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Management of Social Media Usage by Microenterprises in Rural Trinidad and Tobago

Cheryl-Ann Henry
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Cheryl-Ann Henry

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Walden University
May 2019

Abstract

Management of Social Media Usage by Microenterprises in Rural Trinidad and Tobago

by

Cheryl-Ann Henry

MS, Nova University, 1997

BS, Florida International University, 1994

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

Microenterprise owners in developing countries may be uncertain although aware of how to use technologies, such as social media, to advance their economic interests. The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to determine how microenterprise owners in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) can benefit from social media usage in their business operations. The conceptual framework was Rogers's innovation decision process. The overarching research question for this study was how microenterprise owners in rural T&T could overcome the uncertainty of using social media for business growth and competitiveness. Data collection involved the administration of a business demographic survey and semistructured interviews with 14 microenterprise owners in rural T&T. The data analysis included descriptive coding, chunking, and identification of themes. The seven emerging themes were that participants (a) expanded on awareness knowledge, (b) leveraged business acumen to manage social media usage, (c) implemented social media strategies competently, (d) treated drawbacks as negative ideas and not as formidable threats, (e) projected confidence in using business acumen to curtail drawbacks, (f) anticipated favorable outcomes from benefits, and (g) confidently relied on business acumen to leverage benefits. Study findings may contribute to positive social change by illuminating the innovative ways that T&T microenterprise owners can use social media to counter the impact of business constraints and enhance their business growth and competitive position. Social media training initiatives by owners, change agents, and government officials may positively impact economic growth for T&T microenterprise owners and others at local and national levels.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Oliver Barrington Henry and Myrtle Yvonne Gwendoline Jones-Henry. My late father was an educator and historian, who instilled within my psyche the importance of knowledge and the acquisition thereof. My late mother was a midwifery instructor who instilled within my soul a strong desire to dream and chase dreams. I remember her telling me one day that I could be anything I want to be in this life, despite my age, gender, nationality, heritage, and cognitive challenges. I have always believed her. To this day, she remains the wind beneath my wings. My desire to complete this dissertation stems from the love my parents showed me, their child with ADHD, and how my parents nurtured me for a moment like this when I could finally submit my dissertation as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy.

Most important, to God, I give all the glory since, without God's mercy, I am nothing, and I have nothing.

Acknowledgments

My doctoral journey has been eventful, humbling, and fruitful. First, I acknowledge, accept, and trust God's will for my life. I am grateful to God, my ultimate source of support, for willing the completion of my doctoral pursuits at this point in my life. Thus, and to quote Julius Caesar, "Veni, vidi, vici." I believe that nothing happens by chance and everything happens in God's perfect timing.

Accordingly, I want to acknowledge the members of my dissertation committee, who allowed God to work through them to serve God's will. Especially, I thank Dr. Anthony Lolas, my chairperson and champion, whose unwavering support of my doctoral pursuits invigorated my *sticktoitiveness* throughout and secured my ensuing success. I also want to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Danielle Wright-Babb and Dr. Hamid Kazeroony, for their contributions to my success.

I extend my sincere thanks to the members of my moral support system and *famalaylay*, my godmother Eileen Fitzwilliam, who delivered me into this world; my esteemed mentors Mrs. Gloria Syms, Dr. Jo-Anne Manswell Butty, Dr. Monica Gordon, Dr. Rudrawatee Nan Ramgoolam, Mrs. Margaret Clifton, and Mrs. Maureen Henry (my dearest aunt); and my best friends forever, Joanne Lee Shue Ling, Susan Maharaj, Gabrielle Lewis, and Christine Gordon. Also, I thank everyone who contributed to my doctoral pursuits directly or indirectly and in one way or the other.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In developing nations, many microenterprise owners struggle to grow their businesses, given the constraints of time, limited financial resources, deficiencies in skills and management competencies, and lack of innovativeness (Agbenyegah, 2018; Alleyne, Lorde, & Weekes 2017; Omri, Frikha, & Bouraoui, 2015). With such constraints, many owners may have difficulty competing in a social media-infused microenterprise environment. Owners may use social media for social purposes, but they may be uncertain about adopting social media for their businesses (Wood & Khan, 2016).

Researchers have provided ample evidence that social media (used in the singular in this study) has contributed to the growth and competitiveness of businesses (Effing & Spil, 2016; Georgescu & Popescul, 2015; Vecchiato, 2017). For instance, enterprises have leveraged social customer relationship management, social media marketing, social public relations, and social commerce with increased business growth, despite the drawbacks (Bojanowska, 2017; Valentini, 2016; Yong & Hassan, 2019). However, a gap exists in the literature on how microenterprise owners in developing countries, specifically in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), use social media to grow and compete, despite business constraints.

Chapter 1 includes the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions. This chapter also includes a discussion of the conceptual framework and nature of the study, as well as the assumptions, limitations, and scope and delimitations. The chapter ends with a discussion of the significance of this study to practice, theory, and social change, and a summary.

Background of the Study

Microenterprises and small business enterprises represent approximately 90% of the 25,000 registered enterprises in T&T, and owners employ up to 25% of the country's labor force, according to the most recent statistics (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014). Microenterprise growth is important to a nation's economic development because such growth indirectly and directly contributes to poverty reduction and reduces unemployment (Achtenhagen, Ekberg, & Melander, 2017; Jamak, Ali, & Ghazali, 2014). Consequently, such growth helps microenterprise owners with limited education and skills to avoid poverty and increase their income (Jamak, Ghazali, & Sharif, 2017). In addition, microenterprise growth can contribute to socioeconomic development by enhancing owners' self-confidence, increasing their household income, improving their welfare, and transferring these economic changes across local communities (Zainol, Al Mamun, Ahmad, & Simpong, 2018).

Microenterprise owners' use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to supplement and enhance business activities has the potential to foster competitiveness and accelerate economic growth (Bourletidis & Triantafyllopoulos, 2014; Isaga, Mauserel, & Van Montfort, 2015; Jamak et al., 2017; Jones, Borgman, & Ulusoy, 2015). ICT include "skills, software, applications, and systems" (Chen, McMurtrey, McCalman, Domínguez Castillo, & Ligon, 2015, p. 29). ICT usage by individuals, businesses, and government agencies can improve unemployment rates through job creation and impact socioeconomic conditions (Nord, 2017; Tisdell, 2017).

Social media technologies, which include social media platforms, applications, and tools, are types of ICT (Dukic, Dukic, & Bertovic, 2015). Social media platforms are applications that developers design to function as enhanced communications channels for rapid information flow (Dukic et al.; Vecchiato, 2017). To that extent, social media platforms are ICT. In this study, I considered social media platforms (web-based and mobile-based) as variations of ICT and differentiated between the platforms and the use of those platforms by social media users.

Background of ICT in Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago are twin islands located at the southernmost islands of the Caribbean archipelago. They are geographical extensions of South America (Muyangwa, Miller, Bonner, & van den Bosch, 2017). Tobago is the smaller of the two, and together T&T form a sovereign nation, having become independent of Great Britain in 1962 and achieving republic status in 1976 (Williams, 1964/2015).

As of 2018, the population of T&T was approximately 1.35 million people (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office, 2018). As of 2014, approximately 86% of the total population in T&T was rural; in 2018 this percentage decreased to 47% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019; Lowitt et al., 2015;). The people of T&T are Trinbagonians (Green, 2002). The primary language in T&T is English, with native variants consisting of a combination of Hindi, English, French, and Spanish (Alleyne et al., 2017). The capital of Trinidad is Port of Spain, and the capital of Tobago is Scarborough (Pawelz, 2018; Pfeffer, Verrest, & Poorthuis, 2015; Williams, 1964/2015).

The Republic of T&T is one of the wealthiest nations in the Caribbean, with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$20.99 billion and an unemployment rate of 4.5% (Central Bank of Trinidad & Tobago, 2018). The GDP is a measurement of the health of a nation's economy and the size of the economy (Khan & Khan, 2017). In 2017, the energy sector (primarily oil and natural gas) contributed 36% towards the GDP of T&T, whereas the nonenergy sector contributed 64% (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office, 2018). The currency for both islands is the Trinidad and Tobago Dollar (TTD). In 2019 at this writing, the floating exchange rate with the U.S. dollar was \$1.00 to TTD 6.75. (All further dollar amounts are in U.S. dollars only.)

Although T&T is a wealthy Caribbean island, many nationals still struggle with economic hardship (Alleyne et al., 2017; Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Human Development Report 2016, 2016). The economic recession in 2018 further exacerbated the microenterprise struggle in rural T&T. Microenterprise owners in T&T claimed that a notable deterrent to business growth was competition from more technology-savvy enterprises (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2014). Nonetheless, microenterprise owners, along with other T&T nationals, have access to ICT, such as mobile devices, the Internet, and social media.

T&T has had high ICT usage and high mobile penetration rates, approximately 160% (Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2017). The literature revealed that microenterprise owners in other developing countries leveraged the use of social media to mitigate the constraints of doing business, to stay competitive, and to grow (Chung, Andreev, Benyoucef, Duane, & O'Reilly, 2017; McCann & Barlow, 2015).

It is likely that Trinbagonian microenterprise owners can leverage social media in a similar fashion.

Social Media Disruption

In T&T, as in many societies, social media is a disruptive force. Some researchers have referred to social media as disruptive innovations that are simple, convenient, and affordable (Cortez, 2014; Valentini, 2016; Vecchiato, 2017). Social media has disrupted how individuals communicate, disseminate information, and sustain personal relationships (Kim, 2018; Lee, 2018). These individuals include consumers and enterprise owners who are privy to the use of social media platforms because the platforms are free in T&T and accessible through the World Wide Web (WWW) and the mobile web.

In business as well, social media has been a disruptive force in many societies (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). Specifically, social media has disrupted the traditional communications system that enterprise owners use to reach target audiences (Huotari, Ulkuniemi, Saraniemi, & Mäläskä, 2015; Waldvogel, 2017; Whiting & Deshpande, 2016). Lui, Ngai, and Lo (2016) posited that innovations become disruptive when enterprise owners use emerging technologies, such as social media, to enhance business strategies. Braojos-Gomez, Benitez-Amado, and Llorens-Montes (2015) argued that microenterprise owners could use the information technology (IT) infrastructure, despite the drawbacks, to leverage the benefits of social media. T&T has a sophisticated ICT infrastructure, and Trinbagonians are ICT savvy (Government of Trinidad and Tobago,

Ministry of Science and Technology, 2013; Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013; Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2017).

Some researchers have examined microenterprise owners' perspectives and practices related to social media. Vecchiato (2017) postulated that many microenterprise owners are uncertain about how to use social media to grow their businesses and meet competition. Similarly, Cesaroni and Consoli (2015) and Wood and Khan (2016) asserted that small enterprise owners might not know how to take advantage of social media benefits, given the drawbacks. Cesaroni and Consoli also noted that researchers know little about small enterprises use social media to develop successful business growth strategies. Wood and Khan suggested that small enterprises have competing priorities (such as earning income and survival) that may negatively impact social media usage.

Researchers have investigated microenterprise owners' use of social media. However, according to my review of the literature, peer-reviewed studies are scarce on how microenterprise owners manage social media usage in T&T and other developing Caribbean islands. This study may contribute to the literature in this regard. Study findings may also add insight into the use of social media to spur the business growth of microenterprises in developing countries. Rogers (2003) pointed out that individuals need a particular reference point for knowledge about an innovation to inform their innovation decisions; otherwise, individuals may find it challenging to complete an innovation decision process. This study, thus, could be the reference point for microenterprise owners when they make innovation decisions to adopt social media strategies as a competitive business growth strategy.

Problem Statement

The growth of microenterprises and small enterprises is important to the economic development of a nation and contributes towards poverty reduction (Achtenhagen et al., 2017; Alom, Abdullah, Moten, & Azam, 2016; Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014; Jamak et al., 2014). Microenterprise growth is relevant to economic development through job creation and a means for low-income groups to generate income as needed (Jamak et al., 2017). However, various constraints affect the success of microenterprise activities, such as lack of time, insufficient human resources, limited financial resources, and deficiencies in management competencies and technology skills (Jamak et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2015; Lee, 2014; Lee, Foo, Leong, & Ooi, 2016). Such constraints could deter business growth and compromise income generation for low-income groups.

Some segments of the entrepreneurial class in T&T, which includes microenterprise owners, may have access to available technology but may not possess the knowledge and skill set necessary to use available technology to advance their economic interests (Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015; Kim, 2015; Rydén, Ringberg, & Wilkie, 2015). Larger enterprises are often more resourceful and able to leverage available technology, such as ICT (Au & Tucker, 2018; Jamak et al., 2017). Smaller enterprises are not always able to leverage technology as readily as larger enterprises, due to limited resources, such as funds, technology skills, and management competencies (Jamak et al., 2017; Omri et al., 2015; Petrescu, 2016).

The general problem was that microenterprises in developing nations struggle to grow. They face constraints such as limited time and financial resources, deficiencies in skills and management competencies, and a lack of innovativeness (Agbenyegah, 2018; Alleyne et al., 2017; Jamak et al., 2014; Omri et al., 2015). Such constraints deter business growth. The specific problem was that some microenterprise owners in T&T might find it challenging to compete in local business settings with larger enterprises and more technology savvy competitors (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore how microenterprise owners in rural Trinidad and Tobago can benefit from adopting social media in their business operations and grow. Many microenterprise owners in rural T&T use social media but not necessarily in their businesses to enhance business growth and improve their competitive positions. The goals of the study were to understand how microenterprise owners managed the use of social media, what drawbacks they encountered, and how they leveraged social media benefits to grow their businesses, despite the drawbacks and business constraints. Rogers (2003) and Pichlak (2016) referred to a new idea as an innovation and innovativeness as the implementation of a new idea.

Research Questions

In qualitative studies, researchers design research questions to guide the design of a study and the collection and interpretation of evidence (Maxwell, 2013). The overarching research question for this study was this: How can microenterprise owners in

rural Trinidad and Tobago overcome the uncertainty of using social media for business growth and competitiveness? The subresearch questions were the following:

- RQ1: How do microenterprise owners conduct information-seeking and information-processing activities about social media for their business growth?
- RQ2: How do microenterprise owners manage the drawbacks of social media use for their business growth?
- RQ3: How do microenterprise owners leverage the benefits of social media use for their business growth?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was the innovation decision process, which originated from the diffusion of innovations theory. Rogers (2003) referred to the innovation decision process as the uncertainty reduction process. Uncertainty lessens as individuals conduct information-seeking and information-processing activities and envision how, in the case of this study, they can apply social media to their individual situations.

Rogers posited that the innovation decision process is a mental framework that individuals use to reduce the uncertainty associated with adopting or rejecting an innovation. Rogers also theorized that the innovation decision process includes five

stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Figure 1 shows Rogers' (2003) depiction of the stages.

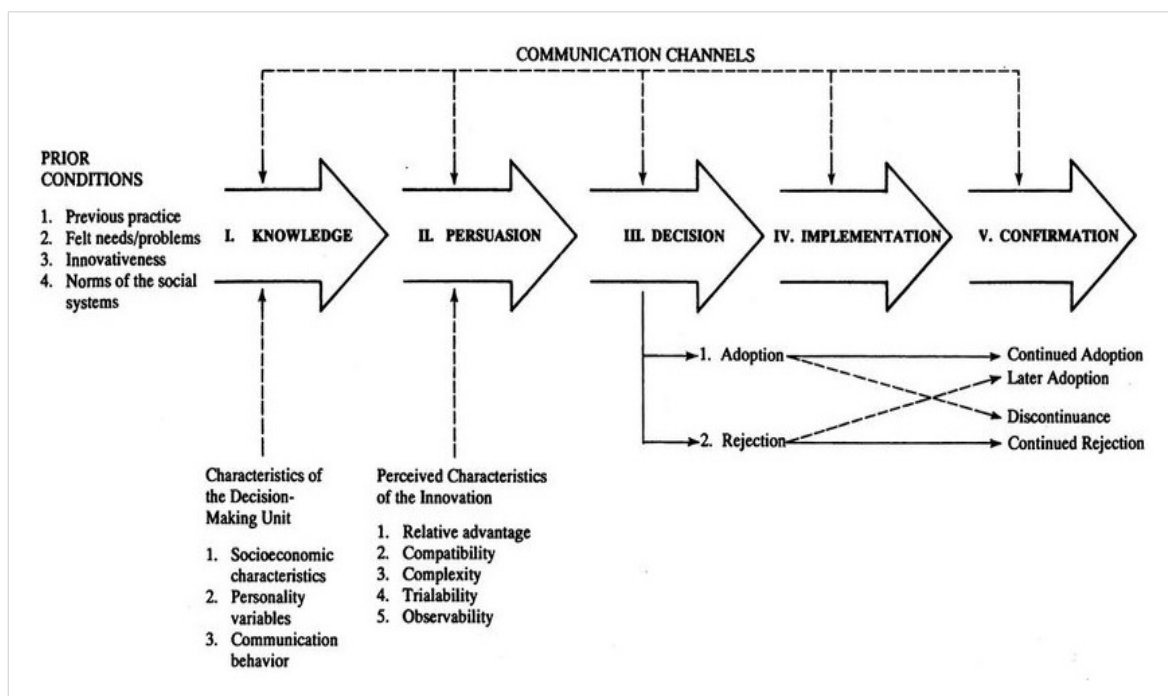


Figure 1. The five stages of the innovation decision process. From *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th ed.), by E. M. Rogers, 2003, p. 170. Copyright 2003 by Free Press.

The innovation decision process is an information-seeking and information-processing decision-making model (Boonying, Noosorn, & Kanokthet, 2014; Kim, 2015; Rogers, 2003). During information-seeking activities, individuals engage in a mental process to determine whether to adopt or reject an innovation (Nordin, Redza, & Saad, 2017). Likewise, during information-processing activities, individuals seek to reduce the uncertainty about positive and negative consequences of adopting or rejecting an innovation (Kim, 2015; Rogers, 2003). Thus, individuals who are aware of an innovation

aim to make sense of an innovation and learn how it could apply to their specific situations.

Some individuals, however, are uncertain about innovations and their relevance to the individuals' specific situations. Diffusion researchers have used the innovation decision process to elucidate how and why potential and actual adopters of innovations apply innovations to their specific situations (Burgess & Paguio, 2016; Lopez-Fernandez, Serrano-Bedia, & Gómez-López, 2016; Rogers, 2003). Ojobor (2015) asserted that the innovation decision process is a mental framework that individuals could use to reduce uncertainty about the adoption or rejection of a new idea. In this study, I used the innovation decision process to elucidate how microenterprise owners leveraged social media benefits and implemented social media in their businesses, despite drawbacks and business constraints.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study was an exploratory single case study. Researchers use case study designs to conduct descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) suggested that researchers could determine the research design for a study by assessing the nature of the research questions, the extent of the researchers' control over behavioral events, and the degree of focus on contemporary events. An exploratory case study design was applicable to this study because of the following: (a) the research questions were *how* in nature; (b) I had no control over behavioral events, such as the time and effort participants invested in performing

information-seeking and information-processing activities; and (c) the social media use, if any, by microenterprise owners in rural T&T was a contemporary event.

The focus of this study was microenterprise owners' management of social media usage, including their uncertainty about consequences and perceptions of drawbacks and benefits of rejecting or adopting social media strategies. The instruments for collecting the qualitative data for this study were researcher-designed and validated by peer reviewers. These instruments included a business demographic survey to qualify participants and an interview and field notes observation sheet to record observations and bracket my biases. In addition, I used an interview protocol to standardize the interview process and an audio recorder to record the interview data.

The participation selection logic was unique to T&T, due to its diverse cultural setting. The most applicable strategy for recruiting participants in that setting was purposive, in which the researcher chooses participants because they have experienced the phenomenon of interest and their characteristics will address the research questions (Patton, 2014). Thus, I selected the participants who would best represent the unit of analysis, which was a set of microenterprise owners in rural T&T with social media awareness and at least 2 years of business experience.

Alternatively, snowball sampling was appropriate. In snowball sampling, the researcher asks current participants for recommendations to other prospective participants who may qualify and be interested in taking part in the study (Patton, 2014; Stake, 2010). I discuss these strategies in the Methodology section.

I qualified research participants for this study using a business demographic survey, which I also used to collect descriptive data on the unit of analysis. I began data collection after microenterprise owners signed consent forms and agreed to participate in the study. I interviewed 14 participants, at which point saturation occurred. There is additional discussion on saturation in chapter 3. At the conclusion of the interviews, I transcribed, triangulated, and analyzed data. The method for analyzing data included the following: (a) generating codes for each data set collected, (b) using MAXQDA (data analysis software) to assist with descriptive coding for each set, (c) manually recombining the data and generating themes, and (d) triangulating between interview responses, on-site observations, and survey data.

Definitions

The following definitions are included in this study:

Alexa's traffic ranking: A website's traffic ranking is a measure of unique visitors and page views. Alexa, owned by Amazon, Inc., aggregates global social media usage behavior (Diel, 2017; Mohammad Shafi & Hanief Bhat, 2014).

Consequences: These are the changes that occur in an individual or a social system because of the adoption or rejection of innovations (Rogers, 2003).

Diffusion: This term refers to the planned and the spontaneous spread of new ideas (Rogers, 2003).

E-commerce: This term is the abbreviation for *electronic commerce*, a concept that denotes that individuals conduct transactions electronically, either in a business-to-

business or business-to-consumer environment (Bhattacharya & Mishra, 2015; Mazzarol, 2015).

Innovation: This term refers to an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or members of a social system (Abrahamson, 1991; Rogers, 2003). Innovation is “the creation or the adoption of new ideas, products, services, programs, technology, policy, structure or new administrative systems” (Pichlak, 2016, p. 476).

Innovation decision process: The innovation decision process is an information-seeking and information-processing activity in which some individuals feel motivated to reduce uncertainty about the advantages and disadvantages of innovations (Kim, 2015; Lopez et al., 2016; Rogers, 2003).

Innovativeness: This concept is “the openness and creativity of individuals, and a willingness to look for new ways and solutions” (Sharma & Tarp, 2018, p. 433).

Meaning: This term refers to the subjective and frequently unconscious perception of innovations by members of a social system (Rogers, 2003).

Microenterprises: Microenterprises are firms with no more than five employees, excluding the owner; with an asset value of \$15,000-70,000; and an annual turnover of up to \$295,000 (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014). In T&T, microenterprises may be businesses in which the owners sell food and beverages, clothing, shoes, jewelry, pottery, and arts and crafts. Other microenterprise businesses may offer landscaping and hospitality services.

Microenterprise owner: This is an individual who owns, operates, and manages a microenterprise in rural T&T. For this study, the owner was also the principal manager;

owners denotes primary managers as well. Only owners, who may also be owner/managers, were recruited. Separate managers who were not owners were not eligible for participation.

Proinnovation bias: This term refers to the acceptance of an innovation by members of a social system and the rapid diffusion of the innovation throughout the system with little questioning, rejection, or revision (Rogers, 2003).

Social media: This term, used in the singular in this study, refers to World Wide Web-based, or web-based, platforms accessible as a content generator, a communications channel, and the content through the Internet. Social media combines user-generated data and the social media technologies used to generate that data. Users communicate with other social media users through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp (Fuchs, 2017).

Social media marketing: This term is “an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that includes social media use to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders” (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017, p. 123).

Social media strategy: This is “a goal-directed planning process for creating user-generated content, driven by a group of Internet applications, to create a unique and valuable competitive position” (Effing & Spil, 2016, p. 2).

Trinbagonians: This term refers to the nationals of Trinidad and Tobago (Green, 2002).

Trialability: This term indicates the extent to which individuals can experiment with innovations and learn by doing (Rogers, 2003).

Uncertainty: This is the degree to which potential adopters perceive alternatives to the occurrence of an event and the relative probabilities of these alternatives (Kim, 2015; Rogers, 2003).

World Wide Web: The World Wide Web is also known as WWW, Web, and W3. Tim Berners-Lee (Berners-Lee, Cailliau, Groff, & Pollerman, 1992) developed the Web as part of a network information project at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). The web is the largest repository of codified knowledge in the world (Calaresu & Shiri, 2015; Tamary & Feitelson, 2015). In this study, the World Wide Web is referred to as *the web*.

Assumptions

The declaration of assumptions in qualitative research is essential to the credibility of a research study (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2014). For this study, I made five assumptions about the people of T&T. (a) Most Trinbagonians are avid social media users. (b) Trinbagonians, including microenterprise owners, understand the form and function of social media. (c) Microenterprise owners desire to grow the businesses they own, operate, or manage. (d) Social media has disrupted the traditional ways that Trinbagonians communicate with each other and how business owners interact with their target audiences. (e) All study participants voluntarily participated in the study, willingly shared their perceptions and thoughts, and accurately recalled past events.

I made these assumptions because, as a Trinbagonian, I am familiar with the struggle that microenterprise owners face in rural T&T, the Trinbagonian culture, and social media usage nationwide. However, for this study, to ensure accurate data analysis,

I was mindful of my biases, as discussed in the Role of the Researcher section in chapter 3. Also, by *bracketing*, I ensured that my biases did not impact the research findings (Moustakas,1994).

Scope and Delimitations

Social media and innovation decisions are broad subject areas. The scope and delimitations of a study establish the boundaries a researcher has set for the study (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2014). This study included 14 microenterprise owners with social media experience who were T&T nationals and conducted business in rural T&T for at least 2 years. The study did not include startups; small, medium, or large enterprises; or any enterprises that the government of T&T did not categorize as microenterprises. In addition, the study did not include participants with no social media experience.

Further, the twin isles of T&T represent one nation and not two separate islands in the Caribbean. Accordingly, I considered the municipalities and cities in Tobago as part of T&T and not separate from Trinidad. The rural business climate in Trinidad is representative of the rural business climate in Tobago (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, 2012). Other Caribbean islands were excluded from the study because of the study purpose and focus on T&T exclusively.

I was interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how microenterprise owners in rural T&T managed social media usage in their businesses, despite social media drawbacks and business constraints. Thus, a qualitative single case study, and not a

quantitative or mixed-method study, was most appropriate for this study. Given the scope and delimitations of this study, I saw no potential transferability issues.

Limitations

Limitations are outside of a researcher's control and represent potential weaknesses in a study (Maxwell, 2013; Yin 2014). Some aspects of this study were outside of my control. For instance, during interviews, some participants agreed to be audio recorded and several others did not. Interview data collection procedures differed in those instances, although not significantly, and I recorded interview responses using a tablet and keyboard. I addressed this limitation by asking participants to check my interpretations of interview responses.

