

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Marketing Strategies Restaurant Leaders Use to Develop Their Customer Base

by

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MBA, Baker University, 2004

BS, Ohio University, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2016

Abstract

Surviving past the first year of operation is a growing concern for independent, full-service restaurants. Some restaurant leaders lack the marketing strategies necessary to develop a loyal customer base and survive beyond the first year of operation. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the marketing strategies that independent, family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders located in the Pittsburgh, PA, metro area in business for at least 5 years have used to develop their customer base during the first year of operation. This study was guided by the 7Ps of marketing theory, which emphasizes how people, including customers and employees, influence the marketing process. Data were collected through in-depth semistructured interviews with 3 restaurant leaders and secondary documentation that included marketing and business strategies, customer base data, and profitability records during the first year of operation. Data were analyzed using a comparison analysis method to establish 3 emergent themes: immediate influence of word of mouth, power of consumer-driven marketing and social media, and the need for an integrated marketing mix. Findings indicate that these family-oriented, full-service restaurants were able to develop a customer base during their first year of business by integrating marketing strategies including word of mouth, social media, and limited print advertising. This study could assist these restaurant leaders in creating best practices for developing a customer base and surviving past the first year of operation. The implications for positive social change include the potential to empower restaurant leaders to engage in cause-related marketing, increase viability in local communities, and promote development of independent restaurants and small businesses.

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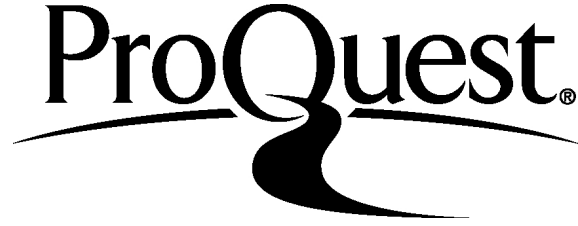
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this doctoral study to my family, especially my children, who I hope always follow their dreams, take the road less traveled, and never give up when faced with adversity. Thank you to my entire family who supported me throughout this journey and friends who offered encouragement and support.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the faculty at Walden University for their support during this journey. I especially want to show my gratitude toward my committee members, Dr. Lisa Kangas, Dr. Lynn Szostek, and Dr. Matthew Knight. I would not have been able to complete this study without their contributions of time, advice, and support. In addition, the support from the writing center and library staff was always prompt and helpful in developing my study.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the marketing strategies restaurant leaders use to develop their customer base. The goal of this study was to offer independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders marketing strategies to develop a customer base. Establishing best practices may ensure that independent restaurants can attract customers and maintain market share within their local area. I used a qualitative case study design to explore marketing strategies restaurant leaders used in their independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants to develop a customer base to survive their first year of operation.

Background of the Problem

Survival is an issue with full-service restaurants with fewer than 100 employees because they are failing almost as rapidly as they are opening with an average of 24,000 opening and 22,000 closing each year over the past 5 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Parsa, Self, Syndor-Busso, and Yoon (2011) found that independent restaurants are 59% more likely to close than chain restaurants, with 25% expected to close within the first year. There is a gap in research as researchers disagree on the exact reason independent restaurants fail and attribute failure rates to many internal and external factors. Independent restaurant owners identified customers as the top external factor to success over location, the economy, and the competition (Mandabach, Siddiqui, Blanch, & Vanleeuwen, 2011).

Despite researchers' agreement that digital marketing communications have become critical to customer relationship management, many small restaurants are

overwhelmed with the choices and lack the resources to implement new marketing strategies (Perry, 2014). Electronic word of mouth (e-wom) is more pertinent regarding intangible services like restaurants because customers tend to share evaluations after visiting; however, little research has been conducted on the significance of e-wom in the restaurant industry (Jeong & Jang, 2011). The purpose of this study was to provide independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants with marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year of operation. Understanding how to communicate and attract new customers through marketing can increase the ability of restaurants to survive during the first year and beyond.

Problem Statement

Researchers have found that marketing is a principal factor in the success or failure of small independent restaurants (Perry, 2014). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) indicated that independent full-service restaurants have a median lifespan of 4.5 years, and 17% fail in the first year (Luo & Stark, 2015). The general business problem is that some restaurant leaders in independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants fail to develop a customer base during their first year of operation, which results in loss of profitability for the restaurant. The specific business problem is that some restaurant leaders in independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants lack marketing strategies to develop a customer base to survive their first year of operation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore marketing strategies restaurant leaders used in their independent family-oriented, full-service

restaurants to develop a customer base during their first year of operation. The targeted population composed of restaurant leaders of three independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants located in the Pittsburgh, PA, metro area. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to provide independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants information to develop marketing strategies that will assist in developing a customer base, creating profitability, and overall business success. The success of independent restaurants may contribute to social change through promoting the development of other independent restaurants and local small businesses, as well as increasing the viability of their local communities through cause-related marketing efforts.

Nature of the Study

I used a qualitative method for this study to explore what marketing strategies independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants use to develop a customer base to survive the first year of operation. Qualitative researchers learn about participants' thoughts, feelings, and emotions on the topic through open-ended questions, which the quantitative approach does not (Ilkay, 2013). Qualitative researchers gather in-depth data and analyze participants' answers (Mancuso & Stuth, 2011). The qualitative method allowed me to obtain valuable information in establishing best practices for independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants' marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

I used a multiple case study design to understand how successful independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants used marketing strategies to develop a customer

base to survive the first year of operation. The case study design is used to explore a phenomenon or case in a comprehensive and practical environment (Yin, 2013). A multiple case study design is preferred over a single case study when the study involves a comparison of subjects' practices to gain an enhanced comprehension of those practices (Wahyuni, 2012). Other qualitative designs, including phenomenological and narrative, were not the most appropriate choice because these methods do not enable researchers to probe the complex phenomenon through in-depth interviews and review of secondary data such as the restaurants' marketing and business strategies documentation, customer base information, and profitability records during the first year of operation. A multiple case study design allows researchers to use multiple subjects and data sources to analyze a phenomenon in its natural setting (Wahyuni, 2012).

Research Question

The primary research question was the following: What marketing strategies do independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders use to develop a customer base to survive the first year? There were 11 interview questions used in the study:

Interview Questions

1. What marketing strategies do you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
2. What marketing strategies are most important when developing a customer base during the first year?
3. What types of marketing strategies do you find are the most successful during the first year?

4. How do you evaluate marketing strategies' success when developing a customer base during the first year?
5. What experiences do you have utilizing traditional marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year?
6. What experiences do you have utilizing emerging marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year?
7. What are your experiences with push versus pull marketing when developing a customer base during the first year?
8. How does customer word of mouth influence the marketing strategies you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
9. How does consumer-driven marketing influence the strategies you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
10. How does innovation influence the marketing strategies you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
11. What additional information you would like to provide that I did not already ask?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework selected for this qualitative study was the extended marketing mix theory. Booms and Bitner's (1981) marketing management theory emphasizes how three additional factors (people, process, and physical evidence) can influence the marketing process. The extended marketing mix theory expands on the original 4Ps of marketing: product, place, price, and promotion (Jain, 2013). Gordon

(2012) argued that the 4Ps alone were not adequate given recent advances in technology such as the movement to focus on the consumer in marketing plans and social media.

People represent personnel or customers who interact with one another, *process* includes procedures and policies such as handling customer interaction, and *physical evidence* refers to the environment in which customers may interact or purchase services (Anitsal, Girard, & Anitsal, 2012). The extended marketing mix theory related to the study with the inclusion of people as an essential component of the marketing mix.

In this case study, the additional P translated into the customers of independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants. The most significant business variable, especially for restaurants, is the customer. I evaluated what marketing strategies independent restaurants used to develop a customer base during their first year of operation. The extended marketing mix theory reinforced the modification of traditional marketing knowledge and supported the need for research on what marketing strategies independent restaurants use to develop a customer base during their first year of operation. I applied the extended marketing mix theory by exploring how the additional P or people influenced best practices for independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants that used marketing strategies to develop a customer base during their first year of operation.

Definition of Terms

4Ps of marketing: The four components of the traditional marketing mix are product, price, place, and promotion (Gordon, 2012).

Cause-related marketing: A corporate social responsibility program in which a company donates to a nonprofit cause when a customer purchases from the company or also donates to the cause (Hanks, Line, & Mattila, 2015).

Consumer-driven marketing: Consumers contribute to the marketing process by coproducing information they consider valuable through a pull-like process (Bacile, Ye, & Swilley, 2014).

Extended marketing mix theory: Management theory by Booms and Bitner that expands on the traditional 4Ps of marketing by adding people, process, and physical evidence, creating the 7Ps of marketing (Anitsal et al., 2012).

Family-oriented, full-service restaurants: Establishments that fall under NAICS Code 722511 (family restaurants, full service) provide food services to customers who sit and order from a server and pay after eating. NAICS code 722511 may include establishments that also provide takeout services and sell alcoholic beverages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Social media: Internet-based applications like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn that build on Web 2.0 foundations by allowing the development and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

When researchers take certain observations or experiences for granted and accept them to be true, they are making assumptions about their study (Nenty, 2009). There were several assumptions included in this study. First, I assumed that all participants

provided truthful responses, and no bias existed from either the participants or me that would influence the responses or interpretation of data. A second assumption was that independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants wanted to use marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Using a qualitative multiple case study research method, I assumed that data from in-depth interviews with independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders who use marketing strategies to develop a customer base could be translated into best practices for the business world. I purposely selected all participants and asked them to volunteer their time for the study by sending an emailed letter to each participant indicating the purpose of the study. Purposely selecting participants ensured all restaurants leaders interviewed were appropriate for this study.

