investigation have useful application to professional practice. An interesting finding from the current investigation was that participants tended to focus on principles or characteristics of mobile marketing campaigns, rather than specific strategies. For example, participants consistently spoke of the four keys that guide their marketing efforts, which also formed the foundation for the company's marketing guide. The keys included engagement, relevance, location, and convenience. Rather than emphasize specific strategies, participants discussed how each of these principles were integrated into their marketing efforts.

Previous research on mobile marketing seemed to emphasize specific strategies, rather than marketing principles. Accordingly, many specific strategies discussed in the literature review of this project were not mentioned by participants in the current investigation. For example, previous scholars mentioned the utility of QR codes (Cata et al., 2013; Ryu & Murdock, 2013), affiliate marketing (Leisenberg, 2016), SMS (Aamir et al., 2013), and banner ads (Jiang, 2017; Yeu et al., 2013), yet participants in the current investigation did not mention the use of these strategies. This may be an indication of the quick-changing nature of mobile marketing; that is, marketing managers in this study may have simply found that these strategies are no longer effective in today's marketing climate, or perhaps they found these strategies to be less effective for advertising their specific products and targeting their prime demographics. Whatever the reason, these

differences suggest that mobile marketers understand that they have to use their marketing dollars wisely, even if they are employed by large companies with expansive marketing budgets. Recent literature continues to support the importance for marketers to reach the dynamic customer on mobile through unique experiences (Viswanathan et al., 2017). The advancement of mobile allows organizations to use data to create experiences that get the brand closer to the customer (Cooke & Zubcsek, 2017).

In the world of mobile marketing, casting large, general nets seems to provide less return. Instead, as participants from the current study indicated, marketing managers must keep their efforts focused and concerted, getting close to their customers, learning about their preferences, using big data intelligently, sending messages and offers that are tailored to individuals' preferences, and making sure that marketing content is sent at times when the user is most likely to transact. Reaching customers with general information that may not apply to them is not likely to solicit as many responses. Understanding the client and reaching them in a personal way at the right time proves more valuable.

Certainly, these findings have important implications for professional practice, for organizations of all sizes. The driving message from participants was that regardless of the strategies and tools mobile marketers use, they must always stay focused on the end goal, which is to increase revenues by increasing the size and number of transactions, upselling, and acquiring repeat customers. Mobile marketers must also gather data intelligently and leverage it to fine-tune marketing efforts. Rather than spend marketing dollars blanketing a region with mobile coupons or developing high-tech games,

marketers should devote a significant amount of their budgets toward developing mobile apps and websites that attract users, gathering data on those users, and then target users with tailored offers and incentives. This is particularly important for smaller organizations that may have limited advertising budgets. In order to be effective, mobile marketing campaigns must be targeted. It is better to engage with and market to a small segment of users who are most likely to purchase a particular product than to waste marketing dollars on large-scale marketing efforts. The concept of sending out mass, generic coupons is akin to traditional large-scale marketing strategies of direct mailers. Direct mail is expensive, and the return is very low. Thus, mobile marketers need to be wise with how they budget their advertising dollars if they want to create successful campaigns that result in increased organizational revenues.

Mobile customers are more likely to be open and receptive to tailored messages than of broad, generalized content or messages, especially when shared through effective communication channels (Andrews et al., 2016). Marketing leaders should tailor their messages and the communication channels they send them through based on their customers' preferences. Clear communication between customers and businesses is essential to effective marketing strategies (Negi & Pandey, 2013). Findings from the current study indicate that marketers understand the importance of communication channels as an essential tool of diffusion.

By tailoring users' mobile experiences according to their individual preferences and getting close to them, mobile marketers can better understand the consequences of a mobile marketing innovation. This supported Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation

theory. Users' reception and perceptions of innovations often vary and have different consequences. By tailoring experiences and gathering data on users' engagement with mobile innovations, marketers can better understand which mobile strategies are most effective.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Results from this study may foster social change by increasing profits driven by mobile marketing strategies, which organizations can use to contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. For instance, more profit can lead to improvements in company-provided healthcare that have social and economic benefits regarding the prevention of issues related to childhood death and women's health (Stenberg et al., 2014). Helping prevent these health issues allows community members to participate in the local retail experiences either as employees or as consumers providing valuable data to the retailer.

Organizations are in a strong position to continue to support their communities when they are profitable (Stubbs, 2017). Charitable donations by profitable organizations can produce positive outcomes, such as improvements to the living conditions among members of a community (Gautier & Pache, 2015). Retailers who leverage effective mobile device marketing strategies could increase profits and contribute to their communities (Gautier & Pache, 2015; Lee & Jung, 2016; Nwaneri, 2015), benefiting both employees and non-employees. Organization success is linked to their ability to contribute to their community (Stubbs, 2017).