Further, participants' educational levels, business experiences, and social media experiences differed. As a result, the interview experiences with participants were not all the same. Participants may not all have been equally perceptive or able to articulate their perceptions with the same clarity. Also, participants may not have recalled experiences with equal accuracy. I addressed this limitation by using an interview protocol to conduct semistructured interviews, member checking during interviews to clarify my interpretations of interview question responses, and member checking of interview transcripts at the conclusion of the data collection process.

The proinnovation bias towards social media usage by T&T nationals was another limitation. This bias could have affected the study outcomes. I addressed the bias by recording in a journal or *bracketing* my thoughts and feelings about participants and their business settings.

Significance of the Study

The uniqueness of this study may result from the status of T&T as a developing nation in the Caribbean. Researchers have not yet thoroughly examined social media use from a microenterprise perspective, specifically in T&T. This lack of research is evident in the gaps in existing literature regarding how microenterprise owners in rural T&T can leverage the use of social media in both social and business settings. I could locate no scholarly studies on how microenterprise owners in developing countries leverage the benefits of social media, despite drawbacks and business constraints. For T&T, I could find no government studies on how Trinbagonians use social media strategies to grow their businesses and meet competition. The results of this study could contribute significantly to theory, practice, and positive social change in T&T as well as in other developing countries.

Significance to Theory

Since the inception of Rogers's theory of diffusion in 1962, researchers have conducted both variance and process diffusion research. Rogers (2003) referred to variance research as quantitative research and process research as qualitative research. Diffusion researchers have conducted primarily quantitative research, and the literature lacks qualitative studies on the innovation decision process (Kim, 2015).

Rogers (2003) asserted that if researchers conducted more qualitative diffusion studies, the results might strengthen diffusion research. In qualitative diffusion research, the objective is to illuminate and understand the management of innovation adopters versus quantification or prediction of adoption behavior. In conducting this study based

on diffusion research, I extended Rogers's innovation decision process to microenterprise owners in rural T&T. This extension and the study results could strengthen the body of diffusion research.

Significance to Practice

Social media usage by microenterprise owners is a relatively new idea that is understudied by diffusion researchers. Individuals can use social media to grow their businesses and to compete (Jamak et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2015). Microenterprise owners compete with larger enterprises that are more technology savvy, which is a relatively new development. Whiting and Deshpande (2016) suggested that the use of social media by enterprises to stay competitive is a relatively new idea. The rapid diffusion of social media usage throughout social systems worldwide indicates that people are embracing new ways to communicate and socialize, in both personal and business activities (Broekemier, Chau, & Seshadri, 2015; Musa, Rahim, Azmi, Shibghatullah, & Othman, 2016).

This study is significant to business practice because it included an exploration of the mental framework that microenterprise owners in rural T&T used to make innovation decisions that could enhance their business growth and competitiveness. These decisions related to their decisions to use social media for business purposes. Moreover, the results of the study illuminated how these owners managed social media usage during challenging economic conditions and despite business constraints.

Also, these findings confirmed that microenterprise owners in rural T&T either avoided social media for business or aligned social media with their business goals and

objectives in anticipation of business growth. Government officials could use the findings of this study to guide innovative business practices to impact microenterprise growth, thereby aiding the entire economy. Business consultants and change agents could refer to this study to promote reasonable and effective enhancements for traditional business strategies.

Significance to Social Change

The study findings may contribute to positive social change by illuminating how microenterprise owners in rural T&T used emerging ICT, such as social media, to counterpoise the impact of business constraints on business growth and competitiveness. Social change is a process in which the structure and functions of a social system change because of one or many forces or actions in infrastructure, technology, economics, or groups (Rogers, 2003). The per-capita income of microenterprise owners in developing countries is often low, as in T&T, and the innovative use of ICT, which includes social media, may eventually lead nations to greater economic prosperity (Jamak et al., 2017; Vecchiato, 2017). Microenterprise owners in T&T and other Caribbean countries may reference the study findings to make intelligent innovation decisions that could ultimately impact their own and the nation's economic development.

The results of this study revealed how local microenterprise owners used their business acumen to curtail the drawbacks and leverage the benefits of social media. Business owners, change agents, and government officials may use the results of this study to ground social media training initiatives, explain social media, and prepare microenterprise owners for business growth and competitiveness. These initiatives may

positively impact economic growth at local and national levels. The study findings and resultant implementation may also be relevant to populations in other Caribbean islands and other developing countries.

Summary and Transition

Microenterprise owners in rural T&T need to grow their businesses and meet competition to survive. The focus of the study was specific to social media management by microenterprise owners in rural T&T. A gap exists in the literature on peer-reviewed studies of microenterprises and the business use of social media in developing countries, and specifically in T&T. Thus, this study on how Trinbagonian microenterprise owners managed social media usage was relevant and necessary.

The research method for this study was a qualitative single case study research design. I used Rogers's (2003) innovation decision process, also known as the uncertainty reduction process, as the conceptual framework for this study, to frame the data in a systematic fashion. After collecting data from multiple sources, I conducted a thematic analysis of the data using MAXQDA to assist. I also reviewed and discussed assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of this study.

The study findings may be significant to social change, practice, and theory because the findings illuminated the decisions, adoption behavior, social media strategies, and survival strategies of microenterprise owners in rural T&T. The applications of the findings to microenterprises in developing countries may lead to more significant economic development and prosperity. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature pertinent to this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore how microenterprise owners in rural T&T could benefit from adopting social media in their business operations. Many microenterprise owners recognize the urgency to develop social media competence to survive economic challenges (Balan & Rege, 2017; Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015). The specific problem was that microenterprise owners in T&T find it challenging to compete in local business settings with larger enterprises and more technologically savvy competitors (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2014).

Some microenterprise owners do not have the knowledge, skills, and resources that larger firms possess (Au & Tucker, 2018; Dukic et al., 2015; Jamak et al., 2017). Microenterprise owners in T&T face growth and competitive challenges due to larger and more resourceful competitors (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2014). Government analysts in T&T reported that the country could benefit economically from innovative business strategies (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2014). Social media strategies for business use are relatively new ways to enhance business activities.

The chapter begins with an overview of the literature search strategy and conceptual framework. The literature review follows and includes a synopsis of ICT, an explanation of microenterprises, and a discussion of social media strategies that enterprises use to stay competitive and grow. Additionally, I explore the constraints, barriers, and benefits of social media use by microenterprise owners in their management of business growth and competition.

Literature Search Strategy

To locate literature, I searched multidisciplinary databases and government websites, including websites managed by the government of T&T to locate reports published between 2012 and 2018 on its citizenry and economic challenges. The government websites included the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, the Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. I also searched the following ministerial Government of Trinidad and Tobago websites: Labor and Small Enterprise Development, Planning and Development, Science and Technology, Finance, Rural Development, and Local Government.

The five multidisciplinary databases I searched, using keywords, were Business Source Complete (EBSCOhost), Computers and Applied Sciences Complete (EBSCOhost), Emerald Management, ProQuest, and Science Direct. Search parameters included peer-reviewed articles with publication dates between 2014 and 2018. The keywords were the following: *Alexa, big data, business growth, case study, competitiveness, consequences, developing countries, diffusion, Facebook, Google, information and communications technology, innovations, innovativeness, innovation decisions, innovation decision process, government of Trinidad and Tobago, LinkedIn, meaning, microenterprises, platforms, research, sense-making, social change, social media, social networking, social networks, Trinidad and Tobago, Twitter, T&T, uncertainty, user-generated content, web platforms, WhatsApp, and World Wide Web.*

The combinations of the search terms I used in all databases were these:

- case study research and social media or innovations,
- developing country and innovativeness or business growth or competitiveness,
- developing country and microenterprises and social media,
- diffusion research or process research or case study research and social media,
- information and communications technology and microenterprises,
- innovation decision process and technology or information and communications technology or social media,
- innovation decisions and social media and microenterprises,
- innovation decisions and Trinidad and Tobago and microenterprises,
- microenterprise growth and developing countries,
- microenterprise growth and Trinidad and Tobago,
- microenterprises and innovations or innovativeness and social media,
- social commerce or social media marketing or social customer relationship management and microenterprises,
- social media and business growth or competitiveness,
- social media or innovation and consequences or uncertainty,
- social media platforms or social media technologies or social media,
- Trinidad and Tobago and business constraints,
- Trinidad and Tobago and economic growth,
- Trinidad and Tobago and social media, and
- Trinidad and Tobago or Caribbean and innovativeness or social media.

Most scholarly articles germane to this study were studies conducted on developed and developing nations and micro-, small, and medium enterprises. I found no relevant or current articles regarding how microenterprise owners in T&T used social media or how microenterprise owners in T&T mediated business growth challenges or made innovation decisions.

Conceptual Framework

The exploratory focus of this study was microenterprise owners' management of social media usage, including their uncertainty about consequences and perceptions of drawbacks and benefits of adopting or rejecting social media strategies. The conceptual framework was the innovation decision process, also known as the uncertainty reduction process. The innovation decision process evolved from Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory, which first emerged in 1962. Researchers have used this theory to explain how, why, and at what rate innovations are adopted and diffused through a social system (Kim, 2015).

Innovations are central to value creation and competitive advantage; innovations represent a means for enterprise growth and renewal (Audretsch, Coad, & Segarra, 2014). Rogers (2003) and Pichlak (2016) referred to an innovation as a new idea that individuals could identify by its form, function, and meaning. Wu and Chiu (2015) observed that adoption behavior is contingent on an innovation and how individuals make innovation decisions within a social system over time. Individuals use a mental framework to make decisions about whether to adopt or reject a new idea or innovation.

The innovation decision process can be a mental framework, communications channel, or decision-making model (Boonying et al., 2014; Kim, 2015; Pichlak, 2016). Rogers (2003) explained that diffusion researchers could use the innovation decision process to determine how and why individuals made innovation decisions before diffusion occurs within a social system. Dace, Egils, and Miquel-Ángel (2015) and Zemaitaitiene, Tiskute, and Tvaronaviciene (2016) asserted that individuals could use the innovation decision process to reduce uncertainty about the consequences of adopting innovations.

Other researchers have recognized the mental framework orientation of the innovation decision process. Dace et al. (2015) and Phonthanakitithaworn, Sellitto, and Fong (2016) suggested the innovation decision process is a mental framework that individuals could use to progress through the stages of knowledge and persuasion (information-seeking) and decision, implementation, and confirmation (information-processing) stages. This study included an exploration of the mental framework that microenterprise owners in rural T&T used to reduce the uncertainty of adopting social media to enhance their businesses.

During the innovation decision process, individuals develop attitudes toward an innovation and the consequences of adopting or rejecting that innovation. Individuals assimilate information they have gathered about innovations and form subjective perceptions about the relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability attributes of the innovations (Kim, 2015; Neuvonen, 2016; Rogers, 2003; Wu & Chiu, 2015). Rogers (2003) referred to subjective perceptions as the attitudes of

individuals toward the attributes of an innovation. These attitudes affect how individuals could make innovation decisions (Phonthanukitithaworn et al., 2016; Zemaitaitiene et al., 2016). Uncertainty about the consequences of adopting or rejecting an innovation could also impact innovation decisions. Effing and Spil (2016) and Kim (2015) suggested that consequences are the anticipated or actual barriers and opportunities individuals may experience before, during, and after making innovation decisions.

Researchers have successfully used the innovation decision process to interpret and explain adoption behavior by examining decision-making activities (He, Wang, Chen, & Zha, 2017). Burgess and Paguio (2016) used the innovation decision process to determine the issues that affected adoption behavior toward the use of ICT among home-based businesses in Melbourne, Australia. Lopez-Fernandez et al. (2016) examined the determinants (internal and external factors) of innovation decision behavior among small and medium family firms in Northern Spain. Lopez-Fernandez et al. simplified the innovation decision process to the decision to innovate and quest for how to innovate.

In this study, the emphasis was on optional innovation decisions. Kim (2015) postulated that change leaders within organizations examine the innovation decision processes organization members use to make optional decisions to determine how to resolve preceding organizational decisions. Kim warned that all organizational cultures might not be collectivistic, and individuals within the organization could use empirical-rational or normative approaches to make innovation decisions. Ogarca (2015) explained that innovation decisions are unique to each decision maker because individuals assimilate information based on whether they are intuitive or logical thinkers. In the

current study, T&T microenterprise owners made optional and varying innovation decisions about their adoption of innovations.

The innovation decision process is one of many decision-making models that researchers can use to examine or explain how individuals make decisions about adopting communications technologies. Researchers also use other models to determine decision behavior (e.g., the technology acceptance model, the unified theory of acceptance, and use of technology). The stages of the innovation decision process are the most relevant to the research questions of this study. Thus, I explored how microenterprise owners in T&T used the innovation decision process to reduce their uncertainty about the disadvantages (the drawbacks of social media strategies) and advantages (benefits of social media strategies) of an innovation (the new idea). The new idea was microenterprise owners' use of social media to overcome business constraints and to compete in rural T&T.

Literature Review

The literature review is an assimilation of the findings from an exhaustive search of the literature for articles that were relevant to this study. The purpose of this literature review was to present a thought-provoking discussion on the innovation decision process, microenterprise survival, business constraints, catalysts to business growth, and the drawbacks and benefits of social media strategies in business. I used primarily peer-reviewed articles from the last 5 years to support assertions I made in the literature review.

Uncertainty and Consequences of Adopting Innovations

The innovation decision process can reduce the uncertainty that some individuals may have about innovations. Individuals often seek information about an innovation (new idea) to cope with that uncertainty (Rogers, 2003). Innovations are typically technological innovations that could result in benefits for potential adopters (Abrahamson, 1991; Zemaitaitiene et al., 2016). Potential adopters try to make sense of innovations by reducing the uncertainty about the consequences of adopting or rejecting innovations. Uncertainty could lead to risk averseness to a new idea by potential adopters, even with the urgency to adopt innovations to stay competitive (Jones et al., 2015).

The consequences of adopting innovations are not always clear, thus uncertain. When clear, consequences are also difficult to quantify; they are not absolute. Consequences are relative to the experiences of individuals when they apply (that is, implement and confirm) an innovation to their specific situations (Kim, 2015; Rogers, 2003). Individuals take risks when they adopt or reject an innovation despite any lingering uncertainty about an innovation.

Kim (2015) postulated that the adoption or rejection of innovations might result in either negative or positive consequences or both. Negative consequences cause unexpected detriments in loss of time, difficulty competing, and slow or no business growth (Petrov, Zubac, & Milojevic, 2015). Positive consequences may benefit microenterprises and result in windfall gains. Windfall gains may manifest as innovativeness, competitive advantage, and business growth (Effing & Spil, 2016;

Hassan, Nadzim, & Shiratuddin, 2015). Consequences unfold as individuals adopt or reject, continue or discontinue, or reinvent innovations.

Uncertainty lessens over time, as consequences unfold. With time and observation, individuals may reject the innovation they adopted, or adopt the innovation that they had previously rejected (Rogers, 2003). Individuals conduct information-seeking and information-processing activities to reduce the uncertainty they may feel about the consequences of adopting or rejecting innovations.

Information-Seeking Activities

Information-seeking activities comprise the knowledge and persuasion stages of the innovation decision process. The knowledge stage is crucial to the innovation decision process, without which an individual cannot progress to the persuasion stage and may instead reject the innovation (Kim, 2015; Zhang, Guo, Lai, Yin, & Meng, 2017). Individuals must first know about an innovation to form attitudes about it. Individuals may be acquainted with an innovation but may not know how to define its relevance to their situations, in which case the persuasion stage will not ensue. Similarly, if individuals know about an innovation but reject it, the persuasion stage will not follow (Zemaitaitiene et al., 2016). Knowledge is relevant to the entire innovation decision process.

During the knowledge stage, individuals inquire into the nature of the innovation, how it works, and why it works (Rogers, 2003). Subsequently, during the persuasion stage, where individuals' mental activities involve feelings, they typically develop subjective perceptions about the attributes of the innovation in the present and future.

These attributes are the relative advantages, compatibility, and complexity of an innovation (Burgess & Paguio, 2016; Wu & Chiu, 2015). Individuals may reject innovations due to a lack of available knowledge or their preconceived negative attitudes toward the attributes of an innovation (Rogers, 2003). Rogers also suggested that individuals continue through the innovation decision process and adopt an innovation if they have positive attitudes toward the attributes of an innovation.

Some researchers have asserted that attitudes determine adoption behavior. Davis (1989) posited that individuals adopt an innovation based on the degree to which they perceived it is useful and easy to use. Davis theorized that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use moderate attitudes toward adopting an innovation, and negative attitudes toward an innovation impact the intention to use that innovation. Fishbein and Ajzen (1977) claimed that individuals' attitudes toward an innovation and their subjective norms moderate behavioral intentions and then behavior.

Some researchers discount attitudes as a moderator of behavioral intentions. Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) excluded attitudes as a moderating factor for behavioral intentions. Vagnami and Volpe (2017) listed attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control as moderators of adoption behavior. Rogers (2003) affirmed that the mental framework individuals use to make innovation decisions (adopting or rejecting an innovation) incorporates a strategic progression from information-seeking activities to information-processing activities. This mental framework is a conduit for individuals to transmute behavioral intentions into innovation decisions.

Information-Processing Activities

The decision stage is the onset of the information-processing aspect of the innovation decision process. If individuals' attitudes toward an innovation are favorable, the decision stage ensues. Then, individuals' mental activities involve deciding, and the innovation may be adopted or rejected (Rogers, 2003; Zemaitaitiene et al., 2016).

At this juncture, individuals attempt to address the uncertainty they may feel about the consequences of adopting an innovation. They may inquire about where to obtain the innovation, how to use it, what problems may arise, and how to solve those problems (Rogers, 2003). This inquiry results from uncertainty individuals may feel about the consequences of adopting an innovation. Once individuals receive helpful and satisfactory answers to their questions, they decide to adopt and use the innovation or reject it. This adoption behavior also occurs at the confirmation stage of the innovation decision process (Kim, 2015; Zemaitaitiene et al., 2016).

After deciding to adopt an innovation, individuals implement and then confirm whether the innovation is applicable to their particular situations. During these two final stages of the innovation decision process, individuals process how and why the innovation applies or does not apply to their situations (Kim, 2015). The culmination of the innovation decision process is a reduction in the uncertainty individuals feel toward the anticipated and unanticipated consequences of adopting or rejecting an innovation (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016; Zemaitaitiene et al., 2016).

If uncertainty continues, or the adoption of the innovation does not fit their situation, individuals may decide to abandon or reject the innovation. Rogers (2003)

referred to this rejection as *discontinuance*. Otherwise, individuals might continue to understand and apply the innovation and adjust it to fit their situation. Rogers also referred to this adjustment process as *reinvention*.

Evidence of Innovation Decisions in Trinidad and Tobago

Trinbagonians have access to available IT infrastructure and ICT. T&T ranked 67 out of 139 countries in the 2016 World Economic Forum (2016) networked readiness index. The government of T&T conducted its first *Digital Divide Survey* in August 2007, covering the years 1999 to 2006 (Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013). In 2007, enumerators traveled to remote areas and collected data with paper surveys. In 2013, the government conducted its second *Digital Divide Survey*, covering the years 2007-2012. In 2012, surveyors used a mobile survey, which was reportedly well received by participants (Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013). Between 2012 and 2016, mobile penetration rates and mobile Internet penetration rates had increased (Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2017).

The results of the second *Digital Divide Survey* were the following: (a) most households had access to computers; (b) the majority of the population had access to the Internet from fixed locations or via mobile devices; and (c) most mobile users subscribe to more than one mobile service provider and own more than one phone—one for each competing mobile service provider (Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013). The two mobile service providers are BMobile (a division of Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago [TSTT]) and Digicel. Both operate on a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) network.

Two enterprises own TSTT jointly. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago National Enterprises Limited (NEL) owns 51% and Cable and Wireless 49%. NEL is an investment holding company, incorporated in August 1999, on behalf of the government of T&T (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, National Enterprises Limited, 2018; Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2017). The findings from the second *Digital Divide Survey* confirmed Trinbagonians' accessibility to ICT that included a computer, Internet, and mobile technologies.

Trinbagonians also have access to social media, although the government of T&T did not aggregate Internet or social media usage data. The findings from the second *Digital Divide Survey* did not include social media usage behavior. There is no available data from government surveys on how Trinbagonians use social media platforms and disseminate user-generated data. However, a significant number of Trinbagonians are avid Internet and social media users, as indicated by my exploration of behavioral usage data from Alexa Internet, Facebook, Instagram, and Google websites. In the absence of government and scholarly studies, I explored these websites to understand how Trinbagonians used the Internet and social media. The most popular websites in T&T are Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Amazon (Alexa Internet, 2018). Although the data published on these websites are not peer-reviewed, the websites and data are current and relevant to this study.

Alexa Internet is an Amazon, Inc., subsidiary and has been aggregating global and country-specific traffic rankings data for almost two decades. Amazon, Inc. acquired Alexa Internet in 1999 (Jalal, Sutradhar, Sahu, Mukhopadhyay, & Biswas, 2015).

Facebook is the most popular social networking platform on the web (Pew Internet, 2017). Facebook acquired Instagram shortly after going public in 2012, with WhatsApp in 2014. Facebook has also aggregated social media behavioral data across those platforms for over 5 years. WhatsApp and Instagram are popular mobile social media applications (Balan & Rege, 2017). Alphabet, Inc. is the parent company of both Google and YouTube and has aggregated usage data across both platforms for over a decade. Google is the most popular search engine on the web, and YouTube is the most popular video-sharing site (Alexa Internet, 2018; Pew Internet, 2017).

The behavioral usage data from Facebook, Google, and Amazon quantify how often Trinbagonians used social media. Based on traffic rankings, Alexa Internet (2018) reported that Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Amazon were the top sites Trinbagonian Internet users visit daily. In March 2018, a targeted advertising search at Facebook revealed that 74% of Trinbagonian Internet users actively used Facebook or Instagram. Also, in March 2018, a targeted advertising search revealed that 78% of Trinbagonian Internet users were active Google or YouTube users. Fatehkia, Kashyap, and Weber (2018) referred to these data as *ad audience data*. The ad audience data from Facebook, Alexa, and Google showed significant social media usage by Trinbagonian Internet users. In addition, the most recent statistic on Internet user penetration was 63% in T&T (Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2017).

The government of T&T calculated Internet user penetration by dividing the number of Internet users by the total population. As of 2016, the total number of Internet users was 851,000, and the total population of T&T was 1.35 million people

(Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2017). The total number of mobile Internet users was 707,300, and the mobile Internet user penetration was 52%. T&T has the highest mobile penetration rate in the CARICOM (Caribbean Community, an organization of 20 Caribbean nations with the purpose of members' economic integration and cooperation). The CARICOM member states include Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and T&T (CARICOM, 2019).

Trinbagonians made innovation decisions to use mobile technology, computer technology, Internet technology, and social media technology. Trinbagonians have learned to use (that is, implement and confirm) the available, accessible, and affordable ICT, such as social media platforms. A significant percentage of T&T Internet users adopted the use of social media for social or business reasons. Many target audiences reside in the social media domain. Microenterprise owners, who may or may not be social media savvy, could benefit from adopting social media strategies to reach target audiences.

Microenterprises

The government of T&T categorizes microenterprises as a form of small enterprise. Small enterprises and microenterprises play a critical role in stimulating the economy of T&T (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, 2012; Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2014). Small and medium enterprises contribute significantly to economic

growth in developed and developing countries (Jamak et al., 2014; Jamak et al., 2017; Zastempowski & Przybylska, 2016). Micro- and small enterprises, such as those in T&T, serve as a source of employment and catalyst for the eradication of poverty in developing countries (Isaga et al., 2015; Odongo & Wang, 2016; Petrescu, 2016).

In T&T, microenterprises are firms with no more than five employees, excluding the owner; an asset value of \$15,000-\$70,000; and an annual turnover of up to \$295,000 (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014). In contrast, mini-microenterprises have one employee, an asset value below \$15,000, and an annual turnover of up to \$36,000 (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014). The business growth pattern of small enterprises in T&T typically progresses from a mini-microenterprise to a microenterprise to a small enterprise and then to a medium enterprise. The culmination of this growth pattern, coupled with inherent capital gains, could improve distressed economies at local and national levels (Jamak et al., 2014; Jamak et al., 2017). Such improvements could translate into a significant reduction of poverty and unemployment.

Several researchers have correlated microenterprise growth with economic growth because of a rise in self-employment, reduction in poverty, and contributions to GDP (Jamak et al., 2017; Omri et al., 2015). In T&T, microenterprises (including mini-microenterprises) comprise 90% of the nation's businesses (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014). Microenterprise growth is germane to the economic health of developing nations such as

T&T, and owners play a critical role in microenterprise growth. In this study, I concluded from the research findings how microenterprises in T&T could positively impact employment rates and help eliminate poverty through business growth.

Microenterprise Owners

Microenterprise owners typically assume the roles of owner, operator, manager, and employee, as necessary, due to limited resources. Limited resources include operating funds, time, skills, competitiveness, and innovativeness (Jones et al., 2015; Lee, 2014). Owners typically start their businesses with saved funds or funds they borrowed from close friends or family members to create employment and income opportunities for survival (Agus, Isa, Farid, & Permono, 2015). In some instances, owners secure small loans from credit unions or banks or acquire grants from government agencies tasked with supporting micro- and small enterprises (Ahmedova, 2015; Zondi, 2017). Otherwise, microenterprise owners improvise and start their businesses without funds, loans, or grants.

Recognizing that microenterprise growth is beneficial to local economies, the government of T&T has always shown interest in stimulating the growth of micro- and small enterprises. The government provides support for registered microenterprises, which is not available to nonregistered enterprises (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014; Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2014). Support includes grants, government-backed loans, business plan development, and training.

Despite the many incentives the government offers enterprise owners to register their businesses, unregistered microenterprises are common in T&T. Some microenterprise owners do not have available time, or perhaps the tenacity, to complete the registration process and leverage government support (Kersten, Harms, Liket, & Maas, 2017; Zondi, 2017). Microenterprise owners cannot always balance survival with the tasks and activities necessary to achieve business success and growth (Isaga et al., 2015). Some owners struggle with business growth initiatives on a daily basis, given ongoing business constraints.