Limitations

Nenty (2009) stated that a study's limitations include inevitable circumstances that are not within the researcher's control. One of the study's limitations was the experience level of the participants. Marketing strategies are evolving, and participants may have limited experience or lack in-depth knowledge about which marketing strategies are the most effective to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Delimitations

When researchers narrow the scope of a study and impose limitations on the study, they are creating delimitations (Nenty, 2009). This study's delimitations included the lack of consideration of how marketing strategies of independent restaurants were

different from chain restaurants. Another delimitation was the small geographical segment used in this study. I did not research restaurants outside of the Pittsburgh metro area or franchised restaurants.

Significance of the Study

Value of Study

The results of this study could bring value to the business environment by allowing restaurants to explore customer needs using marketing strategies. Restaurant leaders could understand the best practices for utilizing marketing strategies to reach local customers and increase market share. Independent restaurants could benefit from this study in three ways: developing a customer base during the first year of operation, increasing profitability, and surviving past the first year of operation.

Contribution to Business Practice

This study could assist independent restaurant leaders in understanding the concept of utilizing marketing strategies and creating best practices for developing a customer base, increasing profitability, and surviving past the first year of operation. Independent restaurants rely on local customers to increase profitability and survive past the first year. These restaurants must continue to implement marketing strategies to reach customers and develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

The goal of this study was to offer independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders marketing strategies to develop a customer base. Establishing best practices may ensure that independent restaurants can attract customers and maintain market share within their local area. Owning a small business can be a challenge with

almost 50% of all small businesses failing within 5 years (Small Business Administration, 2014). This study could assist independent restaurant leaders in developing their customer base during the first year of operation through use of marketing strategies.

Implications for Social Change

This study may promote positive social change by presenting marketing strategies that can increase a restaurant's ability to implement cause-related marketing campaigns. Cause-related marketing is a corporate social responsibility program in which a company donates to a nonprofit cause when a customer purchases from the company or also donates to the cause (Hanks et al., 2015). A restaurant can increase brand loyalty with customers while implementing positive social change through cause-related marketing.

Another way to promote positive social change is to allow restaurants to create social responsibility by addressing consumer needs via marketing strategies. Despite a desire to be socially responsible, restaurants are concerned with getting customers to restaurants before customer food selection. Lee, Conklin, Cranage, and Lee (2014) determined that by addressing the consumer need for healthier food, the brand image of the restaurant also increased. A business can create campaigns through marketing to promote their efforts to remain sustainable and elicit requests from customers.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Survival is an issue with full-service restaurants with fewer than 100 employees because restaurants are failing almost as rapidly as they are opening with an average of 24,000 opening and 22,000 closing each year over the past 5 years (U.S. Census Bureau,

2012). Parsa et al. (2011) found that independent restaurants are 59% more likely to close than chain restaurants, with 25% expected to close within the first year. Researchers disagree on the exact reason independent restaurants fail and attribute failure rates to many internal and external factors (Mandabach et al., 2011). Further research could establish best practices for independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders to implement marketing strategies when developing a customer base during the first year of operation.

I used a variety of scholarly search engines and key word searches to identify 116 sources for this study. Key word search phrases included *independent restaurants and survival*, *social media and restaurants*, *restaurants and marketing*, and *e-wom*. Of the 116 sources, 86% were published within the past 5 years, and 93% were from peer-reviewed journals. The literature review included 85 of the 116 sources, and 92% were from peer-reviewed journals. The literature review highlights several recurring themes discovered when reviewing scholarly literature: conceptual framework, independent restaurant size and survival, independent restaurants and consumer-driven marketing, need for customer base, push versus pull marketing, consumer-driven marketing, marketing innovation, developing a customer base and word of mouth, e-wom and social media, consumer reviews, developing a customer base and emerging marketing strategies, traditional versus emerging media, marketing innovation history, small business marketing, marketing strategy, innovative marketing, marketing strategies and social change, consumer research and marketing innovation, and future research. All of these themes apply to the study topic exploring what marketing strategies independent

family-oriented, full-service restaurants used to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Marketing Theory

Marketing theory has evolved over time, especially with the addition of innovative technologies. Although the original 4Ps developed in 1960 focused strictly on product, price, place, and promotion, social media has presented challenges to the 4Ps of marketing (Fitzgerald, Cavanaugh, & Bhiro, 2014). Scholarly analysis of this topic indicated that this method of creating a marketing mix was missing critical components, but there has not been widespread agreement on how to modify the marketing mix (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). Gordon et al. (2013) agreed the 4Ps of marketing have been in need of refinement since the inception of social marketing.

Various scholars have presented alternative theories to enhance or replace the traditional 4Ps of marketing. Some of those include the associative network theory that consumers can establish pathways in their minds leading to networks of connections in consumer memory (Koll, Von Wallpach, & Kreuzer, 2010). The theory indicates that a consumer can influence a brand without realizing it through techniques like free association influencing their buying behavior and other consumers (Koll et al., 2010). Previous marketing studies address Roger's theory of diffusion concerning the implementation of new technologies (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2013). Gordon et al. (2013) explored the confusion surrounding the 4Ps and presented a new model: capability opportunity motivation social marketing (COM-SM). The COM-SM model provides a broad scope for quick and effective implementation. Focusing on the scope and scale of

social marketing within the marketing mix can help link consumer behaviors to social media marketing efforts (Gordon et al., 2013). All of these conceptual frameworks focus on marketing innovations rather than people, and an additional P may enhance the marketing theory for companies of all sizes and industries.

Anitsal et al. (2012) agreed that the traditional 4Ps marketing mix does not account for important components of people, process, and physical evidence that are unique to service marketing. *People* represent personnel or customers who interact with one another, *process* include procedures and policies such as handling customer interaction, and *physical evidence* refers to the environment in which customers may interact or purchase services. Applying these new components to the marketing mix provides stronger relationships between consumers and businesses, which can lead to increased brand loyalty (Anitsal et al., 2012). Yip and Chan (2012) also used the conceptual framework of Booms and Bitner's 7Ps of marketing for its widespread, accessible, and comprehensive application ability.

Jain (2013) suggested the current marketing mix containing only 4Ps lacks a customer-oriented focus that is necessary in the current business world. The marketing mix requires realignment with emphasis on relationships and consumer-focused marketing messages, especially for services marketing. Jain recommended a new e-marketing mix that integrates additional Ps into marketing tactics using Booms and Bitner's 7Ps theory and supporting the use of the extended marketing mix theory as a conceptual framework for further investigation into marketing strategies.

Madiba (2009) studied the effect the extended marketing mix had on consumers' purchasing behaviors in the restaurant industry due to a lack of understanding among marketers regarding the influence of this theory in the fast-food environment. The theory is widely applicable in the restaurant realm because the three additional components (people, process, and physical evidence) can help restaurants gain the advantage in a highly competitive industry (Madiba, 2009). Madiba emphasized the overwhelming influence of the extended marketing mix components on customer purchasing behaviors.

Madiba found that the personnel of the restaurant had a 62% influence on customers, the physical evidence had a 68% impact, and processes directly influenced 58% of on what customers ordered at the restaurant. Several recommendations based on the study included the focus restaurant leaders must have on these elements when creating a marketing mix. Applying the extended marketing mix includes the service side that other theories overlook (Madiba 2009).

Shah (2012) explored how the extended marketing mix differs from the traditional marketing mix. Shah analyzed each component's influence within the restaurant industry and discussed the growing significance of the 7Ps in the service industry. There was an emphasis on the importance of service people in a restaurant and the impression staff can make on customers (Shah, 2012). However, Shah's 2012 study lacked specific data for each component as compared to Madiba's (2009) study on the restaurant industry.

Singh and Kumar (2015) explored the influence marketing strategies, including the extended marketing mix, had on customer satisfaction within the hospitality industry. Due to the distinctiveness of restaurants offering a tangible product like food and

intangible services, hospitality marketing is challenging (Singh & Kumar, 2015).

Renaghan (as cited in Singh & Kumar, 2015) created a hospitality marketing mix focused on product/service, presentation, and communication aspects but did not include vital components of service marketing like variability, intangibility, inseparability, and perishability accounted for in the extended marketing mix.

Additional theories addressed in hospitality marketing include Hughe's 1997 identification of distinctiveness as a necessary component, Xuing's 2007 discussion of tangible versus intangible marketing, and Tsang's 1998 focus on service quality and the marketing mix (as cited in Singh & Kumar, 2015). All of these theories build on the traditional marketing mix, but only the extended marketing mix includes components that focus on customer satisfaction, service quality, and effective service distribution (Singh & Kumar, 2015). Marketers in the hospitality industry must focus on all of the 7Ps to find the balance that provides the most effective marketing strategy for their customers (Singh & Kumar, 2015).

Bangre, Ghangale, and Ghaisas (2015) agreed that the extended marketing mix included the intangible aspect of the service industry and how people can influence the process involved in offering services. Customers in the IT industry completed questionnaires to describe their satisfaction regarding each of the seven elements of the extended marketing mix. An analysis of data revealed there was a relationship between the use of the extended marketing mix and an increase in customers within the IT industry (Bangre, Ghangale, & Ghaisas, 2015).