Organization leaders who can increase profits through reaching mobile users could use those profits to hire additional diverse marketing leaders from their community. Diverse employees who can represent the customer and bring additional background and experiences in alignment with the customer expectations could improve organizational performance (Chia-Mei, Shyh-Jer, Huangb, & Chien, 2017). Hiring a diverse set of employees could provide benefits to the community by offering employment and benefits to more community members. The diverse backgrounds and experiences of new and diverse employees could help organizations develop closer relationships with mobile users.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Results from the current investigation provide insights that marketing professionals from various sizes of retail organizations can consider. These recommendations for action may be most helpful for smaller retail organizations or those that are just beginning to develop mobile marketing campaigns. Perhaps one of the most salient recommendations for marketing professionals is to gather and use data wisely. Big data is an important tool for mobile marketers, helping them to fine-tune and tailor their marketing tools, strategies, and message. Retail organizations should be mindful of the cost of data collection when budgeting marketing dollars. The processes of gathering data on mobile use, developing responsive websites, creating and launching apps, developing games, and other mobile marketing strategies are very expensive. Although the study site organization was a large corporation with an expansive marketing budget, participants



still mentioned the importance of using data to optimize the money spent on mobile marketing efforts.

Another practical recommendation for marketing professionals is to know their customers. Most of the themes that emerged from this investigation, as well as the data in the organization's marketing handbook, centered on creating personalized mobile experiences. Studying users' behaviors, usages, and preferences, and then using that data to tailor the content sent to users, is essential to creating effective mobile marketing campaigns that increase organizational revenues.

In addition to focusing on tailoring mobile experiences to individual users, marketing professionals should avoid broad, generalized mobile marketing strategies. Data from participant interviews, as well as the analysis of the organization's marketing plans, indicated that marketing managers should avoid generic, broad marketing strategies. Mobile users have come to expect content that is tailored to their preferences and needs. Because they are regularly inundated with marketing messages, users are not only desensitized to generic messages, but they often interpret them as irritants or "noise." When marketers employ mobile strategies that are not tailored to users, they run the risk of irritating and turning off potential customers, which can backfire on their entire marketing effort. Instead, mobile marketers should gather as much data as possible on mobile users, and then use that data to create customized marketing content.

Another recommendation for marketing professionals that was gleaned from this study is to stay up-to-date. Mobile marketers must stay abreast of the fast-changing environments of mobile technologies. This means that websites and social media should

consistently be updated to ensure content is always relevant. It is also essential for mobile marketers to make sure the platforms and technology upon which their mobile content is disseminated is always updated. When faster applications become available, marketers should endeavor to adopt better technologies as quickly as possible to stay ahead of the competition.

Marketing professionals should always be cognizant of users' time constraints when developing mobile marketing strategies. The idea of time is central to Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory, not just in terms of how quickly users adopt an innovation but also the limited amount of time marketers have to convert a user. Rapid advances in technology have groomed mobile users to expect instant results, fast speeds, and seamless websites and apps. If a mobile user encounters a mobile website or app that takes an extensive amount of time to load or is cumbersome to use, he or she may abandon the content altogether. Thus, mobile marketers must respect users' time and make sure their mobile technologies are always working well, and are fast and responsive.

Finally, mobile users should make sure that all mobile content is convenient and easy to access. Mobile marketers can use geolocation data to increase the relevance of offers sent to users. While geolocation can increase the relevance of marketing messages, marketers must also make sure that their messages and content are convenient and accessible to users. Results of this study may be disseminated via publication in the scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Retailing* and *Journal of Research and Marketing*. In addition, results could be written up as a white paper and made available to

the mobile marketing professionals working with retail organizations thru the Business Marketing Association and American Marketing Association conferences.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Results from this study indicate several recommendations for future research. For example, participants in the current study discussed the microlevel data that marketers are now able to glean from geolocation in mobile apps. However, little research exists on the extent to which mobile users' awareness of the collection of such data. Future researchers may explore the extent to which mobile users are aware of marketers' strategies, such as in-store geolocation, and how such awareness affects their willingness to engage with mobile content, especially through apps.

Study participants also discussed the importance of providing consistent brand messages across multiple screens. Multiple screen strategies are increasingly salient to marketers as the number of different mobile devices grows. Future researchers could explore how sensitive mobile users actually are to inconsistencies in brand experiences from one screen to the next.

A limitation of the current study was that the study was performed at one organization in one geographic location. Thus, future researchers may repeat this study with other organizations in other geographic locations to assess for differences in the strategies marketing managers utilize to increase profits. This study could also be replicated with smaller organizations to assess for differences and similarities in the marketing strategies employed by organizations of varying sizes, with varying marketing budgets. Similarly, future researchers may replicate this study with retail organizations in

other markets to explore how managers in different markets employ mobile marketing strategies.

Because the study was a small, qualitative investigation, future researchers may build upon these findings by conducting large empirical studies that utilize anonymous surveys. It is possible that participants will be more forthcoming with anonymous surveys or questionnaires than with interviews. Finally, future researchers may compare the mobile marketing strategies used in retail organizations to those employed in other sectors, such as service and hospitality. Such investigation may shed light on how strategies differ, and whether organizations in different sectors may be able to learn from one another.