In the struggle to survive, some microenterprise owners adhere to business strategies they know, even though those strategies may be outdated and may sabotage their business growth and competitiveness (Jones et al., 2015). Petrescu (2016) suggested that microenterprise owners could achieve success, and business growth, if they could adapt to warranted change. Microenterprise owners, aware of disruptive innovations and uncertain of the consequences of adopting such innovations, sometimes make efforts to accommodate innovations (Vecchiato, 2017).

However, with limited resources and business constraints, owners might find it challenging to expand on awareness knowledge about innovations. Jamak et al. (2017) posited that microenterprise owners need access to information to make competent management and innovation decisions. Such decisions could aid their business growth, competitiveness, and business success.

Constraints to Business Growth

Microenterprises worldwide face deterrents to business growth and competitiveness. These deterrents, or constraints, include deficiencies in networking, marketing, and business planning, which impede business growth (Agbenyegah, 2018; Gherhes, Williams, Vorley, & Vasconcelos, 2016). Microenterprises in T&T face similar constraints.

In T&T during 2014, the latest available business confidence survey reports conducted by the Central Bank indicated that the major constraints to micro-, small, and medium enterprises were shortages of skilled workers, access to finances, and competition (Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, 2014). The Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (2018) reported a general slowdown in the country's economic activities between 2015 and 2017. The state of the T&T economy in 2018 at this writing was an indicator that enterprises continued to struggle with business constraints. Specifically, the constraints were limited time, limited operating funds, limited technical skills, and a deficiency in management competencies.

Limited time. Microenterprise owners have limited time. They need time to conduct daily business activities, leaving little time to focus on managing the business (Gherhes et al., 2016), and they must often operate singlehandedly. Consequently, owners have inadequate time to acquire new skills in a formal setting or leverage government incentives that may be available. Sharafizad (2018) posited that microenterprise owners improvise by learning new skills through collaboration with other small businesses.

Microenterprise owners are not always able to afford additional employees to assist with daily operations. Chen and Kuo (2017) posited that microenterprise owners' learned by implementing new ideas and developing management skills as they gained increased business experience. During the demographic-business survey, most participants in this study listed time as one of the major business constraints that deter their business growth. Further, many participants admitted to learning incrementally over limited time as they conducted the daily operations of their businesses.

Limited operating funds. An economic divide exists between larger enterprises and smaller enterprises. Microenterprises are generally unable to compete with larger and more sophisticated enterprises (Lee et al., 2016). Larger enterprises have greater access than smaller ones to financing for investment in innovations to enhance business strategies, to hire employees for necessary assistance, and to stimulate business growth (Alleyne et al., 2017; Jamak et al., 2017; Nugroho & Andadari, 2014). Smaller enterprises, such as microenterprises, face disadvantages because they do not have the same resources as larger enterprises and therefore cannot compete at the same level (Petrov et al., 2015).

Accordingly, larger enterprises are often more innovative, competitive, competent, and resourceful than smaller ones. However, smaller enterprises have great opportunities to stimulate local and national economies (Odongo & Wang, 2016; Thapa, 2015). Thus, smaller enterprises can impact economic growth.

Limited technology skills. The struggle for survival may force microenterprise owners to adopt new strategies to grow and to compete with technology-skilled

competitors. Many microenterprise owners are unable to develop the strategies needed to sustain and grow their businesses because they lack adequate knowledge and technology skills and cannot afford to hire technological help. Alleyne et al. (2017) and Lee et al. (2016) observed that small enterprise owners feel pressured to focus on innovativeness because they believed it necessary to compete with larger enterprises at the same level.

In the Caribbean, which includes developing nations such as T&T, innovativeness is a pathway to business growth and a driver of competitiveness (Alleyne et al., 2017). Microenterprise owners may not know how to adapt to innovations rapidly enough to match competitors, especially in the continuously changing competitive business landscape (Rydén et al., 2015). Nationals of T&T have access to ICT and are avid ICT users, specifically with mobile technology and social media technology. However, the owners possess limited knowledge of how to innovate using ICT.

These owners may not realize the relevance of leveraging technology and acquiring technology skills. Zondi (2017) suggested that it is important that enterprise owners save the funds necessary to acquire the information technology skills they need. However, microenterprise owners cannot always accumulate extra funds when they are struggling to survive severely challenging economic times.

Alleyne et al. (2017) noted that nationals of developing countries tend to absorb existing technology rather than create their own. This tendency is evident in T&T, in which both business owners and nationals use ICT innovated by experts from other countries. Radzi, Nor, and Ali (2017) postulated that microenterprise owners and

managers should recognize the positive impact technology can have on efficiency, performance, and competitiveness.

Deficiency in management competencies. Microenterprise owners lack the management competencies to promote business growth. A deficiency in management competencies is evident throughout developing nations worldwide (Baporikar, Nambira, & Gomxos, 2016; Zondi, 2017). Microenterprise owners do not always have the time or the funds to acquire or hone new technology or management skills or management personnel. Owners sometimes seek business advice from peers, which may be misguided or not necessarily apply to their business situations (Kuhn, Galloway, & Collins-Williams, 2016).

Braidford, Drummond, and Stone (2017) suggested that the mindsets and temperaments of enterprise owners impact business performance. Sharma and Tarp (2018) explained that management practices evolve from a combination of an innovative mindset and personality traits. Many microenterprise owners who do not have formal training in management tend to rely on personal charm or affability and prior knowledge of the market within which they compete to survive (Braidford et al., 2017; Li Sa & Chai, 2018). However, such traits may not compensate for clear business growth strategies, and microenterprise owners could benefit more directly from industry-specific best practices.

In Nkonkobe, South Africa, a lack of management experience, skills, and knowledge were major factors that hindered business growth and contributed to the failure of small and microenterprises (Chimucheka & Mandipaka, 2015). In Indonesia, common constraints to business growth in rural areas included financial barriers,

marketing challenges, and lack of management competence (Utami & Lantu, 2014). In Nairobi, Kenya, Odongo, and Wang (2016) conducted a quantitative study among 130 micro- and small enterprises. The researchers reported that management incompetence, improper marketing strategies, and low innovation levels were among the major hindrances to small and microenterprise business growth, development, and competitiveness. Similar reasons exist in T&T for slow microenterprise business growth.

Catalysts for Business Growth

Catalysts for microenterprise business growth include innovativeness and competitiveness (Ahmedova, 2015; Jean, 2017; Łącka, 2015). The key driver of business growth is a shift towards the use of applicable technology innovations to enhance business strategies (Audretsch et al., 2014; Milojevic, Damnjanovic, & Milovanovic, 2015; Yoo, Choo, & Lee, 2018). Microenterprise owners often use social media platforms, which are free, as part of a social media strategy to enhance business growth and secure competitive position (Mack, Marie-Pierre, & Redican, 2017). Without such strategies, business growth initiatives may not reach fruition, and the drawbacks of using social media may compound business constraints (Williams & Hausman, 2017). Nonetheless, for the typical microenterprise owner, innovativeness and competitiveness are crucial to drive business and impact economic growth.

Innovativeness. Innovativeness is the ability to envision and imagine new ideas to use in unique ways that could potentially mediate pressing issues, such as business growth and competitiveness (Jamak et al., 2017; Lesáková, 2014). The new idea of using social media as a catalyst for business growth is a valid one, given how avidly target

audiences use social media. Dukic et al. (2015) asserted that competitiveness is largely dependent on the acceptance and use of modern technologies within an enterprise. Effing and Spil (2016) referred to this type of innovativeness as a social media strategy.

A social media strategy is a cost-effective way for microenterprise owners to increase sales, grow their businesses, and stay competitive, despite limited resources (Effing & Spil, 2016). Social media strategies reflect the innovativeness of the enterprise to meet business growth challenges. This level of innovativeness could potentially improve microenterprise owners' competitive edge (Alleyne et al., 2017).

Competitiveness. Competitiveness is the extent to which enterprise owners could enhance business acumen and improve business processes and operations (Agus et al., 2015). Dukic et al. (2015) advised that enterprises, whatever their type and size, should adapt to emerging technologies to stay competitive. Microenterprises in the developing world face an exigency to stay competitive with more technologically-proficient and resourceful competitors (Şener, Savrul, & Aydın, 2014; Yüzbaşıoğlu, Çelik, & Topsakal, 2014). Braojos-Gomez et al. (2015) posited that enterprise owners felt an urgency to develop social media competence because key competitors achieved business gains using social media.

Early adopters of social media generally secure a competitive edge (Effing & Spil, 2016). Lee (2018) suggested that enterprise owners should monitor and analyze the user-generated content from their social media profiles and that of their competitors to secure a competitive edge. Owners could also benefit from learning about social media platforms and the features their competitors used. With such mindfulness, enterprise

owners could strategically use social media as a “competitive marketing weapon” (Hassan et al., 2015, p. 262).

Social media platforms. Many definitions of social media exist, and some are misleading. Several researchers have referred to social media as web-based applications, Internet-based channels, Web 2.0 platforms, social media platforms, social media sites, or social networking sites (Carr & Hayes, 2015; Obar & Wildman; Power, 2014). Social media platforms evolved from the shift towards a more dynamic (Web 2.0) and less static (Web 1.0) World Wide Web (Sharif, Troshani, & Davidson, 2015). Csordás and Gáti (2014) described social media as a collection of platforms that could facilitate two-way communications and act as a bridge over which ideas, information, and values could flow. Bányai (2016) defined social media as a “highly dynamic changing tool” (p. 241). This tool has changed the way people communicate with each other and the way enterprise owners communicate with their customers and target audiences.

Social media platforms are the communications channels through which social media users generate and disseminate user-generated content (Han & Trimi, 2017; Varkaris & Neuhofer, 2017). These platforms may be web-based or mobile-based. Social media content includes user-generated derivatives from social media platforms (Effing & Spil, 2016). Huotari et al. (2015) identified social media users as creators, critics, collectors, joiners, or spectators.

Social media platforms provide a means by which social media users could generate, aggregate, and rapidly disseminate content (Csordás & Gáti, 2014). Platform developers have designed platforms to facilitate collaboration between contributors who

generate social media content (Balco, 2017; Csordás & Gáti, 2014; Drahošová & Balco, 2017). Social media platforms are synonymous with social-networking applications, as both are suitable for disseminating content through social networks (Waldvogel, 2017).

Mobile Social Media Platforms

The popularity of mobile phones worldwide has influenced the rise of mobile social media because phone use offers another affordable and highly accessible way to use the features of social media platforms to generate social media content (Mazzarol, 2015). Mobile social media application developers have designed platforms to support users who generate and disseminate social media content via mobile devices (Wei Phang, Sutanto, Tan, & Ondrus, 2014). Mobile devices (mobile phones and tablets) equipped with social platforms, such as Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Instagram, are more accessible, convenient, immediate, and continuous than other more stationary devices, such as desktops or laptops (Elangovan & Agarwal, 2015).

Social media users can readily use mobile social media via mobile social media platforms to rapidly disseminate user-generated data (Wan & Ren, 2017). Social media platforms, particularly mobile social media platforms, are effective communication channels through which enterprise owners could spread messages about their products and services to increase brand awareness (Kalkan & Bozkurt, 2017; Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, and Johnson (2014) observed that social media popularity might depend on the features that satisfy users' needs or desires to connect and share information collaboratively, continuously, and quickly.

Social media strategies. All social media strategies are not equally applicable to business growth and competitiveness. Social media strategies are relative, not absolute, and in best-case scenarios align with business goals and objectives (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015; Kuofie et al., 2015). Enterprise owners can improve competitiveness and innovativeness by using social media strategies in their business activities.

A significant number of people worldwide actively use social media platforms to generate and disseminate social media content (Pew Internet, 2017; Sharif et al., 2015). Given this widespread use, a viable social media business strategy should include the platforms that target audiences regularly use, the appropriate features, the generation of social media content, the dissemination and management of the content, the integrity of the content, the time frame for managing social media initiatives, and the budget allocated for those efforts (Hassan et al., 2015). Ciprian (2015) and Petrov et al. (2015) labeled social media as good business marketing tools, free to use. However, without a social media strategy in place, microenterprise owners may find it challenging to leverage the access to target audiences within the vast social media domain.

Microenterprise owners could find many target audiences in the social media domain. Effing and Spil (2016) posited that the degree to which target audiences use social media platforms determines the viability of the social media channels and the appropriateness of social media strategies. Social media platforms have evolved into strategic management tools that managers could use to engage with consumers in an interactive fashion (Genç & Öksüz, 2015). McCann and Barlow (2015) suggested that enterprise owners could construct social media strategies that encourage consumers to

use social media interactively. These strategies should include generating content, sharing content within profiles, and sharing those profiles to encourage engagement. Through such engagement, owners could enhance customer relationships which might positively impact sales.

Social media are reasonable management tools that owners could use to increase sales and drive business growth (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015). Using social media as the driver, microenterprise owners could implement applicable strategies at relatively low cost and still reap numerous competitive advantages (Felix et al., 2017). Advantages include the potential for owners to use social media to strengthen their enterprises' business strategy by building collaborative and open relationships (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). Without a good strategy, and given the vastness of social media, enterprise owners may be unable to ascertain whether social media initiatives were fruitful and may be unable to realize or derive competitive advantages (Hassan et al., 2015; Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). The resulting level of uncertainty could lead microenterprise owners to the innovation decision process, in which they first seek knowledge on how to reduce that uncertainty.

Owners may choose from many social media platforms, with no clear directive about which one to choose and how to make that decision sensibly. To be successful, enterprise owners also may need a strategy for choosing which social media platforms to use, which features apply to their specific business environment, the best methods to use for distributing content, and how to decipher user-generated content (Hassan et al., 2015;

Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). Without applicable strategies, microenterprise owners may find it challenging to locate or attract social media users who fit their target audiences.

Some researchers have asserted that owners should learn how to ascertain whether their target audiences use social media and for what purposes (Bányai, 2016; Moore, Raymond, & Hopkins, 2015). With this knowledge, owners could construct social media strategies to suit those audiences. Owners who have strategically used social media to reach targeted audiences have converted leads into new customers, developed relationships with those customers, strengthened relationships with existing customers, and increased brand awareness (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, & Fabeil, 2014; Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). Many enterprise owners who used social media as a mechanism to create conversations, disseminate information, and manage user-generated content experienced business growth (Ciprian, 2015; Petrov et al., 2015; Whiting & Deshpande, 2016).

Despite the free use of social media platforms and mobile social media platforms, enterprises must still generate sales to survive, compete, and grow. As social media usage increased worldwide, web application developers began to integrate the collaborative features of social media into electronic commerce and marketing platforms. Platform owners and developers modified application cores to accommodate interoperability with other social media platforms. The literature revealed that over the last decade applicable social media strategies evolved into social customer relationship management, social media marketing, and social commerce strategies (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015; Charoensukmongkol & Sasataum, 2017; Lin, Li, & Wang, 2017). These strategies are

beneficial to enterprise owners who aspire to reach target audiences, enhance customer relationships and then sell on demand, via web-based or mobile social media platforms.

The interoperability among social media platforms and the inclusion of electronic commerce capabilities have further strengthened the potential of enterprise owners to benefit from social media. Enterprise owners could use the collaborative and communicative features of social media platforms in combination with electronic commerce to impact sales and increase business growth (Hajli & Featherman, 2017). Without social media strategies, microenterprise owners eventually learn, through trial and error, how to leverage social media platforms to gain social media benefits, despite the drawbacks (Bányai, 2016; Charoensukmongkol & Sasataum, 2017). The mental framework microenterprise owners used to learn how to curtail the drawbacks and leverage the benefits of social media was germane to the purpose of this study.

Drawbacks to Social Media Strategies

The literature revealed that the best social media strategies are still susceptible to drawbacks, which could compromise business growth. Despite the benefits enterprises could derive from the adoption of social media strategies, drawbacks exist (Bányai, 2016; Georgescu & Popesculp, 2015; Hassan et al., 2015). The most prominent drawbacks are the risks associated with the use of social media in the business environment.

Several risks have been recognized in the use of social media in business. Williams and Hausman (2017) categorized social media risks as (a) human and technical, (b) content, (c) compliance, and (d) reputational. Williams and Hausman elaborated that many risks associated with social media usage stem from social media content (user-

generated content) and how individuals disseminate this content throughout the social media domain. Inherently or eventually, dissemination may impact the reputation of an organization either negatively or positively. Williams and Hausman further advised that enterprises should concentrate on how to mitigate risks as they arise instead of trying to prevent the inevitable. The risks associated with social media usage by microenterprise owners are unavoidable.

Loss of time and income. Microenterprise owners need time to balance the pursuit of business goals with the implementation of social media strategies. Munnukka and Järvi (2014) concluded that a major risk for microenterprise owners was a loss of time for implementation of social media strategies, with no guarantee of a return on their investment. Time is crucial to microenterprise owners who are responsible for managing all aspects of their businesses (Kalkan & Bozkurt, 2017). Jones et al. (2015) postulated that managers needed training on how to leverage social media use to overcome the constraints of knowledge, time, and financing so that business success could take place.

Microenterprise owners may not have the time to acquire the skills to construct and implement effective social media strategies. Broekemier et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative study on the use of social media marketing strategies by owners and managers in U.S. small and medium enterprises. The researchers discovered that many owners and managers complained of insufficient time and opportunity to maintain user-generated content from social media activities.

Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, and Krush (2016) conducted a quantitative study of sales professionals from diverse companies and industries. The results revealed that sales

professionals were unable to measure social media benefits against the cost of using social media. Instead, sales professionals felt burdened with additional tasks, which took additional time and slowed their responsiveness to customers. Further, the participants who used social media during business activities did not realize any significant impact on customer satisfaction.

Often, loss of time means loss of income. Microenterprise owners have minimal resources to pursue social media strategies, specifically time and operating funds. Owners cannot afford to lose time when they need time to earn a living. Microenterprise owners tend to focus on business growth for survival, which requires time and money. If enterprise owners have the economic means, outsourcing social media initiatives is an option.

Outsourcing. If enterprise owners do not have the time or the skills to construct and implement effective social media strategies, outsourcing social media initiatives may be a viable alternative (Broekmier et al., 2015). Agnihotri et al. (2016) suggested that sales managers could outsource social media tasks to save time. However, such an initiative could increase the cost of doing business. Further, Effing and Spil (2016) warned that a notable disadvantage of outsourcing was the recognizable disconnect that third parties had from the culture, brand, and customer base of the enterprises they serviced. Such a drawback could compromise the effectiveness of social media initiatives, deter business growth and result in more loss of time and loss of income. Many microenterprise owners, including those in T&T, may not have the economic means, due to financial constraints, to explore outsourcing options.

Threats to business reputation. Without a strategy for monitoring social media activities, microenterprise owners could face harsh consequences from compromised business reputation, which is challenging to restore. Once social media users disseminate social media content about products and services throughout the social media domain, microenterprise owners have minimal control over the impact of that content on target audiences. Many enterprise owners, including microenterprise owners, are ill-prepared to deal with negative social media feedback from vocal social media savvy consumers.

Latiff and Safiee (2015) conducted a qualitative study on home-based businesses and the use of Instagram with three business owners. They professed to have had a clear direction for their entrepreneurial pursuits. However, the study results showed that the business owners were unsure how to handle bad reviews, locate key players to champion their brands, target the right audiences, and become acquainted with their customers.

Social media users may use the immediateness of social media features to disseminate negative feedback about an enterprise's products and services. Social media users can rapidly disseminate user-generated content throughout the social media domain because of the connectedness, high interactivity, and uncontrollable nature of social media (Williams & Hausman, 2017). The feedback may remain in the social media public domain indefinitely, and the impacts of negative publicity on business products and services could compromise business growth. Horn et al. (2015) reported that the use of social media strategies by enterprises exposes them to negative publicity, attacks from customers, and reputation damage. Horn et al. also posited that social media use could pose a direct threat to enterprises' reputations, which may indirectly impact sales.

In summary, microenterprises generally have limited resources to manage business operations yet need to devise strategies to manage risks and benefit from social media. Without strategies, microenterprise owners may experience the many social media drawbacks. The literature does not recommend a standard strategy or best practice for the leveraging of social media benefits against the drawbacks, given owners' limited resources of time, money, opportunity, and skills. In this study, I examined how Trinbagonian microenterprise owners who conducted business in rural T&T, despite their business constraints, curtailed social media drawbacks and leveraged social media benefits.

Benefits of Social Media Strategies

Social media strategies in business include the strategic use of social media platforms to meet business goals and objectives. Social media platforms are largely free, available, accessible, and scalable (Harrigan & Miles, 2014; Kuofie et al., 2015). Researchers have found that enterprises of various types and sizes used social media strategies to improve customer relationships, advance brand positioning, extend market reach, and increase sales (Baumöl, Hollebeek, & Jung, 2016; Felix et al., 2017; Mack et al., 2017). Social media marketing, social customer relationship, and social commerce are recognized benefits of the adoption of social media strategies in business.

Social media marketing. Social media has disrupted the traditional ways that businesses conduct marketing initiatives. In the past, traditional media, such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines, were the communication channels through which enterprise owners marketed products and services to targeted audiences (Hassan et al.,

2015; Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). Marketing involved a one-way communication flow from the business to the customer. In contrast, with the advent of social media, microenterprise owners could facilitate a two-way communication flow between business and customer and a many-to-many communication flow among customers (Huotari et al., 2015; Whiting & Deshpande, 2016). Through social media marketing, microenterprise owners could invite and empower target audiences to become active participants in marketing initiatives instead of being passive receivers of one-way marketing communications (Huotari et al., 2015).

Marketers' adoption of social media marketing has transformed traditional marketing strategies into a more intimate business activity in which the business and the target audience interact with each other directly and indirectly (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015; Qualman, 2013; Wankel, 2016). Social media marketing initiatives were effective when marketers focused on the people who actively used social media (Hassan et al., 2015). Likewise, traditional marketing initiatives were more effective when marketers focused on the people who watched television; listened to the radio; and read newspapers, magazines, and newsletters. Social-media-driven marketing initiatives have evolved from monologues between businesses and consumers to interactive and collaborative dialogues between enterprises and their target audiences (Hassan et al., 2015). This transformation has enhanced traditional marketing initiatives.

Some of the most attractive social media features include interactivity, connectivity, and collaboration. These features represent the enhanced communications channels that enterprise owners use to interact and connect with target audiences and

customers rapidly. Csordás and Gáti (2014) posited that social media was audience-focused and ideal for word-of-mouth marketing. Yan et al. (2016) asserted that consumers tend to use electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) excessively. Barnes (2015) referred to EWOM as digitally inscribed. Barnes further described EWOM as less fleeting than traditional word of mouth and more influential, goal-oriented, and pervasive. Electronic word-of-mouth can either strengthen brand loyalty or destroy it (Ahmad & Laroche, 2017).

Microenterprise owners could benefit from the immediacy of social media platforms, its collaborative communication channels, and the broad scope of its reach to market or advertise products and services (Whiting, Hansen, & Sen, 2017). Additionally, through social media marketing initiatives, owners could gain a better understanding of customers' expectations, concerns, and needs (Balan & Rege, 2017; Gümüs, & Kütahyalı, 2017). Yong and Hassan (2019) concluded that the use of social media to supplement marketing initiatives online is vital for business success.

Social customer relationship management. Customer relationship management (CRM) is paramount to the survival of enterprises. CRM is the focus of an enterprise on securing long-term relationships with customers (Maggon & Chaudhry, 2018). Enterprise managers use CRM application software to assist with managing and strengthening customer relationships (Bojanowska, 2017).

Social CRM is the integration of social media into CRM to enhance and maintain customer relationships (Elena, 2016; Moore et al., 2015). As a business strategy, social CRM involves a combination of people, process, and technology, with social media as a

cohesive mechanism for enterprises to build fruitful and lasting relationships with customers (Ahani, Rahum, & Nilashi, 2017). Social media marketing and social CRM are interoperable benefits of social media usage.

Social media marketing includes social CRM strategies. Marketers use social media marketing to reach target audiences and influence purchase decisions (Yong & Hassan, 2019). Enterprise owners could then use social CRM to gain business insights from user-generated content and enhance customer relationships (Husain et al., 2016). Orengra-roglá and Chalmeta (2016) and Yong and Hassan (2019) claimed that enterprise owners have strategically used social media in concert with customer relationship management tools to form, salvage, and maintain customer relationships. With social CRM activities, enterprises broaden market reach, disseminate information quickly, gain business insight, and then use that insight to enhance customer relationships (Baumöl et al., 2016).

Enterprise owners could also use social CRM tactics to resolve public relations issues. Public relations involve the maintenance of communications with the public (Tajvidi & Karami, 2017). As with social CRM, social media have disrupted the traditional ways enterprises conduct public relations activities. Enterprise owners could use the inherent speed of social media channels to preserve or salvage the image of their enterprise or to bolster positive public perception (Baumöl et al., 2016). The main difference between social CRM and social public relations is that CRM focuses on customer relationships and social CRM focuses on the reputation of the enterprise in the social media public domain (Tajudeen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2018). Both strategies include a

focus on building, strengthening, and preserving relationships with customers to sustain brand loyalty.

Social CRM and social public relations are two different disciplines. Allagui and Breslow (2016) established a distinction between social media use by marketers for brand awareness and reputation management and social media use by public relations practitioners to secure brand positioning, maintain brand sustenance, and generate conversions. Valentini (2016) posited that the practice of public relations is two-sided, rhetorical, and relational. The risk of negative backlash from social media campaigns, as Valentini pointed out, could supersede the benefits public relations practitioners derive from their use. With these cautionary observations, microenterprise owners' use of social media for brand awareness and reputation are beneficial for business growth and competitiveness.

Social commerce. Social commerce implies an association between social media and e-commerce. Social commerce is an extension of e-commerce (Chen & Shen, 2015; Han & Trimi, 2017). Busalim, Razak, and Hussin (2016) defined *social commerce* as social media use by sellers and consumers to participate in selling, buying, comparing, and sharing of information about products and services in online marketplaces. Lin et al. (2017) clarified this definition by observing that web application developers enhance e-commerce platforms with social media features or enhance social media with e-commerce features. Akman and Mishra (2017) and Barnes (2015) referred to social commerce, or *s-commerce*, as e-commerce conducted by buyers and sellers through social media platforms. A practical example of social commerce is Shopify.