Bangre, Ghangale, and Ghaisas (2015) concluded that each element of the extended marketing mix did not have equal influence on customers and therefore should not get equal attention when developing a marketing strategy. The service, price, and people involved in the process were the most vital aspects to customers in the IT industry. The place component of the marketing mix did not have as much influence on customers primarily because IT firms usually operate from a single location (Bangre, Ghangale, & Ghaisas, 2015).

Kuria (2015) studied how the extended marketing mix affected customers' selection of a vacation or holiday camp. Interviews of customers indicated that a variety of elements played a role in their purchasing decisions, and all seven elements of the marketing mix were important in the decision-making process. Specifically, place and people were major influencers in the selection of a particular holiday camp while price and promotion were important components of the decision-making process (Kuria, 2015).

Independent Restaurant Size and Survival

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), almost all full-service restaurants are small, independent businesses with 98% having fewer than 100 employees. The majority of restaurants operate independently, and seven out of 10 restaurants are single-unit operations (National Restaurant Association, 2015). According to the Small Business Administration (2014), nine out of 10 restaurants are small businesses, and 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years. Restaurant survival is an issue with full-service restaurants with fewer than 100 employees because they are failing almost as rapidly as

they are opening with an average of 24,000 opening and 22,000 closing each year over the past 5 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Parsa et al. (2011) found that independent restaurants are 59% more likely to close than chain restaurants, with 25% expected to close within the first year. In challenging economic times, full-service restaurants are the most significantly impacted segment within the restaurant industry, and owners must be proactive in understanding business cycles and strategic plans (Lee & Ha, 2012). Researchers disagree on the exact reason independent restaurants fail and attribute failure rates to many internal and external factors, indicating a need for additional research (Mandabach et al., 2011). Frazer (2012) agreed with the need for research because some restaurant owners do not consider how internal factors correlate with profit, costs, and overall survival. Similarly, Hua, Xiao, and Yost (2012) discussed how factors like poor quality products, organizational culture, and marketing contribute to restaurant success. There is a need for further research considering the link between effective allocation and utilization of marketing funds and restaurant outperformance of competition in troubled economic times (Hua et al., 2012).

Independent Restaurants and Consumer-driven Marketing

Need for customer base. Independent restaurant owners have identified customers as the top external factor to success over location, economy, and competition (Mandabach et al., 2011). Similarly, Perry (2014) found that most small restaurants recognized how vital understanding and communicating with customers was to their success. Full-service restaurants have outgrown quick-service restaurants over the past

decade, indicating that customers are still visiting full-service restaurants during down economic times (Reynolds et al., 2013).

A customer base is vital to the success of a restaurant within the first year because repeat customers account for 63% of sales at family dining restaurants (National Restaurant Association, 2012). Ma, Qu, and Eliwa (2014) found that loyal customers were integral to the success of restaurants and cited a need to understand their customers needs to build loyalty. Customers who express loyalty to a restaurant are one of the strategic competitive advantages leading to referrals, higher market share, and overall survival (Ma et al., 2014).

Push versus pull marketing. Traditional media allowed marketers to determine the messages and push them toward consumers with little feedback or input from the customers. A pull strategy considers consumer input when developing marketing messages and aligns with emerging technologies (Hargittai, Neuman, & Curry, 2012). It is essential for businesses in all industries to understand how to develop a marketing strategy that incorporates a pull strategy. Understanding the influence personal media (such as accessing social networking on a mobile phone) has on consumers is necessary when developing an effective marketing strategy. Bacile et al. (2014) learned that the firm-consumer relationship must elicit a more pull-like participation process. Businesses must provide consumers with a more active role after opting in to develop a mutually valuable relationship and allow consumers to coproduce marketing communication efforts (Bacile et al., 2014). Hargittai et al. (2012) agreed that new online media forums have created an undeniable shift from push marketing to pull marketing. Using focus

groups, Hargittai et al. investigated this change discovering the two-way communication of social media was empowering and made consumers confident in expressing their opinions.

Bacile, Hoffacker, and White (2014) concurred marketers used to be the sole producer of marketing material and had control over the sharing of product and brand information. However, with the surge of social media sites and mobile technology, consumers now play a coproducer role in sharing information with other consumers. Social media is modifying the way companies handle service requests and complaints by turning the conversation from face-to-face to electronic word of mouth. Companies must consider moving towards integrated marketing communications plans that interact with consumers and allow them to be active in building marketing messages (Bacile et al., 2014).

Consumer-driven marketing. The restaurant industry is very competitive, and owners must focus on consumer needs by establishing a consumer-driven process; however, research indicates there is a lack of understanding about the most effective method (Harrington, Ottenbacher, & Way, 2013). In a consumer-driven market, customers are selecting restaurants primarily by promotional advertisements, restaurant reputations, reviews, and food ratings (Harrington et al. 2013). Consumers are taking a more active approach in decision-making driven mostly by consumer use of social media to research and share information (Kwok & Yu, 2012).

Consumers are actively sharing information on social media platforms requiring restaurants to determine the most effective way to manage consumer-driven marketing

via social media (Kwok & Yu, 2012). Researchers suggested a need for further marketing research to consider the emotional side of customers who share on social media and their influence on other consumers (Smith, 2013). The main characteristic of contributing on social media is the ease of communicating with friends, colleagues, and strangers. People want to be able to provide information they feel is valuable to others and in turn want to have access to information from like-minded people (DeAndrea, 2012).

In establishing a link between consumer behavior and social media, one must understand the impact on the marketplace and bottom-line for a corporation. Corstjens and Umbligs (2012) developed a process to analyze the effect of social media indicators on a brand's market performance but restriction of a specific industry limited the study. Corstjens and Umbligs analyzed two real-world examples linking the amount of social media coverage to market performance and discovered negative social media had a more powerful impact on a brand in the marketplace. Bronner and DeHoog (2014) focused on how social media is influencing consumer decisions, examining the relationship between factors like e-wom, consumer experience, site relevance, and accessibility. Findings indicated higher ticket items require more in-depth searches on domain specific sites like Tripadvisor and open opinion sites like Facebook (Bronner & DeHoog, 2014).

There is little question companies use social media to promote products and support brand image; however there is a question as to how social media affects consumer purchases. Powers, Advincula, Austin, Graiko, and Snyder (2013) concluded the digital world has better-connected companies with consumers, as well as consumers with other consumers. Powers et al. analyzed a variety of variables such as consumer

emotion, time spent online, and influence of other consumers' opinions online. Luo and Zhang (2013) agreed consumer-created buzz does have a relationship with the overall value of a firm and managers should consider establishing more positive social media buzz. Smith (2013) used a quantitative study to determine consumer social media experiences emit strong feelings and can impact future consumer behavior. Additional research could help understand how business owners are addressing this element of consumer marketing and establish best practices for implementing social media within a marketing plan (Smith, 2013).

Marketing innovation. The wide variety of Internet sources now available to consumers has increased the ability of companies to reach a larger group of consumers and create better-segmented messages (Vinerean, Cetina, Dumirescu, & Tichindelean, 2013). Companies must focus on creating a holistic approach to marketing and engage consumers in creating marketing messages because social media provides an innovative outlet that impacts an organization's brand image and future purchasing behavior of consumers (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). The concept of marketing innovation requires further research into how much information companies should share with consumers such as, user demographics of social media platforms, and how that could help or harm brand image (Naylor et al. 2012).

Vinerean et al. (2013) concluded old traditional marketing methods are not a sustainable option for corporations in this new age of technology and suggested creating relationships with consumers through engagement, building brand advocates, and utilizing large-scale marketing strategies. Rather than focusing on traditional features and

benefits, companies must develop experiential marketing efforts that emphasize customer experiences (Nigam, 2012). If a customer has a pleasant dining experience, they are more likely to make additional purchases, whereas if a customer has a negative experience they are less likely to return (Nigam, 2012). Restaurant owners must create marketing strategies that emphasize the wants of customers and bring innovation and positive experiences that create a desire for the customer to return (Nigam, 2012).

Developing a Customer Base and Word of Mouth

Restaurant customers are using word of mouth to share positive and negative reviews with others. Han and Ryu (2012) found that when restaurants focused on improving service interactions, there was an increase in customer trust and desire to share positive word of mouth. When restaurants attempted to target customer preferences and develop promotions or events that customers found satisfying, positive word of mouth increased (Han & Ryu, 2012). Electronic word of mouth is more pertinent regarding intangible services like restaurants; however little research has been conducted into the significance of e-wom on the restaurant industry (Jeong & Jang, 2011). E-wom platforms can provide restaurants with an opportunity to follow the conversations of customers unlike traditional word of mouth (Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza, & Nelson, 2013). Ong (2012) agreed that restaurant customers now use social media sites, as part of the decision-making process, with 80% of consumers primarily concerned with customer service ratings of online reviews.

User-generated review sites, such as yelp.com, provide restaurant consumers with a platform to connect with other consumers and voice opinions, complaints, and reviews

of restaurants, the impact of which can drastically affect a restaurant's reputation (Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza, & Nelson, 2013). Jeong and Jang (2011) found that restaurant customers used e-wom to share experiences regarding food quality, service quality, and atmosphere to other potential customers. Restaurant consumers are using social media tools, with 60% trying new menu items based on online reviews (Jeong & Jang, 2011). Additional research would contribute to understanding how negative or positive e-wom impacts consumer decision-making about choosing a restaurant and why consumers post e-wom about their experiences.