### **Reflections**

The process of working on the doctoral study was challenging and rewarding. I gained valuable experience in performing qualitative research that may be of benefit in my future professional and scholarly endeavors. It was interesting to wear the hat of a scholar and researcher in a corporate setting, exploring aspects of the very field in which I have built my career. As a professional in the marketing field, I help marketing executives develop mobile applications to increase customer reach and company revenues. This study provided me with the opportunity to explore the mobile marketing strategies used by marketing managers in another organization, specifically exploring *how* and *why* marketing managers employed certain strategies, and how they believed those strategies ultimately influenced the organization's bottom line. Because of my professional experience in marketing, I had to be very cognizant of my personal biases,

perceptions, and opinions. As described in Section 2 of this project, I took measures to prevent personal bias from influencing data. I set aside my personal biases and opinions by performing bracketing and epoché. Just as the collection and analysis of study data were a valuable experience for me, so too was the process of bracketing. As a researcher in a field that I was already close to, I knew it was critical for me to remain as neutral and objective as possible throughout the entire research process. I found this to be a great exercise in neutrality.

As for the themes that emerged from the study data, I did not find any of them particularly surprising. Overall, results from this investigation were strongly aligned with the scholarly research discussed in Section 1, as well as the study's conceptual framework, which was based on Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory. I was, however, struck by an awareness of just how much complexity mobile devices have added to retail marketing strategies. A decade ago, the strategies that marketers used were still very generalized and broadly targeted. However, in today's mobile marketing environment, not only are general marketing strategies ineffective, they can backfire on organizations.

### **Conclusion**

The ability to perform smaller targeted marketing campaigns could allow marketers to spend budgets more efficiently as technology could enable them to understand and target customers individually to generate a higher return on investment. A total of 11 themes emerged from the eight participant interviews, including (a) data gathering, (b) behavioral targeting, (c) getting close to customer, (d) tailored experience,

(e) dynamic content, (f) geolocation, (g) multiple screen strategies, (h) consistent brand experiences, (i) ease of use, (j) what does not work, and (k) the Four Keys. Overall, data from six of the participant interviews aligned strongly with the plan described in the company's written marketing handbook. The mainstays of the written marketing plan included the following four keys: permission, relevance, location, and convenience. The strong correlations between themes that arose from participant interviews and the information in the organization's marketing handbook provided strong evidence of triangulation. In addition, themes from participant interviews were well aligned with the four components of Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory, including innovation, communication channels, time, and social structure.

Data from this study validated the intense increase in specificity required to be effective in marketing, especially mobile marketing. Truly, data gathering is the critical piece required for retail organizations to compete. Because application development and data acquisition are so costly, smaller organizations with limited marketing budgets may be unable to compete with the multi-million dollar budgets of large companies, such as the organization that was the focus of the current investigation. With that said, because smaller, focused efforts are more effective than broad, general campaigns, it is possible that smaller organizations that have dialed into their niche may be able to develop very effective campaigns that are cost-effective, by only spending marketing dollars on users who are most primed to purchase particular products. Thus, while the process of gathering data on users and tailoring campaigns as much as possible can be very costly, this strategy may also provide the greatest return on investment. It is possible that a high

ROI can keep smaller retail organizations in the running against mega corporations.

Although mobile marketing is expensive, it is by no means inaccessible to small and medium sized retailers, with targeted efforts.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

The goal of this study is to examine mobile device marketing strategies that can help increase an organization's profitability. The following constitutes the Interview Protocol for this study. An Interview Protocol informs participants of the steps of events within the interview.

*Before the interview, the researcher will:*

- Provide potential participants with an emailed invitation to participate in the study.
- Provide the following, upon indication of interest in participating: a copy of the interview protocol, a consent form, and the list of interview questions.
- Confirm receipt and understanding of the provided documents.
- Schedule the time and place for the interview.
- Answer concerns and questions.

*During the interview, the researcher will:*

- Obtain the signed consent form, if not already received from the participant.
- Confirm participant's agreement for the interview to be recorded.
- Confirm participant's understanding of the right to withdraw voluntarily from the interview and study at any time, for any reason.
- Remind the participant that identifiable interview responses and participant identity are kept strictly confidential. Aggregated responses and selected quotes from the interviews will be within the concluding research report.
- Address any questions or concerns.

*After the interview, the researcher will:*

- Thank the participant for their contribution to the study.
- Transcribe the interview responses (Document verbatim the conversation in written form)
- Conduct a transcription review
- After the analysis is completed, I will call the participants to discuss the analysis summary back to each participant interviewed and each participant to make sure the data was captured accurately.
- Receive confirmation of accuracy of meaning interpretation from all participants.
- Convert all received paper documents to digital format and destroy paper documents.
- Save all files to USB drive and maintain in the cloud for 5 years, then destroyed.

*After publication, the researcher will:*

- Send the summary of findings and electronic copy of the completed study, if requested, to participants.
- Advise the participant of publication if the participant did not request a copy.
- Send the summary of findings and an electronic copy of the completed study to the marketing leadership in the United States headquarters.