In social commerce, consumers can use collaborative and communicative social media features to diminish brand reputation and negatively affect sales or promote brand awareness and improve sales (Horn et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2017). Lin et al. and Makki and Chang (2015) pointed out that, with the interactivity of social media, consumers could share opinions about products and services across various popular social media platforms. This dissemination of opinions could decrease or increase sales.

Social media users can access many social media platforms via social commerce sites. The most popular social media platforms that developers code to allow interactivity with e-commerce sites include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Pinterest (Barnes, 2014). Consumers with social media profiles can log into commerce websites by using the authentication servers associated with those platforms to share product and service details on their social media profiles. This sharing helps to expedite purchase decisions and increases website membership. With such connectivity to social media domains, enterprise owners could improve their social media presence, increase incoming website traffic, broaden market reach, and potentially increase sales (Barnes, 2015; Busalim et al., 2016; King, 2015; Lin et al., 2017).

Given this connectedness, microenterprise owners could also advertise products and services to active members of popular social media sites and secure better market positions (Moore et al., 2015). Additionally, microenterprise owners who conduct s-commerce or mobile-social commerce (*m-commerce*) could leverage that connectivity to social media domains to manage the relationships they may form with customers and

target audiences (Busalim et al., 2016). Such leverage could lead to increased sales and enhance business growth.

As this discussion has indicated, the benefits of social media usage in the business environment are clear. Microenterprise owners could benefit from the use of social media marketing, social CRM, and social commerce. However, Lindsey-Mullikin and Borin (2017) suggested that appropriate strategies are germane to fruitful social media initiatives that could impact sales. Despite the drawbacks of social media, which may be plentiful, microenterprise owners could leverage the benefits of social media with appropriate strategies to neutralize those drawbacks.

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, microenterprises generally have limited resources to manage business operations yet need to devise strategies to benefit from social media and manage risks. Without strategies, microenterprise owners may experience the many social media drawbacks. No standard strategy or best practice is available in the literature for the leveraging of social media benefits to mitigate the drawbacks, given owners' limited resources of time, money, opportunity, and skills. This study was an exploration of how Trinbagonian microenterprise owners who conduct business in rural T&T curtailed social media drawbacks and leveraged social media benefits for their business growth.

Microenterprises are very small firms. Yet, as several researchers have shown, in many different global economic environments, microenterprises are reputable and effective for the stimulation of local and national economic growth. In the developing world, innovative microenterprises may have a competitive edge over other less

innovative enterprises. However, microenterprise owners operate with limited finances, human resources, time, skills, and expertise.

Microenterprises struggle to compete with larger, better funded, and more resourceful enterprises (Au & Tucker, 2018). Owners or managers of many of these larger enterprises have learned how to leverage social media to strengthen their market positions, improve customer relationships, and increase sales. Some microenterprise owners look to the use of social media by larger enterprises for business success strategies.

Social media has the equal potential to devastate or build and enhance an enterprise. Larger firms have the resources to leverage the benefits of social media strategies, despite the drawbacks. Microenterprise owners are not necessarily able to benefit from social media strategies, due to limited time, financial constraints, lack of skills, and management deficiencies. Researchers have shown that enterprise owners could offset the damage from social media drawbacks with applicable strategies. However, microenterprise owners may not know how to create and implement the applicable and appropriate social media strategies, offset the drawbacks and leverage the benefits of social media.

The exhaustive search of the literature did not reveal how microenterprises in the Caribbean and developing countries use social media to overcome business constraints. This phenomenon, therefore, remains largely unknown and formed an impetus for this study. Chapter 3 includes the research strategy for this single case study of microenterprise owners' management of social media use in rural T&T.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this single case study was to explore how microenterprise owners in rural T&T can benefit from adopting social media tools in their business operations. The goals of the study were to understand how microenterprise owners in rural T&T managed the use of social media, what drawbacks they encountered, and how they leveraged social media benefits to grow their businesses, despite the disadvantages and business constraints. Participants in this study included microenterprise owners who conducted business in rural T&T for a least 2 years and had social media experience.

A qualitative case study best served the purpose and goals of this study because it was feasible, participants were receptive to the demographic-business survey and semistructured interview questions, and they willingly participated because they wanted to share their subjective perceptions on how they managed social media usage to achieve business growth. Participants' unwavering willingness to contribute resulted in their rich and meaningful responses. Through their contributions and data analysis, I gained a deeper understanding of microenterprise owners, how they conduct business, and what they face in rural T&T. With this understanding, I answered the research questions in this study adequately.

This chapter includes sections on the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, and the methodology. In the Methodology section, I present specifics about participant selection, instruments used, procedures for recruitment, and the data collection methods. I then describe the data analysis plan. Following this description, I

discuss issues of trustworthiness and the ethical procedures for the study. The chapter concludes with a summary and transition to chapter 4, the findings of this study.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design was a qualitative single case study. The overarching research question was the following: How can microenterprise owners in rural Trinidad and Tobago overcome the uncertainty of using social media tools for business growth and competitiveness? The subresearch questions were these:

- RQ1: How do microenterprise owners conduct information-seeking and information-processing activities about social media for their business growth?
- RQ2: How do microenterprise owners manage the drawbacks of social media use for their business growth?
- RQ3: How do microenterprise owners leverage the benefits of social media use for their business growth?

The phenomenon I studied was T&T microenterprise owners' use of social media for business growth and competitiveness. Qualitative research is interpretive, situational, personalistic, and well-triangulated (Stake, 2010). A qualitative method was thus appropriate to answer the research questions and interpret the findings. Patton (2014) asserted that researchers choose research methods based on the interpretive lens through which they view the world, which, in this case study was social constructivism. Maxwell (2013) posited that constructivists tend to conduct qualitative research and interpret data inductively. As the researcher, I practice social constructivism in the way that I view the

world and through my intentions to gain a deeper understanding of how microenterprise owners in rural T&T view their social media-driven business environment.

I visited T&T, my country of birth, to locate and interview microenterprise owners who face daily struggles with business constraints that deter their business growth. Basias and Pollalis (2018) noted that a qualitative researcher “observes, interviews, summarizes, describes, analyzes, and interprets phenomena in their [*sic*] real dimension” (p. 94). Consequently, I functioned as the research instrument for this qualitative single case study by recruiting participants, collecting and analyzing data thematically, and then reporting and interpreting the data findings. This approach was highly suitable, I believe, for understanding how microenterprise owners balance their workloads and necessary activities with innovativeness while leveraging social media benefits for business growth and competitiveness.

I conducted a qualitative case study research using Rogers’s (2003) innovation decision process as the conceptual framework. The literature includes many quantitative studies focused on the diffusion of innovations, with limited qualitative studies on the innovation decision process (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016; Nordin et al., 2017; Vecchiato, 2017). Maxwell (2013) and Stake (2010) posited that researchers could use quantitative methods, such as surveys and experiments, to gather data, analyze variables, and measure them numerically. These methods were not appropriate for the current study because my intention in conducting this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how microenterprise owners in T&T used social media to grow and compete. This type of exploratory inquiry warranted a qualitative study.

A mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research methods was also inappropriate for this study. Researchers have used this approach to holistically examine phenomena (Maxwell, 2013; Stake, 2010). However, for this study, the likelihood of strengthening the qualitative research findings with quantitative data was uncertain enough to exclude a mixed-methods approach as the best approach. Researchers may also use qualitative research methods for holistic treatment and interpretation of phenomena (Petrescu & Lauer, 2017; Stake, 2010). Accordingly, I chose a qualitative research method for this study.

Specifically, I used a case study design, appropriate in studies where the case is typical (Yin, 2014). Phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory were suitable alternative designs that I considered but opted against using. Although they might have been adequate for similar studies, the case study design was the most feasible and applicable to the purpose of this study. Case studies are suitable for researchers who intend to explore processes, activities, and events and derive meaning (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Researchers use case studies to gain in-depth knowledge of participants' perceptions within their natural environment and context and provide an in-depth analysis of phenomena (Franklin, & Mills, 2017; Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2014). Many ICT researchers have used case studies to gain a deeper understanding of how and why individuals use ICT and have used semistructured interviews in the interim (Basias & Pollalis, 2018).

Either a single or multiple case study design was appropriate for this study. Yin (2014) posited that researchers use multiple case studies to conduct experiments through

theoretical replication. I did not consider a multiple-case study design because I wanted to focus on a specific unit of analysis and common case in rural T&T. Thus, I chose a single-case study design. The unit of analysis was a set of microenterprise owners in rural T&T with social media awareness and at least 2 years of business experience. I wanted to learn how microenterprise owners in rural T&T managed social media and the impact that usage had on business growth. Yin (2018) explained that the common case is one of five rationales that researchers typically use to justify conducting a single-case study. Further, a single case study design was adequate to address my research questions.

A major problem with case study research is rigor, which refers to validity and credibility (Dasgupta, 2015). Maxwell (2013) recommended that researchers could mediate issues with rigor by identifying serious and plausible threats and applying strategies to neutralize those threats. Rigorous validity and credibility were pivotal to the trustworthiness of this study. Accordingly, I triangulated the data by comparing interview responses with internal and external artifacts (Yin, 1998). The emerging data from these artifacts were observations of participants during interviews and within their natural environments and the demographic business survey results. The Methodology section includes a discussion on the rigor I used to collect, analyze and report data for this study.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary research instrument, conducting interviews; collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; and reporting research findings (Petrescu & Lauer, 2017; Stake, 2010). The researcher must gather data and report findings objectively (Basias & Pollalis, 2018; Patton, 2014). However, Patton

pointed out that the researcher's life experiences, skills, capacity for empathy, and crosscultural sensitivity could influence the credibility of research findings.

Through a personal lens, the researcher may bring personal experiences and biases to the interviews and analyses, as well as the reporting of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2014). Part of the qualitative researcher's role is to approach participants and data analyses with as much objectivity as possible, reflecting the participants' responses (Stake, 2010). Objectivity enhances the credibility of the results.

Maxwell (2013) asserted that reactivity and researcher bias are two formidable threats to the validity of research findings. Maxwell defined reactivity as the inescapable effect researchers could have on research participants. To neutralize such biases, Maxwell suggested that qualitative researchers admit and explain possible personal biases and the methods for addressing them, focusing on techniques to prevent possible negative consequences of reactivity.

I was conscientious of the threats my role in this study could have on the validity of the research findings. To address the issues of credibility and validity, I acknowledged, disclosed, and bracketed my biases. In addition, I invited a peer reviewer to review my research findings for credibility and asked research participants to verify my interpretations of their interview responses.

With these issues in mind, my background is as follows: I am a Trinidad and Tobago citizen, born in Trinidad. My mother was born in Trinidad and my father in Tobago. I emigrated from Trinidad at age 18 and have lived most of my life in the United

States. Nevertheless, I am familiar with the T&T culture and speak in the more informal T&T vernacular, when applicable.

Professionally, I serve in various functions within the field of ICT. I am a management consultant and educator and have been a management consultant with an information systems specialty since 1999. I have extensive experience teaching computer science and technology-related courses in higher education. I am also a social media expert who manages a microenterprise that specializes in the innovative use of ICT. Consequently, I struggle with proinnovation biases and recognize from personal experience that social media may be beneficial to economic growth on local and national levels.

In the past, I consulted with microenterprise owners in Trinidad only (and not in Tobago). The impetus for this study stemmed from my empathy with the microenterprise owners who conduct business in rural T&T. I have seen firsthand how they struggle to overcome business constraints that deter business growth. I believe that microenterprise owners in T&T could benefit from the use of social media to increase their business growth and meet competition. I acknowledge the concept that survival in business warrants survival measures that may not necessarily include social media usage by microenterprise owners in rural T&T. I am also aware that some microenterprise owners in rural T&T may not use social media.

Cognizant of such personal biases, I recognized that I needed to use a phenomenological research technique, *epoché*, and bracket my assumptions and biases. *Epoché* means the suspension of personal judgment and requires the researcher to

become introspective, recognizing and admitting personal biases about the participants and topic (Moustakas, 1994; Rothenbach, Walker, & Luzader, 2012). Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers should *bracket* any reactive and prejudicial thoughts during the data collection and data analysis stages of the research process to preserve participants' true responses (p. 60). I bracketed my biased thoughts at the outset of data collection and continued to do so throughout the study.

Methodology

The methodology section in academic research clearly outlines the study population, sampling strategies, and data analysis plan. Maxwell (2013) recommended that a researcher should describe the research methodology with enough depth for other researchers to replicate the study. Accordingly, this methodology section includes a description of participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection Logic

I qualified participants before inviting them to participate in this study (see Appendix A). Qualified participants met microenterprise eligibility criteria (according to the definition outlined by the government of T&T) and social media usage eligibility criteria (see Appendix B). The population of research participants was a group of microenterprise owners with business operations in rural T&T who (a) owned a microenterprise; (b) had at least 2 years of experience conducting business in rural T&T; (c) had up to five full-time employees; (d) had a business asset value of under \$70,000; (e) had an annual turnover of up to \$350,000; (f) offered recognizable goods, services, or both; and (g) had some experience using social media in their business operations.

The unit of analysis for this qualitative single case study was T&T microenterprise owners who had social media experience and conducted their businesses under similar business constraints during a period of economic distress in T&T. Initially, I sought a minimum sample of 15 participants, using a purposeful sampling strategy to identify, contact, and recruit participants. I kept in mind Yin's (2018) explanation of sample selection for a single case study:

Once you have defined your case, other clarifications—sometimes called bounding the case—become important. For instance, if the case is a small group, the persons to be included within the group (they will become the immediate topic of your case study) must be distinguished from those who are outside of it (they will become part of the context for your case study). (p. 31)

The interviewed group was clustered in a single group. This group was based on my qualification of the participants prior to their participation (see Appendix A).

As a precaution, I chose snowball sampling as an alternative sampling strategy. In purposive sampling, the researcher relies on personal judgment to select participants with characteristics appropriate for the research questions (Patton, 2014). Snowball sampling is synonymous with chain sampling, which involves referrals by present participants of other potential participants. Snowball sampling is appropriate for obtaining referrals in scenarios in which participants may be difficult to reach (Valerio et al., 2016). I also considered convenience sampling as an alternative sampling strategy. Convenience sampling is simple, efficient, affordable, and quick (Robinson, 2014; Stake, 2010). These

alternative sampling methods could have been useful if purposive sampling did not yield a sufficient number of participants.

The procedures I employed to identify, contact, and recruit participants were specific to rural T&T. T&T is a melting pot of various races, ethnicities, and cultures (Huggins, 2016). Based on my prior knowledge of T&T, Trinbagonians represent this melting pot quite thoroughly.

Initially, I visited highly populated microenterprise clusters in rural T&T, such as marketplaces, main thoroughfares, and side streets, to observe microenterprise owners in their natural business environments and recruit participants purposively. Alternatively, I met with potential participants based on trusted referrals. However, I ensured that these individuals had similar and requisite characteristics by qualifying them according to the eligibility criteria listed above for the single case study, thereby “bounding the case” (Yin, 2018, p. 31).

I used a recruitment script to standardize the recruitment process. On meeting with participants, I recited the script in the T&T informal vernacular to identify them as a fellow Trinbagonian. Using the recruitment script as a standard, I recited my research intentions to remain transparent and invoke interest in the study, indicating that the microenterprise owners who participated would be compensated appropriately (with a phone card worth \$5.00). I invited interested microenterprise owners to participate in the study (see Appendix A).

When the participants accepted, I suggested a private and secure area for in-person meetings. After we were comfortably situated, I assured participants of anonymity

and confidentiality and informed them of data security procedures. I supplied two copies of the informed consent, which outlined the nature of the study, criteria, time for participation, and participant protections. Then I read the consent to participants, answered questions, and requested their signatures, returning one copy to them.

Next, I administered the 14-item demographic-business survey (see Appendix B) orally, having prepared hard copies with precoded identification numbers. I read the survey items to each participant and recorded the responses. This survey included qualifying items on the duration of business, employees, asset value, type of business, and familiarity with and use of social media. I completed each demographic-business survey within 5 to 10 minutes. Then, I commenced the individual semistructured interviews and informed participants that the interviews should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

My initial goal was a minimum sample of 15 participants, and this number seemed adequate for this single case study based on the research findings of two studies. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) analyzed 30 interviews and showed that saturation occurred after 12. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) examined 83 published information science studies in peer-reviewed journals and observed, "Single case studies should generally contain 15 to 30 interviews" (p. 20). In this current study, I reached saturation at 14 participants by using purposive sampling for the first four participants and, alternatively, snowball sampling for the other 10. Accordingly, I purposively selected reputable microenterprise owners in rural T&T to locate and refer additional potential participants for this study.

Instrumentation

Researchers require adequate data collection instruments to collect data and address research questions sufficiently (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2014). In this study, I used three major instruments: the demographic-business survey (see Appendix B), the interview protocol (see Appendix C), and an interview and field notes observation sheet (see Appendix D). Each of these instruments proved to be reliable data collection tools; they were also essential for triangulation of the data to enhance the credibility of the study findings. I ensured the accuracy of interviews by using a digital audiotape recorder and observed the participants in the natural environments in which they conducted their microenterprise businesses.

Demographic-business survey. The demographic-business survey was a 14-item instrument (see Appendix B) I developed to qualify participants. The survey had three sections: demographic, business, and social media experience. The demographic segment included three items pertaining to participants' personal attributes. The business segment included nine items pertaining to business-related information. The social media experience segment included two items pertaining to social media-related usage behavior. I developed the items from the literature, surveys of other participants, definitions of microenterprises, and studies of microenterprises in developing countries.

Interview protocol. I developed the interview protocol based on four factors. These were (a) my understanding of the study purpose, (b) the overarching research question and subquestions, (c) information from government reports on microenterprise owners' knowledge and use of ICT, and (d) my previous knowledge and observations as

a Trinbagonian. I also used my experience as a consultant to T&T microenterprise owners.

Interview and field notes observation sheet. I developed this instrument from readings on qualitative interviewing techniques, designing the sheet to document my thoughts and feelings about interviews and observations of participants in their natural settings. Observations included the physical setting; participants' physical appearance, tones, gestures, and body language; the physical setting in which they conducted their business; and my reflective notes, such as feelings, ideas, and impressions. The sheet also served functioned as a journal for *bracketing* my biases.

Audiotape recorder. I purchased an audiotape recorder with noise-canceling provisions and, prior to each interview, set it up in full view of participants. Taping began with their permissions. I showed the participants how to hold the recorder near their mouths as they responded to the interview questions. Participants indicated that they knew how to pause or stop the recorder at will. As a backup, I used the voice recorder application on my tablet to record interview responses and paused the tablet recorder on request. I used both recorders simultaneously during the interview sessions and, for audio transcription prior to data analysis, I chose the better of the two recordings based on the quality of the audio and exactness of the audio content.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I used a systematic procedure to recruit participants and collect data for this study to improve rigor and transferability. The procedure included the use of a script to recruit participants for the study, a demographic-business survey to qualify participants and

collect categorical data, an interview protocol to interview the participants, and an observation sheet to record field notes and observations. For all interviews, I used digital audio recorders to record audio data.

Data collection started with the recruitment process. I planned a total time of 2 weeks for data collection from all participants and made 20 recruitment attempts. The duration of each recruitment attempt was 5 to 10 minutes. Using the recruitment script (see Appendix A), I recruited 14 interested participants and qualified interested participants with the demographic survey; administration of each survey lasted 5 to 10 minutes. I administered this procedure once per potential participant and then recorded and stored the data in an electronic spreadsheet.

Upon introducing myself to individual prospective participants, I recited the recruitment script, which I had memorized. The recruitment script included a synopsis of the nature of the study, the potential of the study to impact positive social change and the prequalification process. When individuals agreed to participate, we arranged a convenient private area for meeting. Then, I read the informed consent aloud, asked each participant to sign one copy, and stored all consent forms digitally. The introductory segment lasted between 5 and 15 minutes.

Next, I introduced the interview protocol (see Appendix C), switched on the audio recorders, familiarized the participants with the equipment, and began the interviews. My tablet functioned as a backup audio recorder and as a means for typing interview responses onto the interview and field notes observation sheet (see Appendix D). Each interview session lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. At the end of the interviews, I

thanked participants and then recorded my observations, thoughts, and feelings on the interview and field notes observation sheet. Each set of closing activities lasted 10 to 15 minutes. I also sent participants follow-up e-mails and reiterated my thanks and assurances.

With my assurances, participants knew they could request follow-up interviews via phone, e-mail, or mobile social media to discuss any additional perceptions they may have wanted to add after the interviews. Participants also confirmed that they were open to participating in member checking activities when invited. These would entail their reviews of the transcripts of audio recordings to assure accuracy. Member checking enhances the dependability of the research (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2014).

Finally, I reassured participants of privacy, confidentiality, and data security. In addition, I wished participants well in their microenterprise businesses and increased use of social media for business growth and meeting of competition. This debriefing segment lasted from 5 to 10 minutes.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan was an outline of the strategy I used to transform the data collected into research findings. I used analytical software (MAXQDA) to assist with thematic data analysis and interpreted the data with empathy, objectivity, and rigor. Accordingly, I connected the data to specific research questions, the procedures for coding data, and the strategy for managing discrepant cases. To answer the three research questions, I constructed three sets of interview questions, linking each research question

to a respective set. After completing all data collection procedures, I thoroughly analyzed the data.

I had intended to use voice recognition software (Dragon Naturally Speaking Professional), qualitative analytic software (MAXQDA), and spreadsheet application software (Excel) to transcribe audio data and assist with thematic data analysis. However, the voice recognition software was unusable because of poor accuracy in recognition of participants' Trinbagonian accents. I declined to use web-based automatic voice transcription services due to possible issues of confidentiality, security, and accuracy. Thus, I transcribed audio transcripts manually, a lengthy process.

The two possible software applications for assisting with data analysis were MAXQDA and NVivo. Although many dissertation researchers use NVivo to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, I chose MAXQDA because of its diverse and unique qualitative analysis features, intuitiveness, user-friendliness, ease of use, interoperability with productivity applications, and affordability. I supplemented the use of MAXQDA with manual intuitive data analysis methods.

The coding process was germane to the identification of themes that emerged from the data. Patton (2014) explained that coding procedures add standardization and rigor to the analysis process. I used descriptive coding to categorize data *chunks* and pattern coding to condense data chunks into subcategories in preparation for more in-depth inductive analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted that codes are linked to data chunks and suggested that coding involves

deep reflection, analysis, and interpretation of those chunks. I also used the MAXQDA text and color codes functions to enhance the coding procedure.

The display formats I used to present the data collected were the matrix and network formats. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined a matrix as a tabular format to collect and arrange data with column headings and rows of data. Miles and Huberman also defined networks as a collection of nodes and respective links to actions, events, or processes. I used the matrix format to present data from interviews, observations, and field notes and the network format to present participants' subjective perceptions of social media in a visually appealing pictorial form. I examined both discrepant and supporting data with the same rigor, mitigating the tendency to neglect data that may have contradicted any assumptions regarding research outcomes. Finally, I accurately reported data findings.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research refer to credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures. The credibility of the data analysis is paramount for participants and readers to trust the data findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings to other contexts or settings, and dependability and confirmability refer to consistency and accuracy of the data findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2014; Prion & Adamson, 2014). A shortcoming of case study research is rigor. In this study, therefore, it was vital to minimize issues of trustworthiness with unwavering rigor.

Credibility

Credibility means that the results of the case study are plausible (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The plausibility of research findings is germane to the trustworthiness of a study. To ensure credibility in this study, I used triangulation, peer review, and member checking strategies. Triangulation included a comparison of the demographic-business survey responses, interview responses, observations, saturation, and member checking. For peer review, Stake (2010) asserted that “multiple eyes” are crucial to triangulation (p. 127). Thus, I invited a Trinbagonian peer experienced in qualitative research to review the research findings. With regard to member checking, I also asked participants to validate the accuracy of their interview responses and my interpretations.

Transferability

Issues with transferability arise when researchers are unable to align or fit their findings to other similar cases (Patton, 2014). Transferability in case study research refers to external validity. Yin (2014) associated external validity with analytic generalizations and explained that researchers could achieve analytic generalization by expanding and generalizing theories. Yin referred to analytic generalizations as lessons that researchers learned from case study findings and that readers could apply to and align with similar cases.

I addressed potential issues of transferability by conducting this study in various rural settings throughout T&T and at different times during the day. In addition, I recruited participants from different business types and those who had varying business

and social media experiences. I was equally purposeful in the use of snowball sampling for recruiting participants.

In the interviews, I prompted for participants' "thick" descriptions that were highly relevant to the context of the study (Denzin, 2001, p. 54). Thick descriptions, which are detailed and heartfelt, increase the likelihood that readers will identify with the participants' responses for applicability to readers' own situations or circumstances or other research contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2014). In most instances, participants were forthcoming and fluid in their recall of past events. In one instance, a participant needed gentle probing to recall the first awareness of social media.

Dependability

Dependability in case study research refers to reliability. Reliability becomes evident when other researchers could replicate the same research procedures and produce similar research findings and conclusions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Yin, 2014). I addressed issues of dependability by refining the data collection instruments to collect data sufficiently. I also used a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix C) to standardize the interview process. Further, I kept rigorous notes on the interview and field notes observation sheets (see Appendix D) to minimize biases and establish an audit trail of the research process.

Triangulation was also relevant to establishing the dependability of the research findings. Triangulation involved comparing the interview and observation data with participants' responses to the demographic-business survey, in which I noted similarities and differences. During interviews, I intermittently repeated participants' interview

responses back to them to assure that my interpretations were accurate. After the interviews, I administered member checks of interview transcripts to increase dependability and accuracy.

Confirmability

Confirmability in case study research refers to the extent to which other qualified sources could corroborate the findings of the study (Prion & Adamson, 2014). Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to confirmability as the plausibility of the research findings. Miles and Huberman also noted that without confirmability, research findings might have no real merit.

I addressed issues of confirmability with reflexivity, in qualitative research a strategy that researchers employ to emphasize self-awareness, cultural consciousness, and ownership of their perspectives (Patton, 2014). Accordingly, I used the interview and field notes observation sheet (see Appendix D) to disclose and bracket my biases, reflective thoughts, and feelings. Further, I invited a peer reviewer experienced in qualitative research and T&T to confirm the findings for objectivity. Finally, my dissertation committee of three academic scholars at Walden University rigorously reviewed and assessed this study.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical issues may occur throughout the research process. Maxwell (2013) suggested that researchers devise a strategy to address these issues when planning and designing a qualitative case study. Such issues may arise before the researcher conducts the study, at the onset, during the collection and analysis, and when the researcher reports

the findings (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009). This study involved direct contact with research participants for data collection, and ethical issues could have emerged. The following is a discussion of how I addressed ethical threats before, during, and after data collection.