Likewise, Berger and Iyengar (2013) discovered word of mouth heavily influenced consumers' purchasing behaviors and e-wom disseminated reviews on an unparalleled level. Cheung and Thadani's (2012) literature review also indicated that consumer-generated online reviews are trusted more than traditional media sources like radio, print, and television advertisements. E-wom readily allows businesses to gain a customer perspective on their brand, as well as view, analyze, and compare social media posts, online reviews, and other e-wom messages to understand themes among customers' needs and wants (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Researchers have proven that when consumers have the opportunity to think about what they want to post via asynchronous online forums, they are more likely to be honest and provide more in-depth posts and reviews about brands (Berger & Iyengar, 2013). Cheung and Lee (2012) agreed the advancement in Internet technology has increased the amount consumers rely on online reviews when making purchasing decisions.

Consumers continue to engage each other by posting online reviews, but the question remains – what motivates consumers to post online, how credible are the reviews, and do these reviews impact other consumers’ purchasing behaviors. Mengze and Wojniki (2014) examined the motivations of consumers who posted online reviews concluding that offering an extrinsic reward resulted in higher referral rates than an intrinsic motivated post. Moe and Schweidel (2013) also supported a need to understand why consumers post reviews online and began to look at the validity of online reviews. Moe and Schweidel studied the effect bandwagon behavior had on motivations of online reviewers and concluded reviewers were more encouraged to post when existing reviews were either extremely high or extremely low. Consumer-driven marketing will only increase with the introduction of new social media tools, and organizations must take a collaborative approach to this new pull marketing method (Vinerean et al., 2013).

Developing a Customer Base and Emerging Marketing Strategies

Perry (2014) discovered that small restaurants were shifting marketing from traditional offline to innovative online channels such as social media, email, and websites. Independent restaurants maintained a social media presence with 98 % having a Facebook page (Perry, 2014). There is widespread concern among foodservice operators about how to integrate social networking site trends into successful strategies (DiPietro, Crews, Gustafson, & Strick, 2012). Only 28% of restaurant owners stated their social media efforts “definitely increased” attracting new customers (Needles & Thompson, 2013).

He, Zha, and Li (2013) found pizza restaurants used various aspects of social media, but additional research could help understand how to convert social media users into customers. Needles and Thompson (2013) found that 72% of independent and franchise restaurant owners were uncertain if their social media efforts were effective in attracting and maintaining customers. The majority of restaurant owners are attempting to measure social media usage, with 38.4% citing a need for tangible metrics, 12.8% citing a need for measuring revenues, and another 12.8% citing a need for multiple metrics (Needles & Thompson, 2013).

Researchers have cited that marketing is a principal factor in the success or failure of small, independent restaurants (Perry, 2014). Restaurants that targeted married couples and families between the ages of 30-49 were the heaviest users of social media, an emerging marketing approach (Needles & Thompson, 2013). Despite researcher agreement that digital marketing communications have become critical to customer relationship management, many small restaurants are overwhelmed with the choices and lack the resources to implement new marketing strategies (Perry, 2014).

Kowk and Yu (2012) studied the effectiveness of restaurants' social media messages and suggested that restaurants use eye-catching keywords and photos of menu items or special events in status updates. Restaurants can gain an advantage by establishing a friendship type relationship with customers via social media rather than pushing marketing messages. After engaging customers through sharing recipes, asking for feedback on menu items, or discussing community involvement restaurants can balance additional posts with promotions or marketing materials (Kowk & Yu, 2012).

DiPietro et al. (2012) found that restaurants could use social networking to reduce costs and maintain a competitive advantage. Despite an inconsistent trend among which social media platform restaurants used most, restaurant managers did report that social networking was beneficial as a low-cost advertising and marketing tactic (DiPietro et al., 2012). Potential advantages of social networking included finding employees, menu feedback, promotion, and maintaining direct feedback with customers (DiPietro et al., 2012).

Traditional versus emerging media. The Internet has been around for over 25 years, and the recent surge of social media sites has contributed to the evolution of consumer and company interaction (Fry, 2014). Katona and Sarvary (2014) defined social media as “the way in which people interact to create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communications and networks”. Consumers are looking for a personal touch when companies use social media to communicate with them. Katona and Savary found traditional and emerging media differed mainly due to social media’s ability to lower cost, develop higher quantity and quality of messages, provide a real-time response, and reach a larger target base.

Previous researchers agreed that companies who used e-marketing (social media, emails, web sites) were able to reach consumers quicker, but questions still linger regarding effectiveness and profitability of such methods. Companies must understand how to reach consumers in the most effective and efficient manners because customers are more business savvy. Danaher and Dagger (2013) found that businesses want to use

the marketing strategy that will allow them to reach more consumers, increase sales, and reduce costs.

Danaher and Dagger (2013) used a case study to examine a multi-media campaign regarding data from a company's loyalty program. Although Danaher and Dagger found targeted email effective, they concluded more traditional media such as direct mail, television, and radio were the most useful types of media. Their study only examined one company with limited online shopping options for consumers and only researched a one month-long promotional campaign. Other studies are contradictory, indicating social media is more effective for the majority of retailers.

Marketing innovation history. Simple terms like advertising or publicity can no longer identify brand communication in the digital age. The innovation of social media and the Internet have modified how consumers and companies communicate about brands and products (Campbell, Cohen, & Junzhao, 2014). Companies can more effectively reach millions of customers with little to no cost using digital tools. One example, social media, creates an electronic word of mouth platform that does not exist in traditional media outlets (Campbell et al., 2014). Previous scholars debated the concept of social media and understood the main theme was the ability of multiple users to continuously update content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

For example, Facebook allows a person to like a brand's page, which creates a free source of advertising each time the user log-ins and sees a post by that brand. Social media began as a personal platform and grew into a daily marketing activity for businesses to connect with their customers. Otherwise known as Web 2.0, these new

technologies allowed consumers to become engaged in the marketing process by posting opinions, sharing product information, and shaping other consumers future purchasing decisions via social media (Tuten & Marks, 2012).

A Forrester Research study (as cited in Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) indicated Internet users reliance on social media increased almost 20% from 2007-2008. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) found that companies understood the opportunity to increase profit by utilizing this new technology but did not know what social media means or how to integrate it properly into their business plans. Social media created a new platform for consumer activists, an active form of consumer movements, due to a number of time people spend in cyberspace (social media). Most researchers have little knowledge of how effective cyber activism can influence others and bring attention to their cause (Scaraboto & Nunes, 2013). One individual, who was upset with Whole Foods' stance on an environmental issue, began a 2009 boycott via cyberactivism on a Facebook page, possibly contributing to the 2.3% sales decrease that year (Kang, 2012). Social media is playing a role in cyber activism and consumer-driven movements are changing how companies market.

Restaurants, Social Media, and Return on Investment

Businesses are constantly trying to determine the most effective way to engage with consumers and increase market share. Social media plays an integral role in the marketing ecosystem and is at the forefront of most scholarly and professional debates. Kim, Koh, Cha, and Lee (2015) studied the impact of social media on a restaurant's value within the restaurant industry and found a positive linear relationship between a

restaurant's social media activity and firm value. Increased positive customer engagement via social media can influence a restaurant's value within financial markets (Kim et al., 2015).

Despite the consumer-generated social networking site era, questions remain as to how these sites generate revenue and if that same business model could reach customers (Dasgupta, 2013). Most SNS sites use either site advertising or a subscription fee to generate revenue, which leads to sustainability issues and concerns in identifying customers on sites that require subscriptions. Dasgupta (2013) analyzed various factors to determine if a profitable revenue stream could be attributed to SNS and determined the costs of using social media are low, but there is still a lack of tangible metrics.

One of the primary concerns is the value of social media like Facebook, and most business owners have a difficult time measuring the ROI of social media efforts. Companies are skeptical due to lack of knowledge, inability to measure, and cost of technology-related resources associated with social media (Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap, & Singh, 2012). There is a lack of scholarly information regarding how social media can influence overall sales strategies. Social media continues to influence consumer purchasing decisions, and sales firms realize the benefit of having a social media presence. Organizations must put effort into social media to ensure prompt responses to customers, accurate information, and positive feedback (Agnihotri et al., 2012).

Wang and Zhang (2012) revealed social media users can influence others' purchasing decisions, and a new link exists between consumer shopping and social media

referrals via posts, tweets, or blogs. Mobile phones have added another dimension to social commerce push marketing concepts like group buying and co-creation of user-generated material. All of these innovative technologies and marketing methods require companies to develop multi-channel messages to use social media tools effectively and reach target audiences (Wang & Zhang, 2012).

It has been difficult to measure social media efforts, but Wilcox and Kim (2013) created the Social Media Performance Model (SMPM) to analyze social media efforts of organizations. Metrics included daily activity like Facebook likes, posts, tweets, retweets, along with factors including website views and new visitors to pages to determine engagement, reach, and frequency. Companies must understand that social media usage is dynamic, and the monitoring and evaluating of activity must be continuous to create the most appropriate messages for the audience (Wilcox & Kim, 2013).