Before the study. Before conducting the study, I gained approval from the Institutional Review Board of Walden University (approval number 07-10-18-0110463). Additionally, I took measures to decrease impressions of coercion or conflict of interest. Recruitment involved approaching participants from municipalities in T&T where I am unknown and with whom I have never conducted business. I offered participants the choice to opt out of the study at any point and gave them reasonable and appropriate compensation for their time.

At study onset. At the onset of the study and before data collection, I informed participants that the study was an independent dissertation study to fulfill doctoral requirements at Walden University. Further, I elaborated that this study was not sponsored by any government, nongovernment organization, or institution to serve special interests. The purpose of these disclosures was to establish trust and mitigate possible negative assumptions participants may have had about the integrity of the study (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009). Thus, participants made informed decisions to participate in this study.

When I distributed the informed consent to potential participants, I emphasized the goal, purpose, and nature of the study and informed them that Walden University would publish the report in the public domain without use of their names. The informed

consent form included descriptions of instruments, data collection procedures, and the estimated time for participation. The consent form also included an explicit declaration that participation was voluntary and that participants could decline or discontinue participation at any point without repercussions or detriments, personally or professionally. I read the form to participants and asked them to read it also thoroughly before signing.

The informed consent further included clear disclosures of potential risks and anticipated benefits, privacy concerns, and potential conflicts of interest. I reassured participants of their anonymity and data security procedures to protect their identities. These procedures involved reporting data findings in group form and referring to the participants by numbers only. The consent form included my name and contact information and a statement that participants could keep a copy of the signed consent.

The wording in the informed consent form was clear, concise, simple, and written in formal English, which is native to Trinbagonians. Participants had ample time to read the form and ask questions before making decisions about participating. They chose to participate in the study by signing the informed consent form.

During data collection. During data collection with the demographic-business survey and interviews, I accommodated the participants' meeting place requests and time schedules. Participants disclosed stringent time constraints, which I considered when scheduling meeting times. Interviews took place at times that were least disruptive to participants' business activities and at safe and appropriate locations, as recommended by each participant. During the interviews, I did not ask participants leading or intrusive

questions that were unrelated to the study goals. At the end of each interview session, I reiterated participants' anonymity in data reporting and the security of data.

Data security involved the storage of all data to an external hard drive with connectivity to my secured home network with extranet access disabled and data encrypted. Data security on my home network includes highly sophisticated security and encryption measures. With these measures, the data are accessible exclusively through my home network and my access credentials. These credentials are confidential. Pursuant to Walden University policy, I will store all data up to 5 years after the publication of the dissertation, at which time I will destroy the data permanently.

After data collection. At the end of the data collection process, I compensated participants for their time in contributing to this study with a \$5.00 phone card from the mobile provider of their choice. I chose this modest method of compensation so microenterprise owners would not feel coerced to participate because the compensation was inappropriately high. At the completion of data collection, I secured all spreadsheets, the audio recorder, and the tablet to preserve the integrity of all data.

As the interviews concluded, I spoke to the participants about the relevance of this study to practice, theory, and positive social change in rural T&T. If they so requested, I offered to share the research findings with them. In so doing, I intended to invoke their sense of patriotism toward T&T and renewed hope for their business success, despite current economic and business constraints. I also sent out thank-you e-mail messages to all participants to show appreciation for their participation.

During data analysis. During the data analysis, I maintained objectivity about the data collected. Rogers (2003) explained that the best way for individuals to address issues of bias is to acknowledge their existence. To address any potential biases, as discussed above, I bracketed my thoughts and feelings that may have prejudiced the analysis and reporting of data.

Reporting data. I reported the data methodologically. Yin (2014) suggested that researchers need a strategy to analyze evidence honestly, arrive at gripping analytic conclusions, and exclude alternative interpretations. During the reporting, I made a conscious effort to present data findings according to these suggestions. Further, I requested peer review input and member checks from participants to enhance the credibility of data findings.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how microenterprise owners in rural Trinidad and Tobago could benefit from adopting the use of social media for their business growth and competitiveness. Currently, ample research exists about the availability of social media and the applicability of social media as a business and management tool (Gholston, Kuofie, & Hakim 2016; He et al., 2017; Thompson & Booth, 2015). However, there is a scarcity of research on how microenterprise owners in T&T manage social media usage in their business activities.

This qualitative single case study involved an exploration of the subjective perceptions of microenterprise owners in rural T&T toward social media. This exploration was necessary to gain a deeper understanding of how these owners managed

social media usage and how their management decisions could impact their business growth. I accessed microenterprise owners in rural T&T over 2 weeks and interviewed 14 participants. I analyzed the data with descriptive coding, thematic analysis, and the use of MAXQDA to assist.

Chapter 3 included strategies for accessing participants who were difficult to reach through a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The chapter also included other strategies for transcribing audio data and ensuring the integrity and credibility of the data during data analysis. In addition, I explained strategies for addressing issues of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I also described the ethical procedures for collection, analysis, and reporting of the data. In chapter 4, I report on the findings of this study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to determine how microenterprise owners in T&T can benefit from adopting social media in their business operations. Microenterprise owners struggle with business constraints that deter business growth (Jamak et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2015; Lee, 2014). Microenterprise owners have leveraged social media and achieved a semblance of business growth (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015; Whiting & Deshpande, 2016). In general, social media usage for personal and business purposes results in drawbacks, benefits, or both (Georgescu & Popescul, 2015; Gümüş, & Kütahyalı, 2017). The goals of the study were to understand how microenterprise owners in rural T&T managed the use of social media, what drawbacks they encountered, and how they leveraged social media benefits to grow their businesses, despite the drawbacks and business constraints.

The overarching research question was the following: How can microenterprise owners in rural Trinidad and Tobago overcome the uncertainty of using social media for business growth and competitiveness? The subresearch questions explored how microenterprise owners conducted information-seeking and information-processing activities about social media, how they managed the drawbacks of social media, and how they leveraged the benefits of social media use for their business growth.

This chapter contains four main sections. The first section is a description of the research setting and a summary of participant demographics and characteristics relevant to the study. The second and third sections include the data collection procedures and data analysis process and resulting themes. The fourth section contains the evidence of

trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the final section, I present the study results, ordered by each research question and including supporting data in the form of verbatim quotations from participants. The chapter ends with a summary.

Research Setting

The research setting was rural T&T during a recessed economy and relatively high crime. Recruitment of participants was a challenge because, in this economic and social climate, many potential participants were more concerned with earning income and resting after full workdays than participating in this study. Participants also complained about the challenging economic conditions in which they had to conduct business in T&T.

Some participants requested interview sessions after work hours and during the evenings. Due to the high incidences of crime, several participants seemed overly concerned about the privacy of the data they provided and who might have access. I reassured participants that I was not conducting research for or on behalf of the government of T&T, and I reiterated the privacy and security measures for this study. Two participants were unwilling to be audio recorded during interview sessions, and I accommodated their preferences. Instead of audio recording, I typed their responses to interview questions on a tablet with keyboard input.

I was cautious about traveling through T&T on my own because of reports of crime waves and personal security concerns. Thus, I hired secured taxi services, which increased the cost of conducting the research and disrupted the data collection process.

However, this disruption did not deter my efforts to recruit a sufficient number of participants, nor did it influence my interpretation of the study results.

Demographics

The personal and business characteristics of microenterprise owners in rural T&T were germane to participation and analysis of the study results. The demographics of a population depict its characteristics (Maxwell, 2013). I collected demographic data using a personal-business demographic survey (see Appendix B). The relevant personal characteristics were gender, age, and educational level (Items 1-3). The relevant business characteristics were the location of the business, business type, years in business, number of employees, asset value, turnover in dollars, business offerings, and business constraints (Items 4-12). Table 1 illustrates the participants' demographic characteristics.

Most participants were male (71%) and between the ages of 35 and 44 (43%). Regarding educational level, the majority had a tertiary level of education (50%). Only one (7%) had not pursued education beyond the primary level.

The major businesses were food and beverage services, automobile care (e.g., car detailing), clothing and textiles, childcare, transportation, medical services, entertainment, horticulture (e.g., sowing, reaping, and selling vegetables and provisions), and retail (e.g., buying and selling automobile parts). All participants owned and managed their businesses, and all conducted their businesses in T&T.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 14)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	10	71
Female	4	29
Age		
25-54 (prime working age)	12	86
55-64 (mature working age)	2	14
Educational level ^a		
Primary	1	7
Secondary	6	43
Tertiary	7	50

^aPrimary level is 4-5 to 11-13 years old; the secondary level is 11-13 to 16-19 years old. For tertiary, individuals remain in school for “Advanced Level” work; if successful, individuals enter university.

Data Collection

Unusual Circumstances

Data collection was challenging and time-consuming due to social constraints and security concerns. The proposed research design specified that data collection would take place in different rural areas of T&T, and it did. However, uncertainties about the crime situation resulted in minor modifications to the planned recruitment and data collection procedures. I recruited most participants using the alternative snowballing method discussed in chapter 3. Participant 3 strongly suggested (and adamantly warned) that I only recruit microenterprise owners referred by reputable individuals in the society.

Other concerned nationals echoed similar sentiments about my personal security during data collection initiatives, and I gratefully took notice. Although this advice and resultant setbacks did not stop the data collection process, delays resulted. Still, I recruited and interviewed 14 participants. With the fourteenth, saturation occurred, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Participant 14 added no new insights on social media usage by microenterprise owners in rural T&T, and so I concluded the interview sessions with this participant.

Location and Frequency

I collected data from various cities, boroughs, and municipalities throughout rural T&T. Most interviews took place at the participants' workplaces in semiprivate areas during the mornings, afternoons, or evenings, depending on participants' preferences and the security of their work areas. In four instances, I interviewed home-based or virtual businesses in safe and semiprivate areas (e.g., public restaurants and city building lobbies) during the evening and afternoon hours in which the venues were well populated.

Types of Data and Duration

I collected data using a personal demographic-business survey (see Appendix B), an interview protocol (see Appendix C), an interview and field notes observation sheet (see Appendix D), handwritten notes, and an audio recorder. At the start of each interview, I explained the study to participants, invited them to read and sign the informed consent form, and assured them of the confidentiality of their identities. The process for protecting participants' identities included referring to them and any direct

quotations only by number (e.g., Participant 1). The strategy for qualifying participants for this study included administering the survey to microenterprise owners and arranging individual interviews for qualified owners. The categorical data collection process lasted an average of 5 to 10 minutes. The interviews lasted an average of 25 to 35 minutes each; the longest was 75 minutes and the shortest 17 minutes.

Most participants agreed to be audio recorded. However, at the start of the interview, two participants declined. In these instances, I recorded their responses using a tablet with a keypad. This adjustment delayed the time to complete each interview, involving a pause between questions so I could record the responses by keyboard input. After input, I read the response aloud to the participants for member checking and confirmed accuracy before proceeding. In these two instances, I extended the sessions by 10 to 20 minutes.

During the audio recorded interviews, two participants requested a pause in recordings to allow them to give background information off the record. To build trust with them and encourage transparency, I agreed. Further, their off-the-record comments were not direct responses to interview questions. These sessions were extended by 5 to 10 minutes. The other participants agreed to the audio recordings, did not request recording pauses, and answered interview questions openly and without hesitation.

After each interview, I recorded my observations of the participants in their natural business settings (see Appendix D). These observations took between 30 and 60 minutes. Each observation entry per interview session lasted 15 to 20 minutes, with an additional 5 to 10 minutes to review my observations for accuracy.

Data Analysis

The data collection process involved the use of a categorical demographic-business survey, observations, and interviews. I analyzed each source individually and then collectively and generated tables from the survey to depict participant personal characteristics, their business backgrounds, and their social media use. I transcribed the audio data from the interviews into written transcripts and confirmed accuracy, also designing diagrams and generating tables from the materials. By qualitative methods, I conducted a thematic analysis of observations and interview data and identified emergent themes, using both MAXQDA and manual methods to assist with descriptive coding and the identification of themes.

Business Demographic Data

I collected participants' business demographic data as part of the demographic-business survey (see Appendix B, Items 4-12). Table 2 displays the results. These results included the business characteristics with respective frequencies and percentages. In Table 2, the challenging business constraints were most notable. The results revealed that participants lacked time to focus on social media initiatives and funds they needed to invest in their businesses (76% and 86%, respectively).

As part of the demographic survey, I collected data on participants' social media experiences (see Appendix B, Items 13-14) and analyzed these data with frequencies and percentages. Table 3 displays the results. They revealed that the most popular social media applications among participants were Facebook and WhatsApp, a mobile application.

Table 2

Business Characteristics of Participants (N = 14)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Number of employees (up to 5 employees)		
0-2 people	10	71
3-5 people	4	29
Years in business (minimum of 2 years)		
2-5 years	9	75
6-10 years	2	14
11-20 years	3	21
Business asset value		
Under \$70,000	14	100
Annual business turnover		
Under \$350,000	14	100
Goods and services offered		
Goods only	2	14
Services only	8	57
Goods and services	4	29
Challenging business constraints ^a		
Lack of time	11	76
Limited funds	13	86
Limited management skills	2	21
Limited technology skills	4	21
All of the above	2	14

^aParticipants could answer more than one; therefore, the percentage values total more than 100%.

Table 3

Social Media Experience of Participants (N = 14)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Social media usage		
Adopted and still use	12	86
Adopted and no longer use	2	14
Social media platforms used in business ^a		
Facebook	12	86
Facebook Messenger	5	36
Twitter	1	7
LinkedIn	1	7
Instagram	16	43
WhatsApp	13	93
YouTube	2	14

^aParticipants could answer more than one; therefore, the percentage values total more than 100%.

Observation Data

With the use of the interview and field notes observation sheet (see Appendix D), I observed and recorded participants' demeanor, their geographical business location, place of business when possible, and the times that participants chose to schedule the interview sessions. For each observation instance, I conducted two cycles of coding. The first cycle involved describing the observations with keywords (see Appendix E), and the second cycle involved categorizing data and generating themes.

Many participants were confident and intelligent. Their personalities varied from quiet and soft-spoken to aggressive and even arrogant. Most were talkative and

forthcoming in the interviews. Appendix E shows a tabular display of the observation keywords per participant.

I also observed the participants' work ethics. Most interview sessions took place after the workday ended. Participants who agreed to interview sessions during work hours answered questions only if there were no customers (which I also encouraged). As noted in the Data Collection section of this chapter, four participants preferred to hold the interviews at private locations rather than their workplaces because their workplaces were home-based or virtual. In summary, most participants were outspoken, high achieving, knowledgeable, enterprising, and ambitious.

Interview Data

I conducted the interviews using an interview protocol (see Appendix C), which was based on the research questions. Interview data included audio transcripts and written transcripts. After manually transcribing the audio data into a written format, I proceeded with four steps:

1. Read through the transcribed interview data one participant at a time.
2. Listened to the audio data while reading the transcribed data.
3. Grouped the interview data segments by interview questions and responses and read through the transcribed data again.
4. Commenced coding.

To expedite the coding process, I imported the data into MAXQDA to use its coding and lexical search features. The in-vivo feature of MAXQDA was useful in expediting the first cycle of descriptive coding, with a generation of 277 codes. The

second cycle of coding involved chunking the data into 22 categories, and the third involved generating specific themes from the interview data according to the research question. The themes that emerged from the third cycle of coding were the following:

- RQ1
 1. Expanded on awareness knowledge.
 2. Leveraged business acumen to manage social media usage.
 3. Implemented social media strategies competently.
- RQ2
 4. Treated drawbacks as negative ideas and not as formidable threats.
 5. Projected confidence in using business acumen to curtail drawbacks.
- RQ3
 6. Anticipated favorable outcomes from benefits.
 7. Confidently relied on business acumen to leverage benefits.

These seven themes embodied the attitudes of study participants toward social media usage in their businesses. However, the data analysis process warranted further abridging, which I achieved in the last cycle of coding. Two subthemes emerged from RQ1:

1. Motivated to make sense of using social media in business.
2. Developed social media savvy by leveraging business acumen.

One subtheme emerged from RQ2:

3. Treated drawbacks as unanticipated but manageable threats.

One subtheme emerged from RQ3:

4. Managed benefits of social media with high self-efficacy.

The emerging subthemes, grouped by research questions, were adaptations of the main themes that emerged from each research question, and the interview questions were based on the research questions. The four subthemes revealed a survival strategy that most participants used to survive harsh economic times in rural T&T. These subthemes showed a decision-making process that participants progressed through to manage social media usage in their businesses. The innovation-decision process was an applicable model for framing the data I collected from the interview sessions with participants in this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I collected data from multiple sources and compared them; this comparison strengthened the credibility of the research findings. The semistructured interviews took place in secure and private settings, and participants were comfortable with the settings, interview questions, time schedules, and sharing of their subjective perceptions about social media usage. I ensured that participants understood my diction by speaking clearly and, when necessary, in the T&T vernacular. During the business survey and interview implementation, I repeated questions on request or when necessary. After each response, I reiterated it to check with participants for the accuracy of my interpretations.

No significant deviations took place from the strategies I had proposed to use for neutralizing any threats to the credibility of this study. However, two participants requested written and not audio recordings of interview sessions, which I honored. One

participant found difficulty with recall when answering one question about first learning about social media. With my subtle prompting, the participant quickly recalled the experience. After the major interviews, some of the participants were difficult to locate for member checking, but I succeeded in reaching most of them. They were available to clarify, correct, and validate their interview transcripts and my interpretations.

For additional credibility, a peer agreed to review the study components. The peer reviewer was a Trinbagonian scholar and foreign T&T national who lectures at an historically Black university in the United States. The reviewer, confirmed the credibility of my thematic interpretations of the data, and approved my use of exemplary direct quotations.

Transferability

I addressed issues of transferability by using different sampling methods to recruit participants, conducting the study at different times throughout the day, and interviewing a variety of individuals in different businesses who had different levels of social media and business experience. All participants were responsive and cooperative and shared thick descriptions as they responded to the interview questions. I also recorded details of the entire data collection process in a thorough and methodological fashion so that other researchers may replicate the study.

Dependability

To enhance dependability, I implemented the data collection process methodically. First, I used a recruitment script (see Appendix A) to recruit participants and a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix C) to conduct the interviews

systematically. The Walden University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the use of this protocol for interviewing participants. Second, I used an observation sheet (see Appendix D) to record my field notes, observations about interviews, and thoughts and feelings about participants, their work environments, and their behavior during the interviews. Immediately after each interview, I privately recorded my impressions and reflections.

Third, I triangulated two forms of data collection: participants' responses to the demographic-business survey and the interview data, noting similarities and differences. Fourth, I kept an audit trail of the entire research process and applied it to each participant. Finally, after the interviews, I administered member checks to the participants so they could review the transcriptions of their interviews for adjustments and increase of accuracy and dependability.

Confirmability

I used the observation sheets (see Appendix D) to disclose and bracket biases about the participants, their responses, and the interview sessions. For this purpose, during the interviews, I jotted keywords and later in private expanded them in the individual observation sheets. I also conducted member checking during and following the interview sessions to secure the accuracy of the responses from participants.

Based on the interview data, I crosschecked social media usage data from the demographic-business survey and interview transcripts against social media usage data from Alexa Internet, Google, and Facebook. Further, I submitted this study to the Walden

University dissertation committee and revised the text according to their feedback.

Finally, I requested the peer reviewer to confirm my results for logic and objectivity.

Study Results

The overarching research question for this study was the following: How can microenterprise owners in rural Trinidad and Tobago overcome the uncertainty of using social media for the purposes of business growth and competitiveness? To answer, I formulated three subquestions. This section includes the results, organized by research questions from which I fashioned the interview question sets, and then by themes. I illustrated the themes with participants' representative verbatim quotations and created summary tables and figures in support.

RQ1. How Do Microenterprise Owners Conduct Information-Seeking and Information-Processing Activities About Social Media for Their Business Growth?

The conceptual framework for this dissertation was Rogers's (2003) innovation decision process. The decision process to adopt or reject an innovation involves information-seeking and information-processing activities (Boonying et al., 2014; Fry, Ryley, & Thring, 2018). For the study participants, most of whom were creative, information-seeking and information-processing activities were ongoing and often simultaneous when they made innovation decisions. As participants sought information about social media, they processed information. Alternately, as participants processed information, they sought corroborating information. This cycle continued until participants made sense of social media and how to apply social media to their business

situations. Figure 2 depicts the themes that emerged from participants' information-seeking and information-processing.

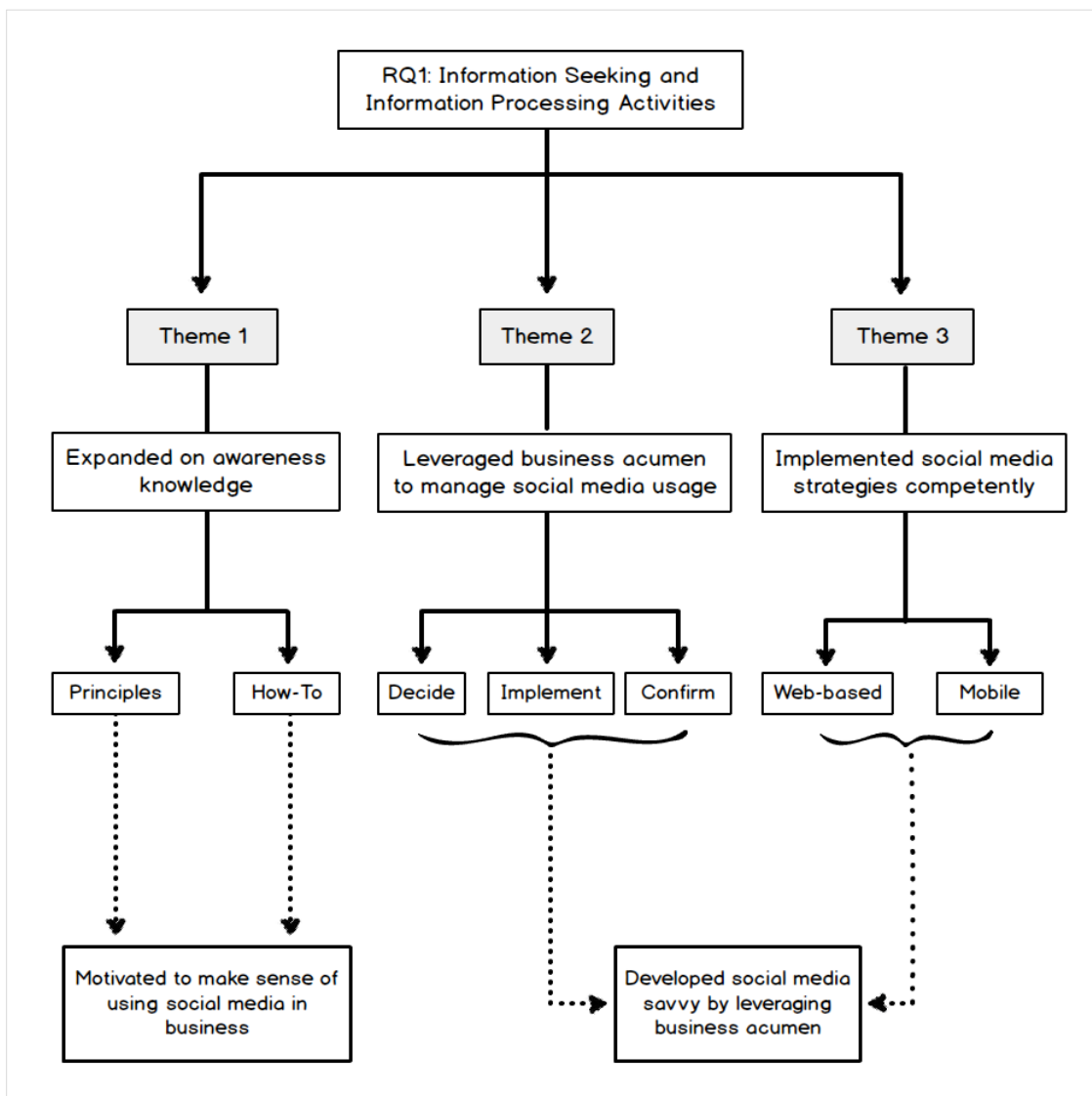


Figure 2. RQ1 themes related to participants' information-seeking and information-processing activities.

Theme 1: Expanded on awareness knowledge. Microenterprise owners leveraged awareness of social media platforms, economic conditions, and target markets to stay competitive. This leveraging occurred for several reasons. Other businesses were

using social media, the target audience seemed to expect social media usage, social media usage was free or low cost, and opportunity costs seemed high. Participants were social media strategists, borrowing and modifying social media strategies from competitors and other businesses.

For instance, Participant 8 noted,

If I get more knowledge about social media, I will be more competitive because a lot of people will get to know about my product, much more than the friends and customers I already knew. It will give me a greater market reach.

All participants had awareness knowledge of social media and desired to expand this knowledge with principles and how-to knowledge. They learned about social media in their social and business environments from friends, family, and peers. Participants were motivated by anticipated benefits and self-efficacy to learn how to use social media in their businesses.

Knowledge-seeking initiatives were specific and targeted. Accordingly, participants used search engines (such as Google) and web-based or mobile social media sites (such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, or Instagram) to obtain knowledge and information. Overall, participants pursued the use of social media in their businesses and how other businesses or competitors used social media to ascertain how and why they could benefit from using social media.

Many participants used search engine features of Google and YouTube in their quests for knowledge. Participants 1, 11, and 14 used Google to find how other businesses that used social media. Participant 12 believed that the starting point for knowledge-

seeking was Google and claimed that most Trinidadians shared this sentiment. In a jocular manner, he quoted a popular Trinidadian saying: “After God is Google.”

Participants 3 and 10 used YouTube to search for how-to knowledge on social media and learn certain skills to grow their businesses.

Participants also searched social media sites, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, for knowledge about how other people, businesses, and competitors used social media. Participants 5 and 9 said they learned about social media for business while using it socially. Participant 6 reported learning about social media from hearsay and then experimented with social media to learn how to use it.

Friends, family, and peers also supplied knowledge to participants, and they processed the information they received from these people, whom they trusted. Participant 8 stated, “I learned about social media from my nephew, who used social media personally and business-wise. I perceived that it was productive for him because he used it to make orders.” Participant 3 exclaimed, “My friend motivated me every day as she pursues her own goals with her business using social media as a tool to promote and advertise.” Participant 10 admitted that colleagues urged the idea of Facebook usage for advertising her business.

Theme 2: Leveraged business acumen to manage social media usage.

Microenterprise owners attributed business growth to their use of business acumen for managing how they used social media platforms to serve business goals and objectives.

For instance, Participant 13 stated,

When I started this business, I never used social media for it. I waited until I built my business to gain customers, get bookings, and then I went on social media.

Secondly, I did the reverse. I just wanted to see how much traffic I would have gained without social media influence.

Observations of other businesses, explorations, and experimentations influenced participants' decisions to adopt social media. Participant 11 stated, "That is how the age of technology is: Everyone is on social media." Participant 10 claimed that his target audience had a heavy social media presence, which influenced his adoption of social media adoption. Participant 7 attributed his popularity to successful social media initiatives: "I am a star here on social media, a bigger star than out there."

When participants convinced themselves that they had more to gain than to lose from using social media in their business activities, they implemented and confirmed social media usage. If they did not convince themselves of the benefits of social media, they abandoned or replaced social media with known business strategies. Figure 3 illustrates the various social media platforms microenterprise owners used in rural T&T (see also Table 3).

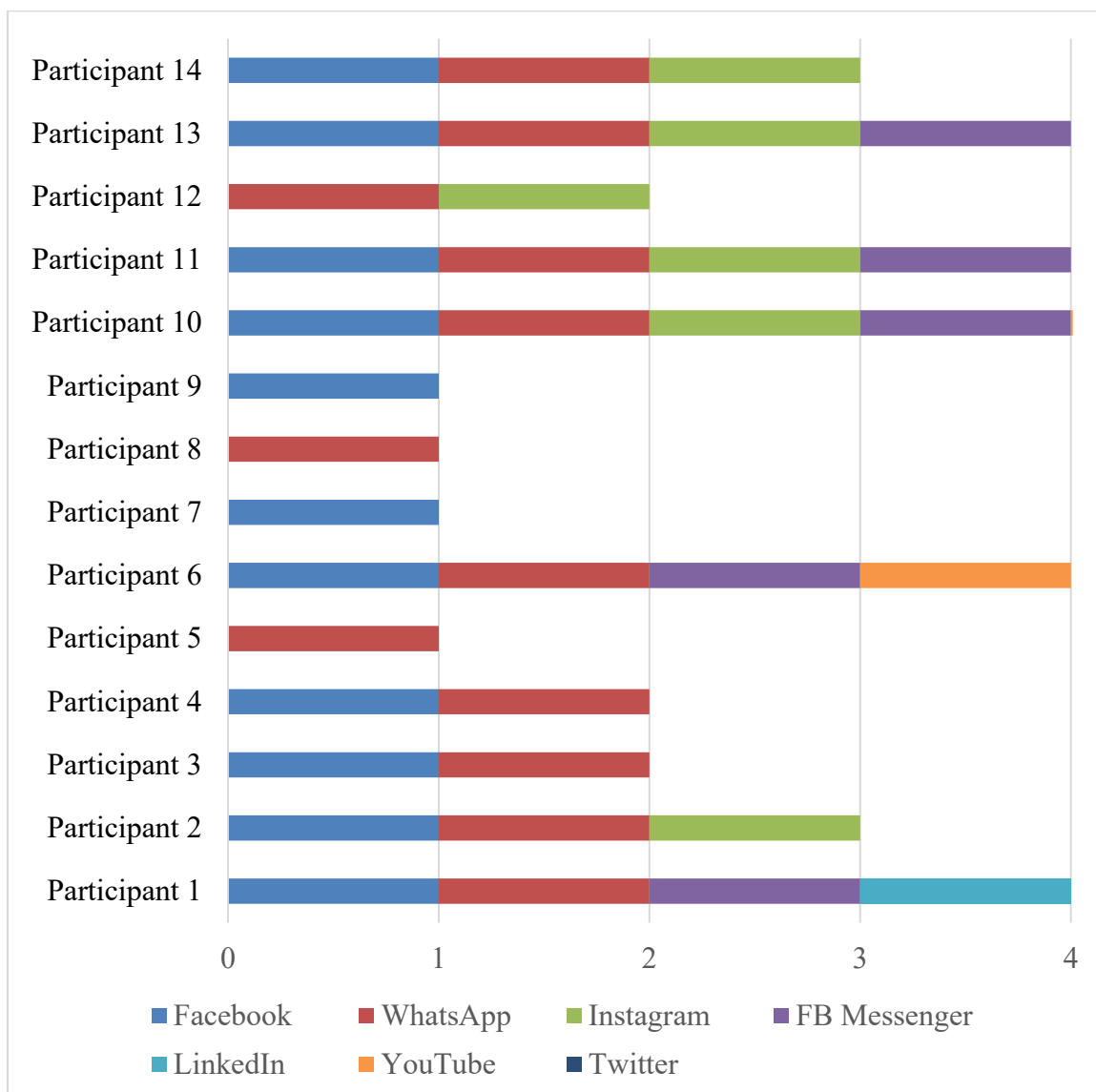


Figure 3. Social media platforms used by microenterprise owners in rural T&T.

Participants explored the websites of competitors and different businesses to understand and learn how they used social media. Participant 13 stated, “I kept tabs on my competitors and, I’ll tell you, I learned how to and how not to use social media from observing them and their social media use.” A few participants admitted to fashioning their social media strategies from those of their competitors or other businesses.

Participant 9 stated, “I went to Facebook to see how other businesses used social media and to find out more about how to use it.”

Participant 13 noted,

I learned about how to use social media from watching my competitors. I'd be, like, I'd never do that, or when I see they are not getting responses or not getting likes. So, for traffic on a page, I know exactly what to do. Yes, and I keep tabs on every single one of them.

Other participants learned by trial and error or gradually developed a clear idea of how they wanted to use social media in the business setting. Participant 1 said, “When I was younger, there was not that much technology. As we grew more and more, technology started to unfold, and we used it and learned as we practiced.” Most participants used common sense to comprehend social media. Participant 13 asserted, “I learned by seeing other people use social media and following the steps and even figuring out different steps of my own.”

Participants were savvy and confident in their business acumen. They used this acumen to develop social media strategies as they did to develop business strategies. They observed social media as a free advertising and marketing business tool and exploited that tool to their advantage. Participant 3 remarked,

Social media is all around. It was pretty easy to figure out which avenues I wanted to explore. I did have conversations with stakeholders, asking their thoughts about my stepping into social media advertising.

As social media usage in business started to appeal to and make sense to participants, they developed their strategies for using either web-based social media or mobile social media platforms. Participants tended to use mobile social media, and especially WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook Messenger, to disseminate information to customers or target audiences quickly. Participant 1 stated, “A few months after using Facebook, I got the idea to use WhatsApp.”

Some participants who used Facebook from desktops or laptops also used Facebook Messenger from their mobile devices. Participant 2 noted, “The major thing is WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram.” Participant 7 mentioned, “I use WhatsApp. I’m the pro of my organization, and it allows me to disseminate information to hundreds of people in a particular way faster than Facebook.” Participant 10 preferred Facebook because of how quickly he could disseminate information about his products and services to target audiences. “I wanted a faster turnover, and I was reaching a larger audience on Facebook. I saw how more likely it was for me to reach the people who were specifically interested in the products that I have to offer.”

Theme 3: Implemented social media strategies competently. Participants knew how to construct social media strategies to suit their business needs and manage their use of social media for business growth. Participant 2 declared, “Nobody uses social media like I am doing.” Participants also recognized the interconnections between mobile social media, especially Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger, and communication with prospects and customers. They discovered how to use web-based social media, such

as Facebook, in conjunction with mobile social media to gain new leads and build customer relationships. Figure 4 illustrates these interconnections.

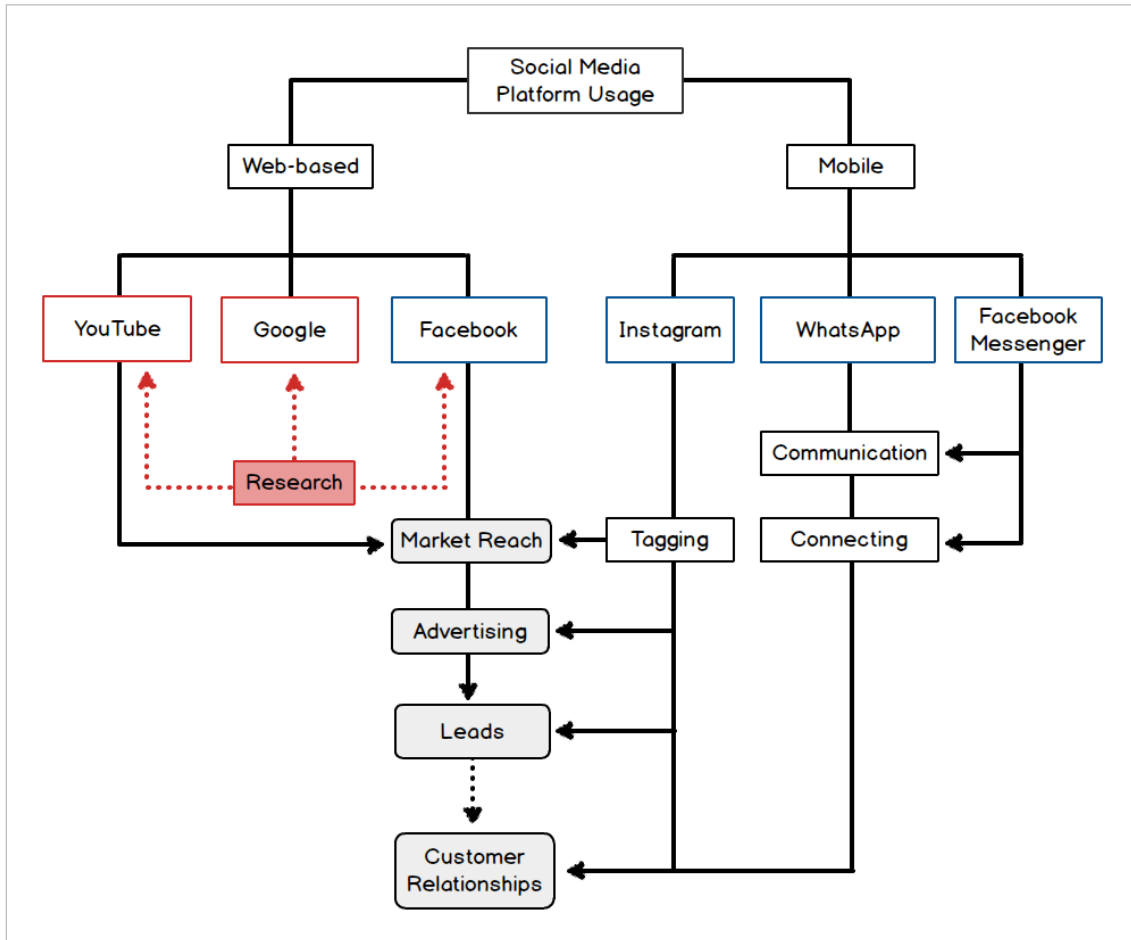


Figure 4. Interconnections between mobile social media and business building.

Further, participants all had business strategies that they were able to execute on a small scale in preparation for business growth and implementation on a larger scale. They identified a gap between where they were as microenterprises and where they wanted to go as they grew. Participants associated growth with a larger customer base and saw social media as a catalyst for that growth. They anticipated favorable outcomes for their

businesses from social media benefits. If they did not see favorable outcomes, they abandoned the use of social media and aborted all strategies.

Some participants explained that they could not leave their social media profiles dormant for long and that they made time to enhance them. These participants wanted to stand out from the competition and felt they could use social media to improve their competitive position. They boasted that their businesses stood out from competitors and that in their businesses they uniquely used social media. As Participant 2 said, “Nobody uses social media like I am doing.” Nevertheless, several participants shared their strategies, confident that competitors might not know how to implement these strategies with the same success. Figure 4 depicts how most participants used web-based or mobile social media to build business relationships with target audiences.

Subthemes for RQ1, Themes 1, 2, and 3. As participants expanded their awareness knowledge, they used the principles and how-to methods of information-seeking. Thus, the first subtheme for RQ1 emerged: participants were motivated to make sense of using social media in business (see Figure 2). As participants engaged in information-processing through the conscientious implementation of social media strategies, the second subtheme emerged: they developed their social media savvy by leveraging their business acumen (see Figure 2).

RQ2. How Do Microenterprise Owners Manage the Drawbacks of Social Media Use for Their Business Growth?

Participants answered questions on the anticipated drawbacks of using social media sparingly and deliberately. On occasion, I suspected that participants were either

naïve or careless about the unfavorable consequences of using social media in their business activities. They had no concrete plans to curtail drawbacks because they anticipated none. Figure 5 illustrates the two themes related to RQ2.

Theme 4: Treated drawbacks as negative ideas and not as formidable threats. Microenterprise owners minimized drawbacks of social media and seemed to believe that drawbacks did not apply to them. They diminished the implications of drawbacks and expressed confidence in their strategies to overcome any that might arise. Participant 11 noted, “The only drawback right now is the economy. I never considered social media as a drawback for me.” Participant 6 elucidated,

No, I didn’t consider any. I think the major challenge for me was to learn about and master social media. I was so excited about the exposure that all I saw was opportunities. And my mindset is always a solution base. I always don’t see the obstacles as an issue because there’s always a way around, under, over, and through.

However, participants did experience anticipated and unanticipated social media drawbacks. They acknowledged the major business constraints to developing their businesses, as Figure 6 illustrates (see also Table 2). The primary constraints were limited time (76%) and funds (86%).

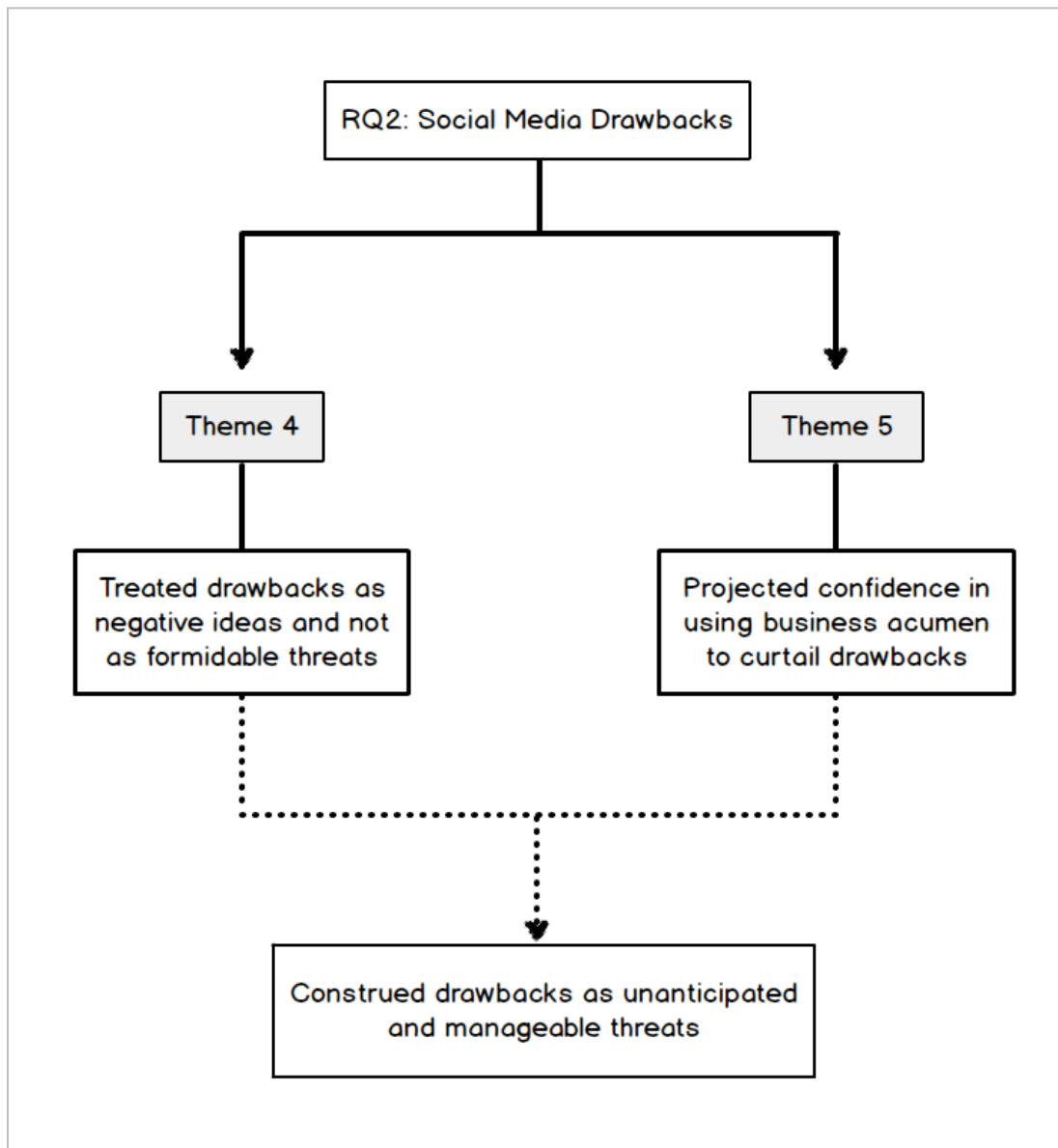


Figure 5. RQ2 themes related to the drawbacks of using social media.

Nevertheless, in terms of the drawbacks of social media, their overall perspective was surprising. Although participants expressed awareness of social media drawbacks and the negative impacts on their business reputations, they did not appear to take drawbacks seriously. Participant 6 asserted, “I keep telling you—what you feed your

mind will form your characteristics. Don't even cry wolf." Participant 10 declared, "I don't see drawbacks. I see only see an opportunity for growth and to make you a better and stronger individual."

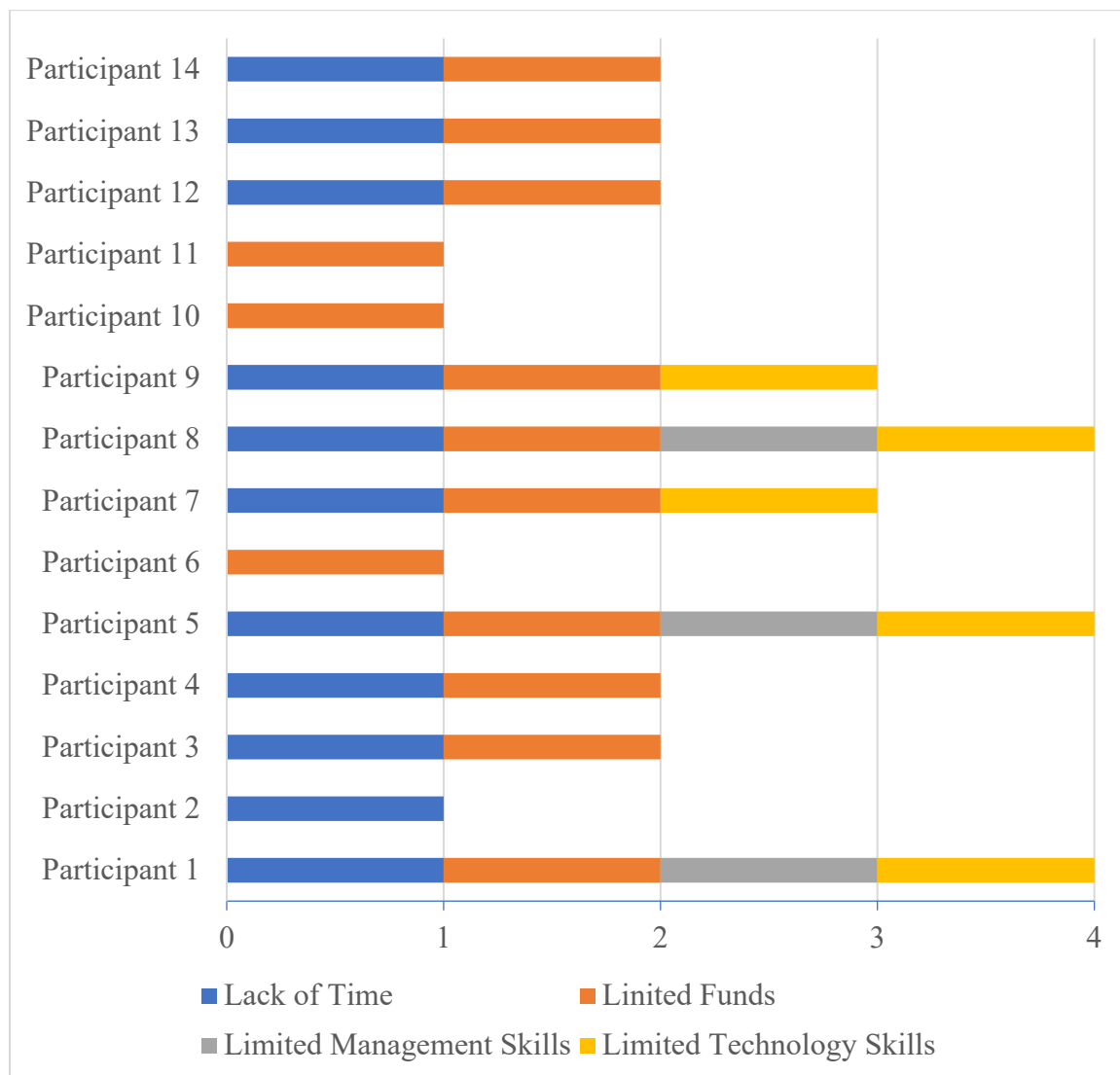


Figure 6. Business constraints for microenterprise owners.

Participants revealed that they were aware of social media drawbacks that impacted other enterprises. But participants apparently managed social media drawbacks with awareness of them and the negative impact those drawbacks could have.

Nevertheless, they believed that they were exempt from drawbacks that may have existed. Although they admitted drawbacks, they maintained that the drawbacks did not apply to them. They did not anticipate drawbacks that they did not observe (nor did they want to entertain them) from other business social media users.

In addition, participants did not believe that drawbacks could affect their businesses or competitive positions either directly or indirectly. Even though many revealed an awareness of social media drawbacks, they dismissed or minimized the potential or likelihood of drawbacks. As Participant 6 noted, “Because of my mindset, drawbacks would not affect my competitive position.”

Three participants attributed possible drawbacks to social media usage to jealousy and envy by customers and competitors rather than negative comments from their target audiences. Participant 8 noted, “I have experienced more dealing with jealousy. Some customers believe I am getting too rich off of the sales, and there are even some who falsely talk negatively about my business.”

On the whole, participants appeared not to give drawbacks any power. They coped with the concept of drawbacks by dismissing and minimizing them. For instance, Participant 6 stated, “I don't let myself go there because I feel I am inviting negative energy into my space.” Many participants associated drawbacks with negativity. By diminishing or refusing to recognize drawbacks, participants may have felt they could curtail or neutralize them.

Some participants also deflected follow-up questions about drawbacks. They either talked about drawbacks to doing business in general, discussed the economy, or

recited sales pitches to promote their businesses. Participant 11 was adamant about the impact the economy was having on leveraging social media benefits and observed,

The only drawback right now I see is the economy. I never considered social media a real drawback for me. Social media is a great solution to everything right now. The economy is the downfall, and everything revolves around that.

Several participants hypothesized drawbacks that could exist, such as negative comments and breach of privacy, and how those could affect their businesses and reputations as business owners if they existed. But most participants maintained that drawbacks did not exist, and therefore, they were harmless. Thus, again participants minimized the drawbacks.

Theme 5: Projected confidence in using business acumen to curtail

drawbacks. Microenterprise owners were not threatened but appeared stimulated and challenged by business, economic, and social media constraints. They were dismissive of the unanticipated negative or unfavorable consequences of using social media. Participant 6 stated, “Because of my mindset, drawbacks would not affect my competitive position.” Participant 3 noted that the notion of drawbacks to social media usage “just encouraged me to push harder because the negative comments can really be discouraging.”

Nonetheless, most participants asserted that they had strategies in place for dealing with negative publicity, and they were confident in their strategies, acumen, brand loyalty, and relationships with their customers. For instance, Participant 10 confided,

When you are confident in your product, whatever the negativity is, it doesn't faze you. I always insist on my clients to give me feedback. If you don't give me enough feedback, I wouldn't know if my suppliers are giving me the best quality, especially when it comes to my business. So, I need their feedback, and I appreciate that. I don't see drawbacks. I see only see an opportunity for growth and to make you a better and stronger individual.

Many participants also reduced social media drawbacks by evaluating and relying on their business acumen. With confidence, they recognized that acumen as a way to minimize risks and neutralize drawbacks. Participants professed confidence in managing drawbacks, should they arise. Participant 9 shared how negativity associated with drawbacks could hinder yet help him:

It can cause you to lose a customer. It all depends on the individual. However, once I take the criticism, I would step up my game and do better, which will let me gain more customers. The drawbacks would've affected my competitive position in a positive way because I would take the negativity and improve my business customer service, employee attire, and product taste or texture.

Participant 13 had an astute and business-smart solution: "If I see any negative comments, I will try to offer free products to eliminate any spread of negativity and review for future experience."

When asked about the drawbacks of using social media, some participants insisted that there were no drawbacks at all. Those participants claimed that because social media

was free, there were only opportunities to gain and nothing to lose. Participant 7 commented,

Social media is a great opportunity for the monopoly on information in the world to be broken. It has opportunity to create so much noise that you can have everything in front of you, but you only focus on what you been directed to, you know. And you could keep in touch with the real issues, but you have to have the correct links and correct friends on your page and connections.

Apparently, participants believed there was no need to dwell on drawbacks that did not exist. These participants may have differentiated between potential loss and actual loss. The potential loss did not yet exist, and so they saw no reason to allocate time and energy to something unreal and unthreatening. For them to give attention to drawbacks would be a loss of time and energy, which would result in a loss of cash or income.