Small Business Marketing

Marketing strategy. Cronin-Gilmore (2012) used a qualitative study to analyze small businesses marketing methods and what influences small business owners to pursue other marketing tactics. Small businesses owners realize their lack of marketing skills but do not know how to use current marketing tactics and are afraid to try new ventures without experience or resources. Cronin-Gilmore's in-depth analysis provides support for the need to further understand small business marketing and social media. Marketing researchers want to understand how attitudes impact consumer purchasing decisions, and the real influence customer satisfaction has on future purchasing decisions (Qi, Chandrashekar, & Yu, 2015). Qi et al. (2015) studied restaurant customer satisfaction

and determined that consumers expressed uncertain satisfaction if they had prior expectations about promotions.

Innovative marketing. Barnes and Jacobsen (2013) conducted a 4-year-long study of marketing executives to evaluate the usage of social media tools by small businesses. The response indicated that 83% of marketing professionals were using social media, with the most popular being Facebook and Twitter. Small businesses owners felt that social media was a critical component to the success of companies and extremely valuable to marketing and business plans (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2013).

Small businesses can reach a larger market and create more brand awareness by spreading marketing messages via social media. This inexpensive marketing tactic can assist small restaurants through boosting sales and reaching new customers (Needles & Thompson, 2013). Winterberg (2013) agreed small businesses lag behind when competing with larger corporations' marketing budgets. The progression of social media and mobile marketing reduces that financial advantage, offering a level playing field to reach and engage target segments (Winterberg, 2013).

Traditional advertising methods are simply not as pertinent in today's market because customers can fast-forward through television ads, block Internet pop-ups, and subscribe to ad-free radio. Companies must integrate pull marketing methods like opting in for blogs and providing useful content on social media sites to engage customers (Winterberg, 2013). The use of online videos and QR codes became a marketing staple with the rise in consumer use of mobile devices. Social media and mobile marketing are

an integral part of a company's marketing plan, especially for those firms that cannot afford strategies that are more elaborate (Winterberg, 2013).

Schaupp and Belanger (2014) found that small businesses lack the resources or time to establish a traditional marketing plan. Social media can assist small business owners gain business leads, awareness, and build traffic at a significantly lower cost than traditional marketing (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Sixty-six percent of small business owners realize that social media is vital to their business success but struggle to measure the value of social media with only 37% of small business owners feeling proficient in social media (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014).

Witzig, Spencer, and Galvin (2012) found that small businesses use LinkedIn more frequently than corporations or nonprofits because of the ability to create word of mouth messages and referrals at an economical cost. These findings were contrary to previous studies and presented a new notion that smaller companies have fewer resources, leading to management's involvement in social media decisions (Witzig et al., 2012). Researchers indicated that when business owners understand the power of social media, both from a cost and customer interaction perspective, adoption rates of social networking tools are higher (Witzig et al., 2012). The low cost, ease of use, and application in marketing, employee retention, human resources, and other business facets makes social media an appealing choice for all types of organizations (Witzig et al., 2012).

B2C Versus B2B Integration

Despite the widespread use of social media in consumer marketing, there is a lack of research regarding social media use in B2B marketing. Brennan and Croft (2012) examined social media use of 10 large B2B companies within the technology industry and found US-companies used social media the most. Although marketing professionals in consumer marketing have been using social media tactics, B2B marketers are more skeptical about how to implement such strategies. The supplier-customer relationship could be enhanced using social media for real-time communication, and to build trust with “soft marketing” strategies that focus on branding, relationship building, lead generation, networking, and research rather than hard selling (Brennan & Croft, 2012).

Järvinen, Tollinen, Karjaluoto, and Jayawardhena (2012) agreed the ability to measure and track customer feedback via social media can assist B2B marketers in branding and building marketing strategies. Although the most probable reasons B2B companies are slower than B2C companies to implement social media is a lack of knowledge, management support, and clear expectations. Järvinen et al. (2012) found that although 75% of B2B companies thought social media was important in creating brand awareness, the lack of resources was a barrier to entering the field.

Moore, Hopkins, and Raymond (2013) examined specific relationship-oriented tools including blogs, instant messaging, RSS feeds, and social/professional networking sites, and discovered a 50% increase in mobile use of social media attributed to the overall ease of use for all types of consumers. B2B companies can create long-term relationships with customers using these tools. Moore et al. (2013) concluded that B2B

and B2C salespeople differed in the use of social media in several ways. B2B sales forces rely on professional networking sites rather than social sites to provide customer service, generates leads, and handle negative feedback. The B2B community preferred to use relationship and professional networking tools to maintain a reputable brand and awareness to customers (Moore et al., 2013).

Marketing Strategies and Social Change

Organizations can use social media to access consumer needs and requests, as well as communicate sustainability and business plans to customers. Cause-related marketing is a corporate social responsibility program where a company donates to a nonprofit cause when a customer purchases from the company or donates to the cause (Hanks et al., 2015). Independent restaurants can create social change by implementing cause-related marketing strategies within their local markets. When restaurants participate in cause-related marketing, it helps to build a positive brand image and increase engagement with customers (Hanks et al., 2015).

Many companies consider cause-related marketing a necessary step in achieving social responsibility and maintaining an ethical appearance. One method of cause-related marketing occurs when a business donates to a specific charity when consumers make purchases at their organization (Vanhamme, Lindgreen, Reast, & Popering, 2012). Hanks et al. 2015 found that consumers were more likely to donate if the restaurant offered to match the donation. Vanhamme et al. (2012) indicated there are benefits linked to cause-related marketing including sales increase, brand loyalty, and employee motivation. The

study supports the need for organizations to research target markets and determine the most effective tactics to use in cause-related marketing (Vanhamme et al., 2012).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) continues to gain traction in being beneficial to organizations, but there is a lack of research regarding how CSR motivates consumers' future behaviors. Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, and Gruber (2011) examined how CSR influences purchasing behaviors while taking into account social desirability basis. Despite consumers' positive attitudes toward socially responsible companies, this did not translate into buying from that company (Öberseder et al., 2011).

Consumer Research and Marketing Innovation

Customer sentiment can be a difficult concept to measure, but the advent of social media has created such a large pool of public opinion. Gunter, Koteyko, and Atanasova (2014) examined potential marketing research benefits to identify, track, and respond to thoughts about brands and products via social media. The online era gave power to consumers and could lead to a deeper knowledge source for market research and a substitute for traditional market research methods. Concerns over the reliability of online posts do exist, but Gunter et al. concluded that most users' express honest opinions and any overly extreme thoughts are self-corrected by a higher quantity of genuine posts.

In 2011, social media surpassed email as a communication tool and began to surface as a marketing research tool (Henderson, 2011). Despite potential drawbacks, such as the validity of participant information and control of a moderator, Rolland and Parmentier (2013) found valuable data could come from actual consumers who want to share information about their experiences and products. Social media research avoids

some costly expenses of traditional focus groups like travel costs, paper surveys, and venue rentals; however online users may request additional validation from researchers as to how their information will be used and protected (Rolland & Parmentier, 2013).

Caste, Egleston, and Marx (2013) expanded social media's influence by analyzing the impact LinkedIn can have from a research perspective. Caste et al. collected survey data from 714 willing LinkedIn participants via Survey Monkey and results demonstrated that social media could be a useful research tool in many ways. First, most scholarly research uses college students as the population, and social media networks allow researchers to gain knowledge from subject matter experts from a global arena. Social media can also decrease the response time, which is an advantage to researchers (Caste et al., 2013).

Bertrand (2013) examined the level of influence of three brands' social media mentions and concluded that a social media dataset could benefit research and should be a tool used to increase trust in brands. Social media allows researchers to gain a different perspective from consumers and is easily measured over a period, increasing the validity of the approach. Another benefit of using social media as a research tool is the ability to gain retrospective insight from users, which increases the reliability of data provided by participants (Bertrand, 2013).

Henderson (2011) suggested that social media tools like online focus groups could enhance but not replace traditional research tools and it is up to the researcher to know how to use all of the tools available to them. The concept of gaining insight from the voice of the consumer (voc) has been around for decades with customer service

representatives logging and recording phone conversations and using that feedback in marketing and business decision-making process. Henderson agreed with Gunter et al. (2014) that social media does have challenges ensuring the reliability of selecting the most appropriate participants. Henderson noted this challenge has plagued traditional research in the past, but is overcome through additional validation tools. In research situations where time is vital, traditional focus groups and phone surveys would take too long, considering that 500,000 tweets in six hours can provide immediate data to researchers (Henderson, 2011).

Mancuso and Stuth (2011) concurred that qualitative research focuses on the how and why aiming to dig deeper into participants' experiences, which social media cannot replicate. However, there is potential to merge social media and traditional knowledge together to gain a deeper insight in a real-time environment. Benefits include the ability to gather and analyze data fast, a larger participant pool, ability to track and count brand mentions, engage in real-time conversations, and analyze competitors; which can provide more depth to research discussion and create awareness of future research needs (Mancuso & Stuth, 2011).

Social media is becoming a must-have research tool for marketing research; however there are many concerns regarding how social media obtains permission for participants and adheres to ethical guidelines (Nunan & Yenicioglu, 2013). Most types of traditional research require informed consent and social media methods pose ethical concerns about participant guidelines. Nunan and Yenicioglu (2013) examined what private information means in the social media world and if privacy terms applied to

users' families or others, they interact with on social media. Once a person gives consent (as determined by the platform) is that all encompassing or would it only apply to that one instance? Further, Nunan and Yenicioğlu suggested a type of consent known as participative consent that would indicate several stipulations where the user knows the consent is ongoing. Participative consent would include an agreement between multiple users of the same social media network based on data gathered during social media research to ensure value and ethically inform users, so they are making conscious decisions about sharing information and their privacy.

Fry (2014) agreed privacy and consent concerns distort social media as a research tool. Most users are not aware who can access and use their personal data for research purposes. The credibility of social media research, including valid sample groups and purpose of research, plays a role in the overall value of using social media (Fry, 2014). Fry placed responsibility on the researcher to build a credible research method by gaining user consent when possible and being clear about the parameters of the study.

Some scholars believe social media attempts to place a numerical value on qualitative research by asserting such opinions as the larger the number (such as Facebook likes or tweets), the better a brand/product is for consumers (Price, 2013). The number may suggest success but it does not tell the entire story of a brand, mainly the how or why that qualitative research aims to provide. Price (2013) suggested that although social media has value for research, it is important to remember the nature of qualitative research and not rely solely on social media numbers.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 included a background of the problem, the problem and purpose statement, nature of the study, research questions, and conceptual framework. I provided operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study in Section 1. A review of the scholarly literature was included to ensure the reader had a basis of the purpose of the study. The next section will include an in-depth analysis of the methodology chosen for the study. Section 2 will address aspects of the research study such as role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection, data organization, data analysis, and reliability and validity. Section 3 will include the study's presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for future action and further research.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 provides details regarding the purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, and population and sampling. I describe ethical research, data collection, data organization, and data analysis to support the multiple case study design. Section 2 includes an explanation of the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore marketing strategies restaurant leaders used in their independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants to develop a customer base during their first year of operation. The targeted population comprised restaurant leaders of three independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants located in the Pittsburgh, PA, metro area. The implications for positive social change include providing independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants information to develop marketing strategies that will assist them in developing a customer base, creating profitability, and enhancing business success. The success of independent restaurants can contribute to social change through promoting the development of other independent restaurants and local small businesses, as well as increasing the viability of local communities through cause-related marketing efforts.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers should conduct work in an ethical and reliable setting while providing value to the field (Fry, 2014). I was the primary data instrument in the data collection process of this study by conducting each of the interviews face-to-face with the participants. My qualifications to collect data include previous business experience with

developing marketing strategies and establishing a customer base, as well as living in the same geographic region as the participants of the study. Researchers should accept the responsibility of conducting ethical research including respecting participants' privacy, ensuring full disclosure, and minimizing potential bias (Lunnay, Borlagdan, McNaughton, & Ward, 2015).

I adhered to the Belmont Report by taking steps to ensure respect, beneficence, and justice for all human participants involved in the study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The Belmont Report assists researchers in the application of basic ethical principles through informed consent, risks and benefits assessment, and selection of participants (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I applied the Belmont Report principles through a consent form that highlighted risks and benefits.

I ensured the study adhered to ethical data collection guidelines by removing potential bias. Each participant received a consent form outlining the parameters of the study to mitigate bias and keep all participant information confidential. It is the researcher's responsibility to develop a credible and valid research method by gaining user consent when possible and being clear about the parameters of the study (Fry, 2014). I remained open minded and objective when interviewing participants to remove any bias.

This qualitative study included interviews with participants to gather an in-depth understanding of independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders' experiences using marketing strategies to develop a customer base within the first year of operation. I

used purposive sampling to select participants. In semistructured interviews, the researcher should have an open mind to expand the discussion if new topics emerge and should remain flexible to ensure a productive experience for interviewees (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The in-depth interview protocol promoted participants' freedom in answering questions honestly without input from the interviewer, minimizing researcher bias (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012). The interview questions and protocol appear in Appendix A.

Participants

Qualitative researchers focus on a smaller number of participants with a deeper exploration of their experience to gain in-depth understanding missed by quantitative research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Värlander (2008) screened study participants for experience, current role, and knowledge of research topic and acquired prior consent of each participant. I used similar eligibility criteria. Prospective participants for this study met the following criteria: had experience with marketing strategies to develop a customer base; was a restaurant leader in an independent full-service, family-oriented restaurant; and had been in business for at least 2 years. Screening of restaurant leaders ensures alignment between the participants and the overall research question (Asioli, 2011).

Similar to Cronin-Gilmore's (2012) study, access to a purposive sample of three successful independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders occurred through personal research and using local business directories. I fostered a working relationship with potential participants through personal communication at the onset of the study via email, Facebook, phone, and in-person visits. Appendix B includes the invitational email

sent to potential participants. Other working relationship strategies included screening participants' eligibility, explaining the study's intent, and asking them to sign a consent form at the beginning of the relationship. Hannabuss (1996) suggested that interviewers consider creating a relationship with participants, ask open-ended questions, understand how to keep interviewees focused, and limit bias during the interview (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Allowing research subjects to participate at a convenient location and time can promote a positive outlook regarding the study (Lunnay et al. 2015). Interviews of participants took place at their restaurants during a time when the business was not open or at a time when the participant was not distracted, which encouraged willingness and full disclosure.

The participants of this study were independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders who used marketing experiences to develop a customer base to survive the first year of operation. Similar to Cronin-Gilmore (2012), I used a small participant base to explore strategies independent restaurant leaders use to develop a customer base during the first year of operation. The chosen participant group for this study aligned with the overall research focus of determining what marketing strategies independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants use to develop a customer base within the first year of operation.

Research Method and Design

Method

Qualitative research aims to dig deeper into participant's experiences by focusing on the how (Mancuso & Stuth, 2011). A qualitative method allowed me to explore what

marketing strategies independent restaurant leaders used to develop a customer base. Asioli et al. (2011) used a qualitative method to explore the perceptions and experiences of consumers, and I employed the same method when exploring the perceptions and experiences of restaurant leaders. Using a qualitative approach allowed me to gather open-ended information and analyze participants' answers. This method provided valuable information in establishing best practices for independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders.

Qualitative researchers gain in-depth knowledge by focusing on a smaller number of participants with a deeper exploration of their experiences, which quantitative research would miss (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A quantitative approach would not allow me to frame questions in an open-ended manner and would not permit flexibility like the qualitative approach (Ilkay, 2013). A quantitative approach would have limited the in-depth responses from participants, which were necessary to gain an understanding of how and why independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders use marketing strategies to develop a customer base.

Bailey (2014) suggested a qualitative approach in marketing and consumer research, including interviews to gain expert insight into the how questions about consumer motivation, developing new services, testing advertising, and exploring the meaning behind these concepts. Qualitative researchers also aim to provide a deeper understanding of the meaning behind participants' responses that data from a quantitative study cannot provide. Quantitative or mixed methods studies may indicate success through collected data numbers, but they do not tell the how or why story that qualitative

research aims to provide (Price, 2013). I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences; a quantitative or mixed methods approach would not have yielded the desired data. Naidu and Patel (2013) suggested the most appropriate research method depends on the research question and goals. I wanted to obtain a deep understanding of marketing strategies independent restaurant leaders used to develop a customer base, and the best research design was a qualitative multiple case study.

Research Design

I used a multiple case study design to explore marketing strategies that independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders used to develop a customer base during their first year of operation. A multiple case study approach is preferred over a single case study when comparing subjects' practices to gain an enhanced understanding of those practices (Wahyuni, 2012). A multiple case study design allowed me to gather in-depth responses via open-ended interviews with independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders who used marketing strategies to develop a customer base.

Case studies are the most appropriate research design when the goal is to explore a complex concept via an intensive real-world analysis (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014). El Haddad (2015) agreed that a case study design is most appropriate when there is a lack of research on a problem within a specific sector. I intended to explore the marketing strategies of independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders, which had not been addressed in previous studies. A multiple case study approach also allows

researchers to use multiple subjects and data sources to analyze a phenomenon in its natural setting (Wahyuni, 2012).

Similar to Cox (2012), I triangulated the interview data by reviewing participants' secondary data including marketing and business strategy documentation, customer base information, and profitability records during the first year of operation. Wahyuni (2012) suggested the use of secondary documentation for triangulation to answer the research questions. Case study researchers use triangulation to enhance validity by using multiple data collection methods with different strengths that support the weaknesses of each other (Wynn & Williams, 2012). The exploration of secondary data balanced any weaknesses found when conducting in-depth interviews.

Other qualitative designs, including phenomenological and narrative, would not have been appropriate because they would not have included analysis of secondary data. The phenomenological design includes in-depth interviews so researchers can understand the lived experiences of participants (Bowers & Green, 2013). A narrative or phenomenological design would not have permitted a substantial contribution to the business environment, given the lack of analysis of secondary data such as marketing and business strategy documentation, customer base information, and profitability records during the first year of operation.

O'Reilly and Parker (2012) suggested that selecting a sample size assists researchers in achieving data saturation. I used a purposive sampling method to ensure data saturation. To achieve data saturation, a researcher must conduct interviews until new information ceases and participants are providing recurring responses and data

(Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). I followed the data saturation protocol by interviewing multiple restaurant leaders until new information was not provided. I also ensured data saturation by reviewing transcripts to establish recurring themes. The use of triangulation ensures data saturation by exploring different perspectives of the research topic (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Population and Sampling

Öberseder et al. (2011) developed a sample population of knowledgeable participants through purposive sampling to ensure an appropriate and effective sample size. I used purposive sampling to select the population for this study to gain insight from a specific subset of independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders in the Pittsburgh metro area. Tkacyk and Kryzanowska (2014) used a purposive sampling method to conduct their study on word of mouth marketing through interviews of a specific population. The sample size included one leader from three different independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants in the Pittsburgh metro area. The study also included the experiences and nonverbal behaviors of participants regarding the use marketing strategies.