Two participants, however, admitted drawbacks and discontinued the use of social media. Participant 9 stopped using Facebook because he could not realize the benefits he had anticipated. Instead, he experienced loss of time, business opportunities, and income. He explained, “I wanted to try it to see what it would do for my business, how it would grow my business. I don't believe that social media can do much for my business as yet.” Participant 9 was obviously disenchanted with social media.

Participant 8 discontinued using social media because, he said, he did not have the knowledge to use it the way he had envisioned—to achieve greater exposure. He realized that learning social media was too challenging for him and would take too much time. If he received the proper training, he maintained, he would adopt social media again.

However, prior to discontinuing use, he did not report experiencing any drawbacks nor did he consider them. Nevertheless, some participants admitted that negative comments that spread quickly could impact their competitive position if they allowed it. For instance, Participant 5 stated,

Drawbacks I anticipated were just negativity. It only takes one person to spread a negative comment, and it can cost your product popularity out the window because I understand social media can speed up communication and spread far and wide.

However, for most participants, it was not actual drawbacks that they referred to because they did not report experiencing drawbacks. Rather, they expressed their fear of wasted time, negative comments, or privacy breaches. Thus, regarding participants' responses to the interview questions based on RQ2, two themes became evident. In Theme 4, they treated drawbacks as negative ideas and not as formidable threats, thus minimizing or denying drawbacks. In Theme 5, they had confidence that they could leverage their business acumen to curtail drawbacks. These responses showed their positive attitudes toward drawbacks in the management of their businesses.

Subtheme for RQ2, Themes 4 and 5. Participants treated drawbacks as negative ideas and not as formidable threats. They also expressed confidence that their business acumen could curtail any drawbacks that might emerge. Thus, the subtheme for RQ2 emerged: participants treated drawbacks as unanticipated but manageable threats (see Figure 5).

RQ3. How Do Microenterprise Owners Leverage the Benefits of Social Media Use for Their Business Growth?

Microenterprise owners demonstrated business and social media acumen and confidence in their acumen. They leveraged social media to increase leads and stimulate business growth. Participant 5 noted, “When you are confident in your product, whatever the negativity is, it doesn't faze you.” Participant 10 stated,

I know my product, and I know what services I offer, so I am not going to be sidetracked and consumed with the negative comments by a small few who feel threatened by my goods and services. Performance beats all old talk.

All participants asserted that benefits could be derived from using social media, as they gleaned from information-seeking activities, but some participants did not necessarily know how to attain those benefits. They recognized and assumed that other businesses benefited from social media usage, and they wanted to acquire those benefits also. The benefits that they anticipated included an influx of traffic through leads, market reach, visibility/exposure, popularity, and business growth in sales increase. Other than the fact that social media usage was free, these benefits were the compelling motivators for participants' use of social media.

Many participants explained that they adopted social media as marketing, advertising, and communications tools because they anticipated more benefits than drawbacks. They were prepared to take the risk of using social media because social media was free, and they anticipated that benefits might impact business growth directly or indirectly. They were also optimistic that they had the business sense to transform

benefits into income. Participant 11 remarked that the use of social media was “to make more money by getting my company's name out there, so my company name's is on the tip of everybody's tongue. This increases sales and market reach and also increases my clientele.”

With little to no hesitation, participants exploited the fact that social media was free of charge once they knew how to use it to attain leads. Participant 5 explained, “I tried social media because it was free; I was looking for benefits. I try not to focus on drawbacks.” Participant 13 considered social media as free exposure and stated, “If you are a small business owner it really helps because it's free marketing, free advertising, and you need to have the correct formula. Once you find the correct formula for your social media, you win.” By “formula,” this participant meant a strategy for leveraging the benefits of social media for business growth.

Theme 6: Anticipated favorable outcomes from benefits. Participants anticipated having very little to lose by using social media to grow their businesses and survive in the economic recession. Because social media use had no cost, they focused more on the benefits and how to attain them than any ensuing drawbacks that may have arisen by using social media. Participants who received the benefits they had anticipated were inclined to use social media more enthusiastically. They continually sought more knowledge and revised their strategies (see Figure 7).

When questioned about anticipated social media benefits, most participants focused their responses on increased market reach, visibility, and popularity, as opposed to solely increases in sales. Notably and with business acumen, Participant 2 stated, “I do

not offer sales. I offer service.” Participant 4 associated business growth with more clients, reaching millions of people, and increased sales. Participant 8 stated that he wanted social media to increase sales, business growth, and market reach.

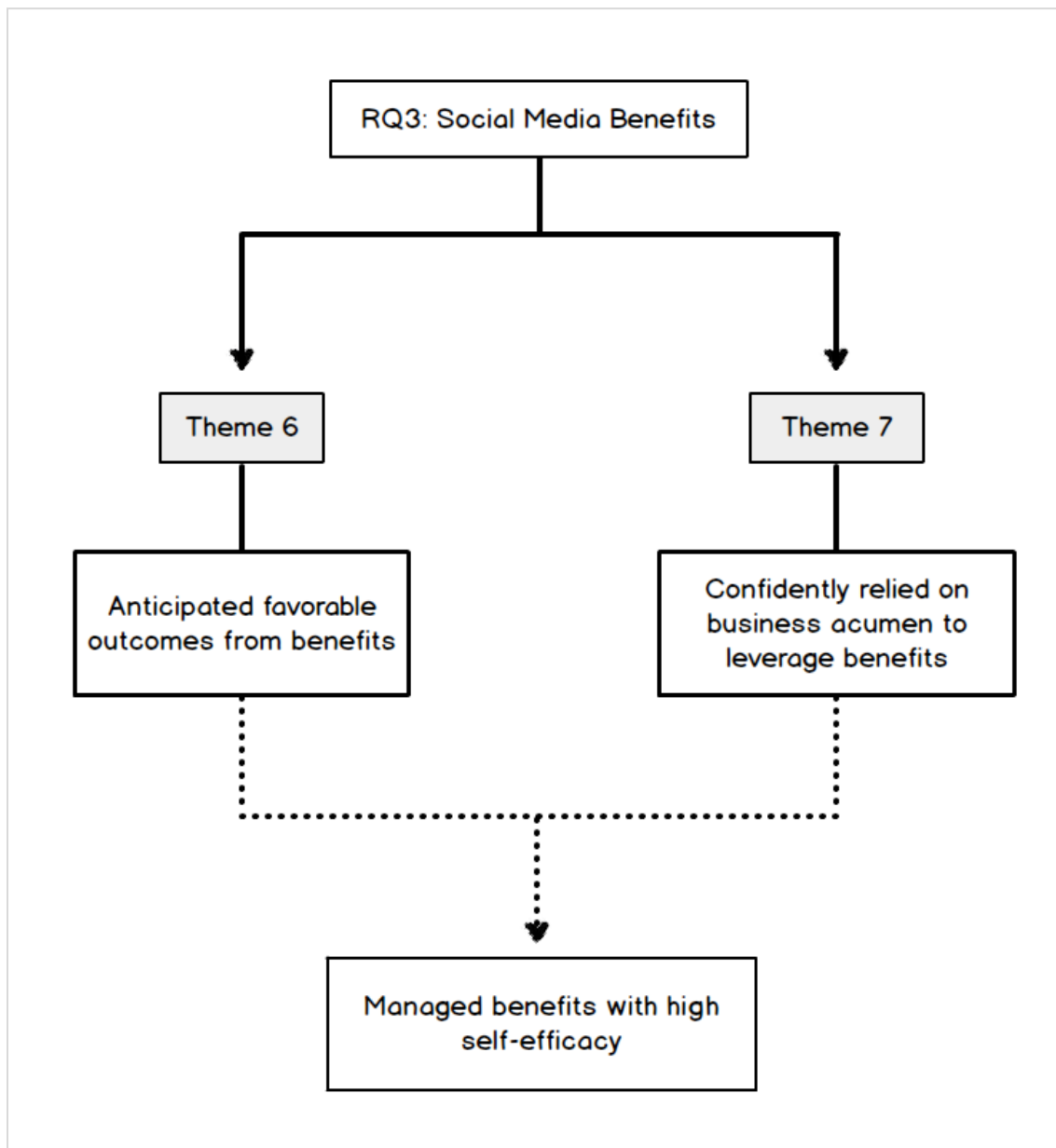


Figure 7. RQ3 themes related to the benefits of using social media

Theme 7: Confidently relied on business acumen to leverage benefits.

Microenterprise owners did not anticipate social media drawbacks because they were optimistic about their businesses and use of social media. Participant 6 asserted, “I keep telling you what you feed your mind will form your characteristics. Don’t even cry wolf.” Participant 10 declared, “I don't see drawbacks. I see only see an opportunity for growth and to make you a better and stronger individual.” Participant 11 stated, “Social media is a great solution to everything right now.”

Participants used business acumen to monitor increases in popularity as well as to gauge when and how to use social media. They were also optimistic that they had the business acumen to translate the outcomes of social media benefits into income. Participant 11 remarked that the use of social media was “to make more money by getting my company's name out there, so my company name's is on the tip of everybody's tongue. This increases sales and market reach and increases my clientele.”

The participants anticipated favorable outcomes from social media usage. They learned not to anticipate automatic income as a benefit of social media. However, participants who realized the benefits they had anticipated were inclined to use social media more enthusiastically. Participants who did not realize the benefits they had anticipated discontinued or suspended social media use. For instance, Participant 8 needed more how-to knowledge on social media, and Participant 9 needed better features from social media platforms to realize benefits. With those unmet needs pending, neither of these participants anticipates any useful benefits from social media, which impacted their usage.

For these participants, business outcomes impacted their social media usage. Most participants identified a potential transition from increased brand awareness to increased sales. Participant 11 explained, “I want to make more money by getting my company’s name out there so that my company’s name is on the tip of everybody’s tongue.” Participant 6 declared, “Social media is kind of like a free promotion of your business. I mean it's just your time and your Internet bill you're paying for; it helps to broaden your support base.” Participant 8 stated, “So using social media increased my profits as I was able to cater to the specific needs of the market. And I was getting all this information from social media.”

Thus, from participants’ responses to the interview questions regarding RQ3, two themes became evident. In Theme 6, they anticipated favorable outcomes from the benefits of using social media. In Theme 7, they competently relied on their business acumen to leverage benefits. The themes revealed indicate the perspectives and steps participants brought to the better management of their businesses with the use of social media.

Subtheme for RQ3, Themes 6 and 7. Participants anticipated favorable outcomes from the benefits of using social media and voiced confidence and reliance on their business acumen to leverage the benefits. Thus, they were inclined increasingly to use social media. As they anticipated and saw the benefits, these outcomes impacted their social media usage. The subtheme for RQ3 emerged: participants managed the benefits of social media with high self-efficacy (see Figure 7). Although most participants evidenced

these themes and subthemes, several did not. I discuss their responses in the next section on discrepant cases.

Discrepant Cases

In qualitative analysis, discrepant cases reveal views or circumstances that may contradict the majority. These discrepant cases are important for a greater understanding of the phenomena under study and recognition of the complexities (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). My initial qualifications were intended to prevent discrepant cases. Nevertheless, the interviews revealed that two participants abandoned the use of social media but for different reasons. Participant 8 and Participant 9 discontinued using social media either because they did not have the how-to knowledge, or they were unable to attain anticipated benefits from using social media.

Participant 8 suspended the decision to adopt social media until he learned how to use social media. He also noted that he benefited indirectly from social media when a regular customer took pictures of his products and published them on the customer's social media. Participant 8 subsequently stated, "The benefits did not affect my use by much because my limited knowledge of it stopped me from using it in the first place." The rejection in both instances was unusual, given the affordability (without cost) and popularity of social media in T&T for microenterprise owners.

Participant 9, clearly disenchanted with social media, stated, "If I used it to get the benefits I desired, that would have prompted me to get more involved in the social media thing. I would have sought other platforms to gain much more popularity."

Participant 9 was the only participant to reject social media for this reason. Anticipating

the benefits of more leads, this participant used social media, but his efforts were fruitless. With no leads, he saw no purpose for investing more time in social media and discontinued using it. He further reviewed his existing business strategy without social media and decided that it was more applicable to his business domain, one he felt he had already conquered. Participant 9 exclaimed, “Social media did nothing for my business growth.”

I noticed other instances of discrepant cases. Most participants sought how-to knowledge by asking friends, observing, or researching social media business profiles. In contrast to other owners, Participants 6, 7, and 10 started using social media via YouTube to promote products or to seek how-to knowledge, replacing YouTube with the social media platforms, Facebook, and WhatsApp. These platforms had more applicable and usable features. This social media behavior was unusual because most participants did not use YouTube and did not identify it as a social media platform.

Another discrepant case emerged. In the survey, Participant 1 revealed that she had a LinkedIn profile and explained that she was not a habitual LinkedIn user. This admission also was unusual because the other participants did not use LinkedIn, even infrequently. In addition, during the semistructured interview, Participant 1 did not mention her use of LinkedIn. Curious, I searched LinkedIn for this participant’s profile and observed that the profile was scanty and with few connections. I extrapolated that LinkedIn was not relevant to Participant 1. Further, LinkedIn was not listed in the top five sites that Trinbagonians frequently used (Alexa Internet, 2018).

Summary

In this qualitative single case study, I explored how microenterprise owners in T&T can benefit from adopting the use of social media in their business operations. The research setting for this study was rural T&T during a period of economic recession and relatively high crime waves. Recruitment initiatives were challenging; however, I addressed them effectively and safely. The participant pool included 14 microenterprise owners in T&T from various business types, age groups, educational backgrounds, and both genders. All were cooperative and willing to share their knowledge and experiences with social media usage in their businesses.

Data collection procedures entailed unusual circumstances concerning personal safety, transportation, and the total cost of conducting the study. These unusual circumstances delayed the data collection process but did not deter it. There were minimal threats to the trustworthiness of this study. To address the few threats, I triangulated the data using different sources, implemented member checking procedures, bracketed biases, and sought peer review of the study components from a qualified scholar. Further, I explained and illustrated discrepant cases. Figure 8 depicts the emerging themes and subthemes of this study.

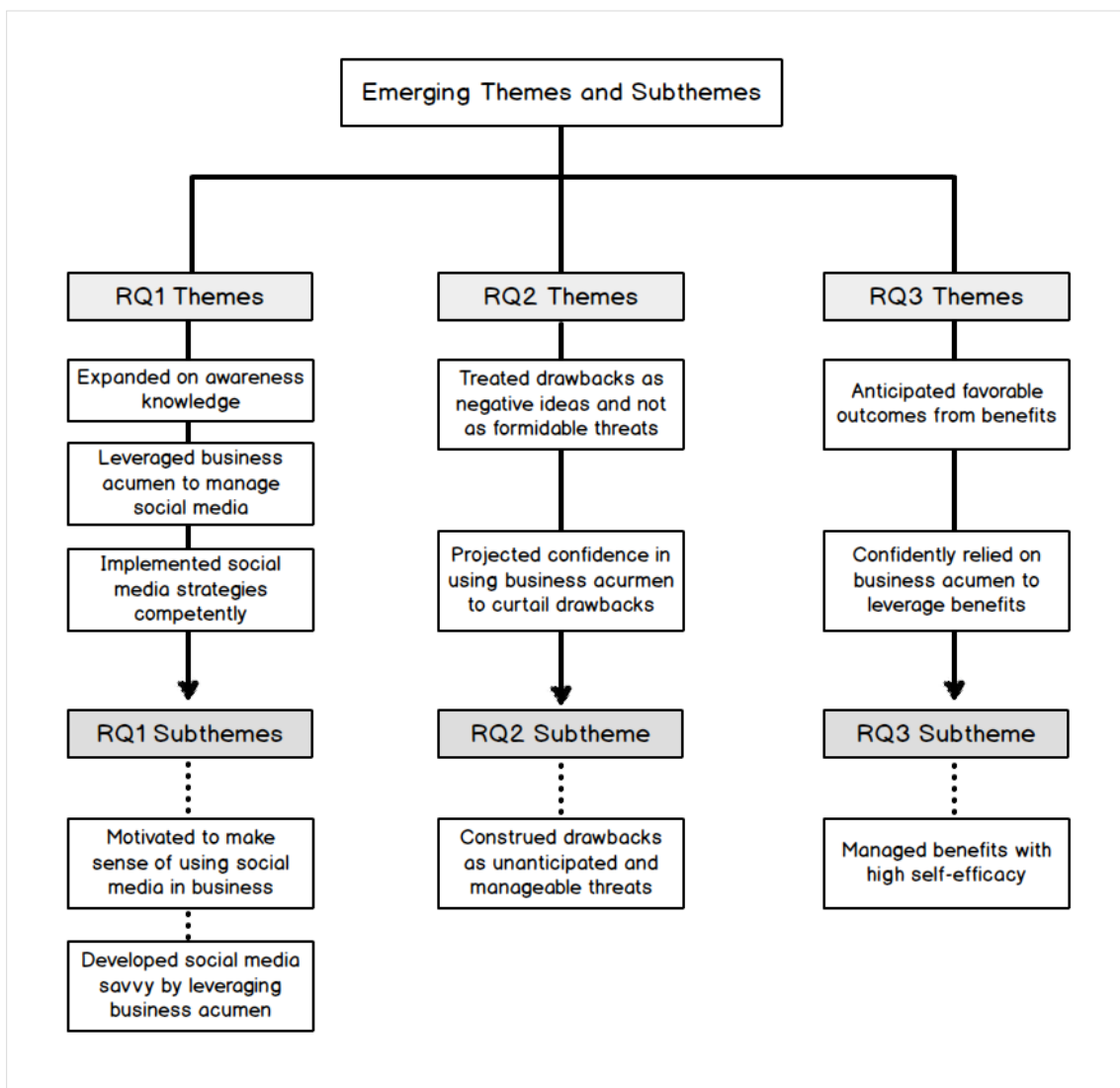


Figure 8. Emerging themes and subthemes from the data analysis.

Chapter 4 included a brief description of the research setting and demographics, along with a thorough outline of data collection and data analysis procedures, issues with trustworthiness and the results for this study. In chapter 5, I interpret the findings of the study and discuss the implications for positive social change in T&T. Further, I make recommendations for future research, discuss implications for positive social change, and present conclusions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this single case study was to explore how microenterprise owners in rural T&T can benefit from adopting social media in their business operations. The goals of the study were to understand how microenterprise owners conducted information-seeking and information-processing activities, managed social media drawbacks, and leveraged social media benefits in pursuit of business growth despite business constraints. Thus, the overarching research question was the following: How can microenterprise owners in rural T&T overcome the uncertainty of using social media platforms for the purposes of business growth?

Qualitative analysis of interviews with the 14 participants revealed seven themes. With reference to RQ1, participants expanded on their awareness knowledge, leveraged their business acumen to manage social media use, and implemented their social media strategies competently. With reference to RQ2, participants treated drawbacks as negative ideas and not as formidable threats and projected confidence in using their business acumen to curtail drawbacks. With reference to RQ3, participants anticipated favorable outcomes from the benefits of social media and confidently relied on their business acumen to leverage benefits.

The study findings revealed that the microenterprise owners interviewed in T&T used their business acumen via their mental framework to make sensible and effective innovation decisions about using available ICT, specifically social media, to manage and enhance their business growth. Moreover, observing the benefits attained by other businesses, participants instinctively used their business acumen to curtail drawbacks and

leverage social media benefits. Thus, microenterprise owners in T&T overcame the uncertainty of using social media for their business growth.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study confirmed that participants in this study, who were microenterprise owners in rural T&T, used Rogers's (2003) innovation decision process (uncertainty reduction process) to make decisions about whether to adopt or reject social media usage in their business activities. In participants' decisions, they performed information-seeking and information processing activities that were unique to Trinbagonians because of the accepted business culture, economic climate, and crime situation in T&T. Consequently, despite the drawbacks and existing business constraints, participants leveraged social media benefits.

Information-Seeking and Information-Processing Activities

Participants engaged in all the stages of Rogers's innovation decision process, often interchangeably and sometimes sequentially, through a decision-making mental framework. Rogers (2003) stated that the mental framework individuals use to make innovation decisions involves an interplay of information-seeking and information-processing activities, which Nordin et al. (2017) and Boonying et al. (2014) confirmed. Evidently, participants conducted information-seeking and information-processing activities to make sense of social media and to determine whether its usage aligned with their business goals and objectives.

In their interview responses, participants sought specific principles and how-to knowledge that could improve their understanding of social media usage for business

growth and competitiveness. Participants did not seek a broad knowledge of all social media platforms accessible to Trinbagonians. Rather, they sought specific information about which platforms and features to use and how to use those features to leverage benefits at the lowest possible opportunity cost--especially in time.

Time was a prominent business constraint with which most participants struggled. Leveraging social media benefits meant spending the time they could have used to generate sales; several were uncertain as to how their efforts in learning to use social media could eventually translate into sales. Additionally, they indicated that taking the time to learn about using social media platforms could result in less business. Therefore, participants adopted the social media platforms their competitors used, platforms that trusted individuals recommended, or platforms that customers expected them to use. To save time, participants also customized existing social media strategies that they had located through their information-seeking activities.

To make sense of social media and social media strategies, participants sought principles and how-to knowledge from trusted individuals, competitors, and reputable businesses to expand their existing awareness of social media. Once they knew how to leverage the benefits from social media usage, they adopted the respective social media platforms in anticipation of implementing social media strategies for similar benefits. Otherwise, they either postponed or rejected social media usage.

Participants confirmed that social media usage made sense when, after they implemented social media strategies, they realized a broader market reach and more leads. This validation did not take place because participants realized how to use social

media. Instead, as data analysis of the interviews revealed, the confirmation took place when they realized that social media usage actually enhanced their marketing campaigns and customer relationship initiatives, and they could accomplish social selling without electronic commerce. Thus, participants realized the benefits they anticipated.

Collectively, participants used a similar mental framework to make sense of social media and reduce the uncertainty of using social media in their business activities. Given their business situations, they devised similar strategies they found workable to leverage social media benefits. Figure 9 illustrates the resulting common strategies.

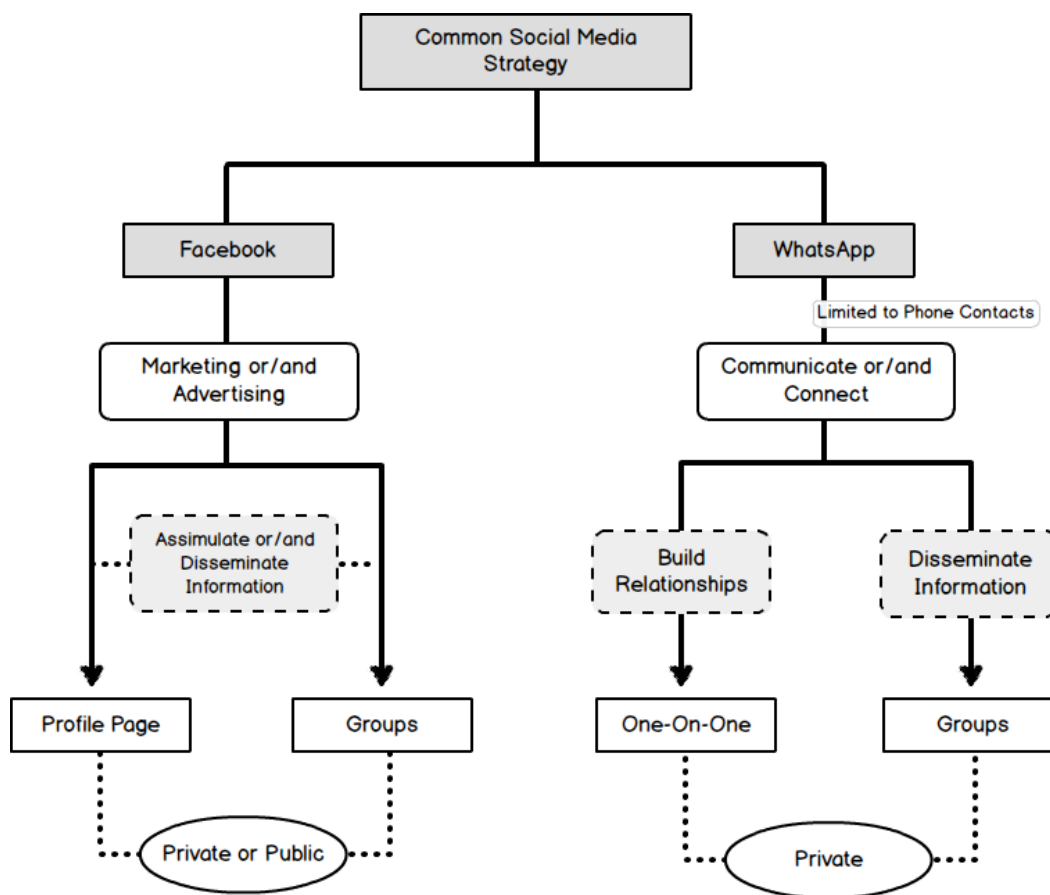


Figure 9. Social media strategies used by microenterprise owners in this study.

Social Media Drawbacks

Most participants were inclined to dismiss or minimize the risks associated with social media. Previous studies have revealed that the common business constraints microenterprise owners face as they conduct business activities include loss of time, limited financial resources, loss of income, loss of privacy, and negative publicity (Jones et al., 2015; Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2014). However, microenterprise owners often risk adopting social media despite such business constraints and the uncertainty of the resulting consequences (Munnukka & Järvi, 2014).

Similarly, some participants in this study showed minimal risk averseness to adopting social media and were confident about minimizing drawbacks while leveraging benefits. Other participants considered the drawbacks as a positive consequence of using social media. For instance, when I asked about the anticipated drawbacks of social media usage in business, Participant 8 exclaimed,

Negative comments. I was always afraid it would spread negativity; it's obvious you are going to get likes and dislikes. Everybody wants to get 100% good comments. If I get a negative comment, I know that you cannot please everybody, I focus on the criticism of my product base on the majority judgment. If I get a negative comment, it brings awareness for me to check up on myself and product and do better. So I'm not really afraid of it.

Several reasons may account for this minimization tactic. Perhaps participants' experiences with social media may have been insufficient for them to have experienced serious drawbacks. Or participants simply did not feel threatened by drawbacks,

considering the anticipated benefits that were free and nonthreatening. Additionally, participants may not have had the time to linger on negative issues, such as unanticipated drawbacks, when managing challenging time constraints and surviving difficult economic conditions.