Qualitative researchers ensure data saturation by choosing the most appropriate sample size for the study (Marshall et al., 2013). The quality and number of interviews, along with the researcher's experience and sampling method, can affect saturation. I used a purposive sampling selection method, transcript review, and data triangulation to ensure data saturation in my study. Marshall et al.'s (2013) suggestion of conducting interviews until new data was no longer emerging supports my purposive sampling method for

establishing a population of three restaurant leaders to gain proper data saturation from a suitable population. Similar to Marshall et al., I would have interviewed additional restaurant leaders to achieve data saturation if new data continued to develop after interviews with three restaurant leaders.

Screening participants ensures alignment between the study sample and the overall research question (Asioli, 2011). Similar to Jeong and Jang (2011), I screened participants to determine whether they met the criteria of being independent family-oriented, full-service independent leaders who used marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year of operation. Lunnay et al. (2015) suggested allowing research subjects to participate at a convenient location and time to promote a positive outlook regarding the study. I conducted interviews at the restaurants when they were not operating, or when the participant was not distracted to promote willingness and full disclosure.

Ethical Research

It is the researchers' responsibility to build a credible and valid research method by gaining user consent and being clear about the parameters of the study. Researchers' must aim to create work that is ethical and in a reliable setting while providing value to the field (Fry, 2014). I ensured ethical research throughout the doctoral study process via several methods, including completion of the National Institutes of Health's Protecting Human Research Participants training course. The training course certificate of completion is located in Appendix C.

Appendix D includes the consent form given to each participant. The form detailed that at any time, before or during the interview process, participants could elect to withdraw from the study by contacting me via phone or email. The consent form indicated to participants that participation in the study was voluntary and participants would not receive any compensation. I shared the study results with the participants and community stakeholders via a 1-2 page summary.

Lunnay et al. (2015) concluded that researchers must ensure that questions are ethical in nature, and participant solicitation is in-depth and respectful of participants. Each participant was required to sign a consent form that provided ethical protection of the study, researcher, and participants. I will save data both electronically on a portable hard drive and on hard copies in a fireproof safe for 5 years to protect the confidential nature of the interviews.

I went through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process before the study began to ensure the adequate ethical protection of participants (Walden IRB approval number 03-31-16-0433628). It is vital to remain ethical during research, which can be accomplished by adhering to a governing body, attaining informed consent, informing participants about the role of the researcher, intention for the interview data, and ensuring the privacy of the participants (Qu & Dumay, 2011). I ensured the adequate ethical protection of participants by keeping all participants' responses confidential via assigned numbers to each interviewee to mitigate bias, respect participants' privacy, and protect their interests. Using only the assigned interview numbers throughout the study

removed any confidential or personal information about the interviewee or organization, and provided confidentiality and security for participants.

Data Collection Instruments

I served as the primary data collection instrument for this multiple case study by conducting semistructured interviews with three successful independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders who used marketing strategies to develop a customer base in the Pittsburgh, PA, metro area. In-depth interviews, a popular qualitative method tactic, can gain expert insight into the why and how questions about consumer motivation, developing new services, testing advertising, and exploring the meaning behind these concepts (Bailey, 2014). The semistructured interviews contained 11 open-ended questions to determine how each restaurant leader used marketing strategies to develop a customer base, how much experience restaurant leaders had integrating marketing into business plans, and the impact marketing use had on profitability during the first year of operation.

Interviews are an efficient way to gather rich data from participants with different perspectives on the same concept (DeMassis & Kotlar, 2014). I aimed to explore what marketing strategies each independent restaurant leader used to develop a customer base and required a rich understanding of business practices. Previous restaurant marketing research such as Perry (2014) used semistructured interviews to gain in-depth responses from participants about the usage of marketing tactics.

Öberseder et al. (2011) employed a qualitative in-depth interview method to understand the perception consumers have of CSR and actual purchasing behaviors

versus agreeing with others that CSR could be an influence. The qualitative method explored the meanings of consumers' actions, perceptions, and values rather than predict future behaviors (Öberseder et al., 2011). Similarly, I used semistructured interviews to explore the meanings of independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders' experiences and gain an in-depth understanding of the marketing strategies used to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

I built validity by conducting interviews with open-ended questions to encourage participants to include in-depth responses and true feelings regarding the research topic. Open-ended questions create validity and identify gaps in the current understanding of the subject (Ilkay, 2013). Transcript review and audio comparison of each interview transcript and my notes ensured reliability of the study. A semistructured interview format with an outline allows researchers to divide questions into themes under examination (Asioli, 2011). An interview guide (Appendix A) with research questions assisted in the flow and flexibility of the interviews.

Collecting secondary data allows the triangulation of data collected from interviews and enhances the findings and credibility of a study (Wahyuni, 2012). I collected secondary data from the restaurants including marketing and business strategy documentation, customer base information, and profitability records during the first year of operation. Documents collected from restaurant leaders included formal reports, publications, meeting minutes, social media usage, and other relevant marketing and business materials. This type of secondary document collection can add value to case studies as they provide historical data (El Haddad, 2015). Conducting in-depth interviews

and collecting secondary data created a robust probe into the complex phenomena of what marketing strategies independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants use to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Data Collection Technique

Asioli et al. (2011) conducted one-hour interview sessions recorded via video and audio, with the audio transcribed. I recorded my 30 minutes to 1 hour, face-to-face interviews via Livescribe and then transcribed and analyzed the interviews. Livescribe is a voice-recorder and note taking smartpen that allows a researcher to record interviews efficiently while taking corresponding notes. The advantage of Livescribe is the audio and written data transfers to your computer as one document for further analysis. A recording device that does not function properly is a disadvantage to this type of data collection technique. I took detailed notes in case the software does not operate.

Interviews are a vital component of all research approaches and used as a primary method in qualitative research (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Researchers use focus groups in qualitative research, but focus groups are not a recommended method when exploring topics that participants may be hesitant to discuss publicly (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Conducting in-depth interviews encourage participants to divulge real-world experiences and provide intricate responses (Öberseder et al., 2011). Semistructured interviews elicit in-depth responses from participants using their verbal and nonverbal communication to the interviewer, which fosters a deeper understanding of the research topics (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Alvesson's localist framework suggested that interviews are a tool permitting researchers to explore the account of a situated perspective of a phenomenon, and thus considered interviews as conversations that promote the exchange of knowledge between two people rather than a simple research tool (Qu & Dumay, 2011). A successful interview requires pre-planning, listening ability, and extensive note taking while allowing the most in-depth exposure to participants' experiences (Qu & Dumay, 2011). I took notes via Livescribe, which transcribed notes, along with the participant's interview answers. This method includes the ability to analyze the transcripts through review of the audio recordings and notes.

I also collected secondary data from the restaurants including marketing and business strategy documentation, customer base information, and profitability records during the first year of operation. Collecting secondary data allowed the triangulation of data collected from interviews and enhanced the findings and credibility of a study (Wahyuni, 2012). Documents collected from restaurant leaders included formal reports, publications, meeting minutes, social media usage, and other relevant marketing and business materials. This type of secondary document collection can add value to case studies as they provide historical data (El Haddad, 2015).

Potential disadvantages of secondary data collection would be missing or incorrect documents and lack of participant willingness to provide documentation. All potential participants knew which documentation I was going to ask them for before the interview. In-depth interviews and collection of secondary data created a robust probe

into the complex phenomena of exploring what marketing strategies restaurant leaders of independent restaurants use to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Data Organization Techniques

Livescribe recorded, transcribed, and digitally saved each of the interviews.

Bowers and Green (2013) audio recorded and then transcribed each interview before applying Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) data analysis approach which validated the credibility of the findings. The stages include immersion of the data by text organization, understanding through NVivo 11 software coding of the transcriptions, abstracting the data into recurring themes, synthesizing themes into broader concepts that can be generalized, illustrating how the data related to prior literature, and integration of the data themes into current practice (Bowers & Green, 2013). I integrated steps like NVivo coding software and synthesizing themes to organize both the interview transcripts and secondary data better.

Koll et al. (2010) conducted an exploratory study asking 61 participants to complete three tasks and then coding the information into themes. Using this coding method can allow researchers to organize and compare themes with the frequency of codes (Koll et al., 2010). I organized collected data by establishing themes through the coding software to create codes and understand emerging themes of the data.

Ritch (2014) examined transcripts utilizing double hermeneutics to understand the participants' application and meaning by developing themes and grouping data into relationships with other broader themes. Organizing the interview data into emerging themes will benefit further data analysis (Rich, 2014). I numbered all electronic records,

saved, and backed-up data on an external hard drive to maintain an organized and secure environment for 5 years.

Data Analysis

To establish themes within the data, I used transcript review to analyze interview transcripts and methodological triangulation to analyze secondary documentation.

Methodological triangulation is a popular method used in qualitative research to collect, store, transcribe, clean, and analyze raw data (Wahyuni, 2012). Triangulation added to the validity and reliability of the study by requiring multiple sources of data (Wahyuni, 2012). Case study researchers use triangulation to create validity by using multiple data collection methods with different strengths that support the weaknesses of each other (Wynn & Williams, 2012). Fusch and Ness (2015) agreed that triangulation increases the depth of research and assists in exploring different perspectives.