Further, participants may have wanted to conserve already limited time for leveraging benefits, converting leads into sales, and increasing income. The pluses resulting from participants' leveraging of social media benefits could have been so compelling that the drawbacks might have seemed insignificant in comparison. Overall, participants did not allow the threat of social media drawbacks to deter them from leveraging the benefits they anticipated.

Participants were also apprehensive about discussing the drawbacks of using social media to achieve business goals, so they deflected. In many instances, participants magnified their business acumen rather than respond directly to interview questions about social media drawbacks. They interpreted drawbacks as challenges and not threats to their business growth and competitive position. Instead, participants preferred to entertain positive ideas about social media, such as realizing the anticipated benefits from social media usage in their business activities.

If participants saw any drawbacks, they were in relation to time. As Munnukka and Järvi (2014) pointed out, a major risk for microenterprise owners is a loss of time for implementation of social media strategies, with no guarantee of investment return. Microenterprise owners are responsible for managing all aspects of their businesses, and

therefore time is crucial (Kalkan & Bozkurt, 2017; Munnukka & Järvi, 2014).

Participants in this study were adamant about using time wisely.

Time was a deterring factor for some potential participants, who declined participation in the study due to time constraints. One microenterprise owner explained that by default she reserved any extra time for needed sleep. The remaining time was for her to earn a living. Microenterprise owners who agreed to participate in this study reserved either lag time from work or scheduled time after work hours for the interviews. They participated because they anticipated favorable outcomes from the results of the study that could ultimately impact positive social change in T&T.

One participant discontinued the use of social media because he recognized that the usage was wasting his time, which was already limited. He also did not gain the popularity from social media use that he had anticipated. This discontinuance supported the conclusion of Agnihotri et al. (2016) that sales managers in their study felt burdened by fruitless social media activities that consumed valuable time.

The participants' behaviors relating to time also supported the observations of several other researchers. Kalkan and Bozkurt (2017), Lee (2014), and Munnukka and Järvi (2014) pointed out that microenterprises face serious time constraints. During interview sessions in this study, participants did not divulge that time constraints were an issue; However, in the demographic-business survey, most participants identified time constraints as a hindrance to business growth. Many participants also shared that they felt an exigency to use social media in anticipation of favorable outcomes, such as increased

visibility, popularity, and new leads. Thus, participants made time for social media activities to enhance their business activities.

Social Media Benefits

Most participants considered activities associated with social media usage as a necessary business activity that was worthy of their time because they anticipated favorable outcomes. Participants were confident, optimistic, and disciplined about achieving business success. Business success meant an increase in sales and income, which helped them secure a competitive position and livelihood. The participants' confidence in their business acumen mitigated risks and revealed self-efficacy.

The microenterprise owners in this study sacrificed time to learn about and develop social media savvy. At times, this sacrifice meant that they reserved time to audit their competitors and implement social media strategies more purposively. Most participants achieved the results they had anticipated, which served to bolster their business acumen and solidify their self-efficacy. These outcomes, in turn, impacted how and why these participants used social media.

However, participants did not report achieving direct increases or decreases in sales due to their social media usage. Rather, with social media, they gained visibility, popularity, and leads to more sales. Participants anticipated specific favorable outcomes from social media usage, which included a gain in visibility and popularity. These gains indirectly impacted sales when participants knew how to convert leads into sales, for which they relied on business acumen. For participants, social media usage meant free targeted marketing and advertising of their products and services.

Most participants revealed that they were comfortable in their implementation of social media with merely realizing broader market reach, popularity, visibility, brand awareness, and new leads. Thus, their attitudes toward social media usage were positive because they anticipated such favorable outcomes, which drove adoption and usage. This finding contradicts that of Venkatesh et al. (2003), who excluded attitudes from the unified theory of acceptance and use of the technology (UTAUT) model as moderators of behavioral intentions to adopt technology. Vagnani and Volpe (2017) advocated for attitudes as a moderator for adoption decisions, and Rogers (2003) postulated that individuals with favorable attitudes toward an innovation are more motivated to adopt the innovation.

Participants' Management Decisions

Participants made management decisions to use social media to supplement their business strategies, despite constraints such as time, limited technology, management skills, and inadequate funds. They used business acumen to manage the risks associated with their management decisions. Nevertheless, some participants found that the management of business activities, risks, and business growth was challenging. Isaga et al. (2015) posited that it is common for microenterprise owners to struggle with balancing survival and aspirations for business growth and competitiveness. When uncertain about the applicability of social media usage, participants in the current study relied on their business acumen for business continuity. This finding confirms the assertion of Jones et al. (2015) that microenterprise owners resort to prior business knowledge or familiar business strategies to overcome uncertainties and survive.

Participants were confident in the management decisions they made by using their business acumen. Horn et al. (2015) stated that microenterprise owners should be ready to mitigate threats associated with social media risks. Participants in this study also seemed prepared for the unanticipated and anticipated threats of social media drawbacks. This finding contradicts those of Latiff and Safiee (2015), who claimed that business owners were ill-equipped to neutralize negative publicity and threats to privacy.

From their decisions to use social media, participants understood the implications of greater market reach, improved visibility, and brand loyalty, and were prepared to face both negative and positive consequences as they arose. However, they also recognized that increased traffic did not translate to increased income automatically. They acknowledged the importance of converting leads to relationships and attributed good customer relationships to increases in sales. Participants were highly conscientious about customer relationship management and leveraged social media for enhanced customer relationships.

Participants used social media strategies as a “competitive marketing weapon” (Hassan et al., 2015, p. 262). They also recognized the need to acquire additional information about social media. Jamek et al. (2017) claimed that microenterprise owners tend to seek more information about innovations in adapting to new business growth challenges and constraints. In general, in accord with Petrescu’s (2016) advice, the current participants were willing to change and adopt new strategies.

Limitations of the Study

This study included several limitations. The research design was a qualitative single case study. Additional quantitative research might have strengthened the credibility of the research findings. The participant pool excluded entrepreneurs and start-up businesses owners whose contributions to the study may have enhanced the results. The types of businesses that participants owned and managed were limited to entertainment, child care, food and beverages, clothing and textiles, automobile industries, and agriculture. Inclusion of other business types would have also improved the research findings.

The study was limited to microenterprise owners in rural T&T; findings may not be transferable to other microenterprises or larger businesses in the Caribbean or other developing nations. Finally, I treated T&T as one nation and not two separate islands, even though individually Trinidad and Tobago contribute to the GDP in different ways. Implementation of separate studies and a comparison of study results from each island may have also strengthened the research findings.

Recommendations

In 2014, the government of T&T launched initiatives to support micro-, small, and medium enterprises growth through the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ministry of Labor and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, 2014). However, to date, no existing workshops are sponsored by the government of T&T to educate current microenterprise owners on how

to curtail potential drawbacks of social media or leverage the benefits. I recommend government-sponsored workshops that are free to all T&T microenterprise owners.

Government researchers in T&T could expand on the research of this study to learn (a) which social media platforms and features microenterprise owners used to impact business growth, (b) how microenterprise owners measured the success of their social media strategies, (c) why some microenterprise owners rejected social media usage and others did not, (d) why microenterprise owners hesitated to discuss social media drawbacks, and (e) which characteristics of social media influenced the adoption or rejection of social media by microenterprise owners. Researchers and government officials might use this knowledge to customize social media-driven business workshops for the entrepreneurial class to improve social and business savvy to grow and sustain businesses. This type of initiative could increase the population of microenterprise owners, reduce unemployment, and improve the likelihood of poverty eradication across T&T.

Thus, I recommend that the government of T&T, through one or more of its ministries, conduct a series of workshops for displaced workers, unemployed individuals, self-employed microenterprise owners, and entrepreneurs with the following topics:

- How to employ cost-effective ways to launch a new business using social media or mobile social media.
- How to curtail social media drawbacks and leverage the benefits, with special emphasis on mobile social media.

- How to use Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn for businesses.
- How to manage social media usage in the business environment.

Also, I recommend that the government pay closer attention to the delivery and accessibility of these workshops. Participant 10 exclaimed,

Personally, I think that the government does not support small businesses or microenterprises. Yes, they say they have programs for that but the amount of red tape you have to go through with that.

Participant 10 was very vocal about his disenchantment with government procedures regarding the delivery of free resources to Trinbagonians. To address concerns of this nature, I suggest that the government hold community meetings to learn more about what microenterprise owners need to survive, grow, and compete and incorporate into workshops the lessons learned from those meetings. I suggest too that the government deliver workshops in a mobile-ready format for microenterprise owners to access easily via their mobile devices, such as phones and tablets.

This study was limited to microenterprise owners in rural T&T. Study findings may not be transferable to other larger enterprises, such as small, medium, and large enterprises. Nonetheless, future researchers could extend this study to other islands in the Caribbean in which the entrepreneurial class also faces challenging economic conditions because of compromising business constraints. The results of those studies might also reveal how Caribbean microenterprise owners utilize ICT, such as social media, to mediate economic challenges and grow.

A notable strength of this study was the small number of participants, congruent with the qualitative approach. The number of 14 participants promoted a deeper and more meaningful qualitative study. In the future, researchers may gain even deeper insight into how Trinbagonian business owners survive a competitive market in both rural and urban areas of Trinidad and Tobago by the inclusion of owners of mini-microenterprises, small, and medium enterprises.

Additionally, to complement qualitative studies, researchers could conduct quantitative studies using a larger sample size of participants and more detailed surveys than the demographic-business survey. For instance, researchers could administer surveys to learn which social media platform features microenterprise owners use and quantify that usage. With additional surveys, researchers could explore or explain the perceived attitudes of microenterprise owners toward social media characteristics, such as relative advantages, compatibility, complexity, and reasons for adoption of specific social media.

Another strength of the study was the participants' willingness to share information. All used mobile social media, either exclusively or in combination with web-based social media. As of 2017, the mobile penetration rate in T&T was 160% (Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, 2017). Specifically, participants used one, some, or all available mobile social media platforms, such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger. In the future, researchers could explore how business owners in T&T use the various mobile social media platforms and in what percentages to achieve business goals for business growth and competitiveness.

Participants in this study identified the benefits of social media usage. The usage enhanced traditional business strategies, such as marketing, public relations, and customer relationship management. In turn, enhancement resulted in broader market reach, more visibility, more popularity, and increases in leads. Participants also revealed that they would use their business acumen to fill gaps in their traditional business strategies. However, they did not explain how they would go about addressing these gaps.

Perhaps in the future researchers could explore how business owners of any size or type in rural T&T could use their business acumen to convert favorable outcomes from social media usage into sales (income) and achieve business growth. Researchers could also compare conversion techniques among enterprises. The results of such studies could further inform the business community and the government on how to help business owners integrate their business acumen with social media savvy to survive severe economic conditions.

Further, researchers could compare microenterprise owners in T&T and those in other Caribbean countries regarding the management of social media. Comparisons could add to the existing literature on microenterprise business growth in the Caribbean, specifically T&T. Also, researchers could study how microenterprise owners might recognize the uses, benefits, and drawbacks of social media and design social media strategies specific to their business situations. In turn, results of such recognition could positively impact business growth on local and national levels.

Implications for Positive Social Change

Possible applications and implementation of the study results can have far-reaching positive consequences for Trinbagonians and other Caribbean people. Social media is a disruptive force in T&T society, and social media usage has disrupted how people communicate in general and how business owners communicate with target audiences and existing customers. The use of social media by Trinbagonians could impact social change. A positive social change in T&T could take place through education, government initiatives, improved management competencies, greater technological skills, and poverty reduction because of local economic growth.

Social media strategies represent a shift from the traditional way business was conducted in T&T before social media disrupted the social and business environments. Microenterprise owners could use social media to enhance business and management strategies and achieve business growth. Social media is free, accessible from mobile devices and other personal and business computers, and relatively easy to use and learn. Enterprises of varying sizes and types could use social media strategies to promote products and services, improve market reach, and generate new leads toward expanded sales.

In T&T, because of the advent, prevalence, and predominantly free availability of social media, business is no longer the usual business but a type of social business. With the appropriate social media strategies, microenterprise owners not only in rural T&T but throughout the nation could use social media platforms to alleviate economic hardship and contribute to the eradication of poverty within impoverished local communities.

Greater local economic growth could lead to greater national economic growth.

Microenterprise growth stimulates local and national economies and contributes to poverty reduction (Jamak et al., 2017; Odongo & Wang, 2016; Thapa, 2015).

The results of this study also revealed a mental framework that microenterprise owners in rural T&T used to make innovative decisions. With this framework, participants made strategic decisions about how to manage social media usage in their business activities to grow and compete. Other microenterprise owners, or entrepreneurs seeking to start a new business, could use this framework as a starting point to construct social media strategies that are relevant to their specific business situations. This use could demystify social media, reduce the time Trinbagonians usually take to make innovation decisions regarding social media, and increase the likelihood that owners could leverage social media benefits, despite the drawbacks.

Study results may also be relevant following a recent closure by the T&T government. The government closed Petrotrin, a state-owned and major oil refinery of almost 100 years, as part of a restructuring campaign to salvage the economy. This closure displaced over 1,700 workers (Brelsford, 2018). As a result, many enterprises, including some micro-, small, and medium enterprises, lost lucrative contracts. For some enterprises, these contracts were the main sources of income, and their business survival is uncertain. This retrenchment might negatively impact unemployment rates and further exacerbate the economic crisis in T&T.

Many displaced workers had worked with Petrotrin for extended periods of time and may not know how to re-enter the job market. The results of this study may serve as

a reference point for such recently displaced Petrotrin workers, who might seek ways to survive this major life change. From this reference point, displaced workers might learn from existing microenterprise owners in rural T&T in a similar struggle how to leverage available ICT, such as social media, to curtail business constraints and survive at a low cost. Ultimately, the displaced workers might become future employers and continue to stimulate local economies.

Extending the ramifications of social change, I envision the government of T&T, through the Ministry of Education, incorporating web programming into the primary school curriculum so that first-year students could learn basic programming concepts while they learn to read, write, spell, and count. An initiative of this nature may extend into secondary and tertiary education programs, in which programming would be at the core of all ICT-related academic programs. Consequently, Trinbagonians who graduate from academic institutions in T&T could enter the workforce with strong programming skills or develop web applications, such as social media platforms and social commerce platforms that are relevant to Trinbagonians and the culture of T&T. Ultimately, T&T may produce more programmers, namely skilled web programmers, who could develop web applications and mobile web applications to bridge digital divides and connect Trinbagonians to other Caribbean and global markets.

Many working-class Trinbagonians seek employment as opposed to becoming employers. I envision a shift from the propensity of T&T nationals seeking knowledge to become employees to nationals seeking knowledge to become employers and owners. I also envision a population of mobile social media-savvy entrepreneurs who can manage

their businesses with success. Perhaps, in the transition, the government of T&T might consider a shift away from a dependency on the energy sector for sustaining the T&T economy to a reliance on micro- and small business enterprises to innovate and stimulate the national economy.

Conclusions

In the Caribbean, which includes developing nations such as T&T, innovativeness is a pathway to business growth and a driver of competitiveness (Alleyne et al., 2017). This study focused on how microenterprise owners in rural T&T made innovation decisions and managed social media usage in their businesses. The innovative ways in which microenterprise owners in rural T&T leveraged social media to manage and grow their businesses and meet competition, in a growth-challenged economy, were relatively unique—they minimized or ignored the drawbacks and maximized the benefits.

Social media is multifunctional and immediate, with broad market reach. Social media has changed the way many Trinbagonians conduct business, reach target audiences, form and maintain customer relationships, and achieve business growth. The results of this study showed that the sample of microenterprise owners in rural T&T was either social media savvy or desired to be so.

Through information-seeking and information-processing activities and observation of competitors, participants understood the value of social media as communication, marketing, and advertising instruments. To most Trinbagonian microenterprise owners in this study, business growth and business success were synonymous. Owners were attracted to the free social media use, the anticipated social

media benefits, and the likelihood of greater business success and inherent business growth.

In developing countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, microenterprise growth is crucial to economic growth on local and national levels. The results of this study revealed that participants embraced social media—they sought knowledge of social media and expanded on their awareness of social media. They leveraged their business acumen to manage the use of social media and implemented strategies competently. In addition, participants were motivated by the success of other businesses and competitors to use social media in their businesses and to develop or hone their social media savvy.

The most significant finding in this study was that participants construed drawbacks as challenges, and not as threats, and were confident about using their business acumen to curtail drawbacks. Instead, they focused their attention on attaining favorable outcomes from the benefits of social media usage in their business activities. This finding was not surprising. Most participants revealed, through the demographic-business survey, that time constraints deterred their business growth. They did not have time to invest in disaster recovery planning in lieu of drawbacks to social media. Further, participants saved time by relying instead on their business acumen.

These study findings could help not only microenterprise business owners but also small business owners to understand how they could leverage social media to survive difficult economic times. The participants in this study revealed that social media indirectly impacted their growth in sales of products and services. The findings suggest that social media usage by microenterprise owners does not directly impact economic

growth but could indirectly impact growth. Business and social media savvy microenterprise owners could leverage social media, increase leads, and convert those leads into sales, which could impact their economic growth. Growth could lead to more positive social change within T&T communities, the national government, and by extension other Caribbean nations.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Hello, my name is Cheryl-Ann Henry, and I am a graduate student at Walden University in the United States (US). I am conducting a study on the management of social media by microenterprises in rural Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). The study can help microenterprise owners and the economy of T&T. Are you the owner of this business that you are operating and managing?

IF NO:

- a. Okay, thank you and have a good day.
- b. May I speak with the owner?
- c. Okay, would you give the owner my business card and ask the owner to give me a call? I would like to discuss the possibilities of participation in my study.

IF YES:

- a. Do you have 3-5 minutes to explore participating in my study?
If no: Okay, thank you and have a good day.
- b. If yes: I am approaching you today because you are a microenterprise owner, and you operate and manage a microenterprise in rural T&T. Participation includes a brief business demographic survey to prequalify you for the study. This should take approximately 3-5 minutes. First, I will read each brief question from the survey to you and ask for your answers. If you qualify and agree to participate in an interview, that would take approximately 30-45 minutes.

Thank you for your participation. We can schedule a private meeting at your convenience.

Appendix B: Demographic-Business Survey

All answers will be held confidential. Your name will not be used. All information will be reported in group form only.

Demographic

1. Your gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

2. Your age

3. Your highest educational level

- a. Primary school.
- b. Secondary school (high school)
- c. Tertiary school (college or university)

Business

4. Geographical region

- a. Trinidad
- b. Tobago

5. Microenterprise roles

- a. Owner
- b. Manager
- c. Operator
- d. None of the above

6. Number of years in business

7. Number of employees (excluding owner)

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4

e. 5

f. More than 5

8. Your business asset value

a. Under \$70,000.

b. Over \$70,000.

9. Your annual turnover

a. Up to \$350,000.

b. Over \$350,000.

10. The registration status of your business with the government

a. Registered

b. Unregistered

11. What you offer target audiences

a. Goods

Specify _____

b. Services

Specify _____

c. Goods and services

Specify _____

d. None of the above

12. Business constraints that challenge you

a. Lack of time

b. Limited funds

c. Limited management skills

d. Limited technology skills

e. All of the above

f. None of the above (disqualify)

Social Media Experience

13. Your social media experience in business over the past 2 years

a. Adopted social media and still use it

b. Adopted social media and no longer use it

c. Rejected social media and now use it

d. Never used social media

14. Social media platforms you have used/do use in your business activities

a. Facebook (owned by Facebook, Inc.)

b. Facebook Messenger (owned by FB)

c. Twitter (owned by Twitter)

d. LinkedIn (owned by Microsoft)

- e. Instagram (owned by FB)
- f. WhatsApp (owned by FB)
- g. YouTube (owned by Google)
- h. I have never used social media in business

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Welcome and Explanation Script

Good morning (or afternoon, evening, night). My name is Cheryl-Ann Henry. I am a doctoral student at Walden University in the United States (US). I am pursuing postgraduate studies in Management, with an Information Systems specialty. Although I am a US resident, I am still a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). I decided to conduct doctoral research in T&T because I am *Trini to de bone* [proud to be a Trinbagonian] and I feel that the results of this study could contribute to positive social change here in T&T.

I am here today to conduct a relatively short interview with you, and you are here with me because you showed a willingness to participate in this research study. The purpose of my doctoral study is to explore how microenterprise owners, like you, could benefit from using social media in their business operations. The goal of this interview is for me to gain a deeper understanding of your perceptions about social media usage in your business operations. If you are still willing to participate in this study, please sign two copies of this consent form, which I would like you to read carefully before signing. You may keep one copy for your records.

Your identity will be protected. I will be referring to you in my final dissertation article by code, and there will be no identifiers leading back to you. At the end of our session, I will be glad to give you a token gift of appreciation.

The Demographic-Business Survey

First, I will ask you a number of short-answer questions. I will read them and mark the answers for accuracy. This should take only about 5 to 10 minutes.

(Depending on answers and inclusion criteria, some participants may not qualify. In this case): Thank you for your willingness to participate. I see that some of the answers mean you participation is not appropriate. Nothing wrong but I have certain requirements. I still want you to have a gift of appreciation. I will send a phone card to your cell phone.

The Interview

The interview session should not exceed 30-45 minutes and will include questions on these three topics (the three research questions):

- A. Your activities in seeking and using information.
- B. The benefits (advantages) you perceive of social media usage for your business growth.
- C. The drawbacks (disadvantages) you perceive of social media usage for your business growth.

You may request a short break after each of these topics if that is necessary.

Audio Recorder

During the interview session, I will be using an audio recorder to audiotape our session. The purpose of my doing this is to capture your exact responses to interview questions and to pay full attention to you during the interview session. Our session will be 100% confidential. At any time during the session, you may request that I stop recording or that we stop the interview. No harm will come to you in any way from withdrawing.

Tablet/Laptop

I may bring my tablet/laptop with me to the interview session. I may quickly jot a few keywords to reference my thoughts about your responses.

Interview Responses

In responding to interview questions, please know that no response is incorrect. I am very interested to know and understand your perceptions about social media usage in your business, and I am interested in whatever perceptions you want to share with me during the session.

Interview Questions

I will be asking a series of open-ended questions, which may require your recall of past, current, and anticipated experiences with social media usage in your business operations.

A. Your activities in seeking and using information

1. How did you learn about social media use of microenterprise owners? (If the response is vague, then question 1a and 1b.)
 - a. Which competitors, businesses or persons that you know of used social media?
 - b. How did you observe/perceive that they used social media?
2. What did you do to gain information about social media? (If the response is vague then question 2a.)
 - a. Did you ask friends, family, neighbors, or peers about social media? If so, then what did they tell you?

- b. If not, did you search the World Wide Web (Web)? If so, which search engines brought you results? Where did you find information and what did you learn?
 - c. If not, did you go directly to social media sites? If so, which sites did you go to and what did you find out/gather?
3. What do/did you want social media to do for your business? (If the answer is vague):
- a. What did you want social media to do for your market reach?
 - b. What did you want social media to do for your sales?
 - c. What did you want social media to do for your business growth?
 - d. What did you want social media to do for your competitive position?
4. Who or what prompted you to start using social media?
5. What led to your deciding to use social media?
6. How did you start using social media?
7. What convinced you that your decision was the right one?

[Would you like to take a short break before I start the next set of questions?]

B. The benefits (advantages) you perceive of social media usage for business growth

- 8. What benefits did you desire/expect/anticipate?
- 9. How did the benefits affect your use of social media?
- 10. How did the benefits affect your competitive position?

[Would you like to take a short break before I start the next set of questions?]

C. The drawbacks (disadvantages) you perceive of social media usage for business growth

11. What drawbacks did you anticipate?
12. How did the drawbacks affect your use of social media?
13. How did the drawbacks affect your competitive position?
14. What else would you like to tell me?

Conclusion and Thanks

Our session is now complete. I appreciate the time you took to contribute to my doctoral research with this meeting. And I would like to give you a token of appreciation, a phone card for your cell phone (gives it).

The next step for me is to transcribe our interview session and interpret your perceptions. On completion, may I ask to validate my interpretation? I will be glad to email you with my results for your opinions.

I want to ensure that I do not misrepresent anything that you have shared with me today. Kindly give me your email address. It will be completely confidential, and only I will have it. If you recall anything else that you want to share with me after this meeting, please call me through WhatsApp using [telephone number redacted] to locate me. If you do not have WhatsApp, you may call me collect at [telephone number redacted], and I will schedule a meeting by phone, social media or in person. Or email me and I will respond. My email address is on your consent form.

Again, thank you for spending time with me today and contributing to my doctoral research in such a significant way.

Appendix D: Interview and Field Notes Observation Sheet

Participant Code Number _____

Date: _____**Time:** _____**Place:** _____**Description of physical setting:****Description of participant:****Description of participant's business setting:****Reflective notes--Feelings, ideas, impressions:**

Appendix E: Observation Codes for Each Participant

Participant	Observations
Participant 1	Industrious, forthcoming, intelligent, confident, self-assured, adventurous, curious.
Participant 2	Ambitious, industrious, self-assured, confident, a tad arrogant, high-energy, innovative, witty, intelligent.
Participant 3	Wise, knowledgeable, confident, laid back, innovative, humble, intelligent, strategic, cautious.
Participant 4	Calm, wise, confident, laid back, self-assured, humble, intuitive.
Participant 5	Calm, confident, innovative, soft-spoken, humble, connected, intelligent.
Participant 6	Open, wise, confident, self-assured, enterprising, witty, experienced, talkative.
Participant 7	Witty, wise, intelligent, confident, laid back, humble, intuitive, humble, unassuming, curious, experienced, soft-spoken, apprehensive.
Participant 8	Witty, intelligent, humble, confident, self-assured, intuitive, wise, experienced, charismatic.
Participant 9	Wise, intelligent, mindful, strategic, confident, experienced, knowledgeable.
Participant 10	Forthcoming, enterprising, innovative, confident, experienced, intelligent, creative.
Participant 11	Quiet, soft-spoken, laid back, reserved, open-minded, intelligent.
Participant 12	Talkative, self-assured, a tad arrogant, social media savvy, intelligent, charismatic, enterprising, creative, adventurous.

Participant	Observations
Participant 13	Intelligent, driven, passionate, ambitious, articulate, knowledgeable.
Participant 14	Industrious, forthcoming, intelligent, confident, self-assured, adventurous, curious, aggressive.