Asioli et al. (2011) classified interview data into corresponding themes, concepts, and meanings before using content analysis. I used NVivo, qualitative analysis software, to establish themes in the data. Öberseder et al. (2011) analyzed data through code creation and establishing patterns of the interview responses. Koll et al. (2010) conducted an exploratory study asking 61 participants to complete three tasks and then coding the information into themes, which allows researchers to explore themes with the frequency of codes. Using this coding method can allow researchers to compare themes with the frequency of codes (Koll et al., 2010).

Yip and Chan (2012) used a qualitative method to study how the hard and soft components of marketing within the retail industry impacted young consumers. The

researchers coded the interview data and established recurring themes from the interviews (Yip & Chan, 2012). Coding based on Marshall and Rossman's comparison analysis method can link data by comparison and contrast (Yip & Chan, 2012).

I also performed content analysis on the secondary data collected from restaurants until there was no new information and to organize emerged themes found within the restaurants marketing and business strategy documentation, customer base information, and profitability records. Performing content analysis in qualitative research assists in interpreting the meaning from textual data (Wahyuni, 2012). I applied coding to the themes found during content analysis of the secondary data that aligned with themes found in the interview transcripts. Coding themes assigns labels to each recurring topic or theme during the analysis of data and assists in establishing core categories found within the research (Wahyuni, 2012).

Reliability and Validity

To establish rigor within the qualitative field, researchers must create trust. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability all contribute to trust in a study (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

Reliability

Dependability. Dependability of a study considers how repeatable a study is, based on changes in settings (Wahyuni, 2012). Houghton et al. (2013) suggested researchers increase dependability by maintaining records about research decisions made during the entire study process. I was transparent in describing how I chose participants for the study, the interview methods, analysis software and coding theories, and how the

study maintained ethical and unbiased throughout the process. Researchers can increase a study's dependability by being clear in describing the steps taken within the study and specifying the research methods (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I maintained participant confidentiality throughout the data collection process via a signed consent form from each participant that included the steps of the study.

Validity

Credibility. One method of ensuring credibility is careful selection of the study's population (Wahyuni, 2012). The purposive sampling method added to the study's credibility because the participants were in charge of marketing efforts. Bowers and Green (2013) audio recorded and transcribed each interview before applying Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) data analysis approach to maintain validity and credibility. Transcript review also increased this study's credibility by giving participants an opportunity to confirm data. I used Livescribe to record my notes and indicated the time taken within the interview's transcript to add to the validity of the study. Similar to Houghton et al. (2013) I was persistent in my observations to demonstrate credibility in research. The data reliability increases through recording data and saving digitally for 5 years.

Transferability. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) deemed a study valid if the findings applied to other situations, additional research studies, or fields. Wahyuni (2012) agreed that with modifications to settings a study could transfer to other industries. I included transferability of the study results in the findings section and detailed how medium and large businesses, nonprofit organizations, and various industries could apply the results. Increased transferability will occur by providing detailed descriptions so a

reader can apply findings to other situations (Houghton et al., 2013). Previous literature also contributed to the transferability of the study and led to inclusions for future research.

Confirmability. A study's confirmability takes place after establishing dependability, credibility, and transferability and expands on the holistic view of the phenomenon (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). A well-detailed record of the study process and findings can increase others conformability of the study's findings of participant data (Wayhuni, 2012). Saving all procedures, data, and results on a portable hard drive and hard copy in a fireproof safe for 5 years adds to confirmability. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) suggest that others conducting qualitative studies attempt to remove bias by focusing on participant's experiences and their meanings rather than inserting personal insights on a topic. I developed confirmability in the study by asking open-ended questions and recording all interviews to establish validity in the participants' responses. Similar to Houghton et al. (2013) the use of NVivo software to compare and match across interviews and secondary data increased the confirmability of the study's data. Conducting in-depth interviews and collecting secondary documentation from multiple restaurant leaders achieved data saturation in the study.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 expanded on the chosen qualitative research method and the multiple case study design. I explored marketing strategies that independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders use to develop a customer base. Section 2 also detailed utilizing purposive sampling and reaching data saturation with three semistructured interviews and

document collection to gain an in-depth understanding of establishing best practices for independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders. Section 2 explained and supported every procedure used in this study by previous research. Section 3 will include the study's presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for future action and further research, reflections, and a concluding statement to summarize the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This section provides a comprehensive summary of my research findings and recommendations. This section includes an introduction, presentation of findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and future research, reflections, and conclusions of the study.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the marketing strategies used by independent family-oriented full-service restaurant leaders to develop a customer base to survive the first year. The study included semistructured interviews with leaders from three independent family-oriented full-service restaurants and a review of secondary documentation including marketing and business strategies, customer base data, and profitability records during the first year of operation from each restaurant. The findings of this study revealed three themes regarding marketing strategies used by independent, full-service, family-oriented restaurant leaders to develop a customer base in the first year of operation.

The first theme that emerged from data analysis was word of mouth had an immediate influence on attracting customers. The second theme was the influence consumer-driven marketing and social media had on developing and maintaining a loyal customer base. The third theme was the need for restaurant leaders to implement an integrated marketing mix to develop a customer base and create overall business success.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this study was the following: What marketing strategies do independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders use to develop a customer base to survive the first year? I used a multiple case study approach to interview three leaders of independent full-service, family-oriented restaurants. Analyzing secondary documentation from each restaurant assisted in triangulating the data. Three themes that emerged from the study included immediate influence of word of mouth, power of consumer-driven marketing and social media, and need for an integrated marketing mix.

Immediate Influence of Word of Mouth

When restaurants target customer preferences and develop promotions or events that customers find satisfying, positive word of mouth increases (Han & Ryu, 2012). All of the participants in my study stated that word of mouth is the number one driver to attract customers during the first year of business. There was a consensus that print advertising is something leaders have to do, but product and what people say about it to others is what matters. None of the participants had money to advertise and instead hoped that customers would love what they were doing and use word of mouth to promote the restaurant. This strategy was very successful for two of the participants and somewhat successful for the third participant during that first year.

Berger and Iyengar (2013) discovered that word of mouth heavily influenced consumers' purchasing behaviors and e-wom disseminated reviews. All of the participants in my study indicated that word of mouth played an integral role in the marketing efforts of independent full-service, family-oriented restaurants. Electronic

word of mouth is more effective with intangible services like restaurants because customers tend to share evaluations after visiting; however, little research has been conducted on the significance of e-wom on the restaurant industry (Jeong & Jang, 2011).

Electronic word of mouth through Yelp, Facebook, and other social media sites can influence customers, and one of my participants tried to respond to e-wom as soon as possible to resolve any issues. E-wom platforms can provide restaurants with an opportunity to follow the conversations of customers, unlike traditional word of mouth (Parikh et al., 2013). One of my participants stated that although it is true that the customer is always right, there comes a point when one can no longer appease certain people. This participant cited an incident in which customers used the power of e-wom as a threat to post a negative review if they were not happy.

All participants agreed that word of mouth through social media has an immediate influence on marketing, which aligns with the study's conceptual framework of the extended marketing mix. Booms and Bitner's (1981) marketing management theory emphasizes how three additional factors (people, process, and physical evidence) can influence the marketing process. The extended marketing mix theory relates to the study with the inclusion of people as an essential component of the marketing mix. This theory was evident in the finding that customer and employees influence the marketing process of independent restaurants through employee-customer interactions and customer word of mouth, e-wom on social media, and online reviews. One of the participants tried to be on-site during business hours and create a family atmosphere to build customer loyalty. This

participant tries to visit each table and ensure all customers are enjoying their food and service to promote positive word of mouth and repeat customers.

None of the participants had a formal marketing plan that they followed, and none posted any profitability the first year of business. The drive to live their dream drove all of the participants to continue after an unsuccessful first year of business. All participants realized the need for marketing but could not afford expensive print media during the first year and relied on word of mouth to attract customers. There was also a lack of time to dedicate to marketing during the first year of business. According to independent restaurant leaders and the findings in this study, word of mouth strategies have an immediate influence that enhances the development of a customer base in their restaurants during their first year of operation.

Power of Consumer-driven Marketing and Social Media

Consumers are taking a more active approach in decision-making driven mostly by consumer use of social media to research and share information (Kwok & Yu, 2012). One of the participants agreed that consumer-driven marketing is valuable to get the customer base involved and get them to hash-tag and post; that is the most effective marketing strategy today. Two of the participants stated that it seemed like location did not matter and agreed that consumer-driven pull marketing made more sense than push marketing. Although one participant was not familiar with the term pull marketing, the participant felt like if you do something well, location does not matter; it is more word of mouth, and social media allows 100 people to hear about a special in 5 minutes if one person likes it.

Ong (2012) agreed that restaurant customers now use social media sites as part of their decision-making process, with 80% of consumers primarily concerned with customer service ratings of online reviews. Restaurant consumers are using social media tools, with 60% trying new menu items based on online reviews (Jeong & Jang, 2011). One restaurant leader stated that around nine months after opening, a food writer in the local metro area published a very positive review, and that helped the business take off. The weekend after the review the restaurant had their best day in sales ever.

Independent restaurant owners identified customers as the top external factor to success over location, economy, and competition (Mandabach et al., 2011). A customer base is vital to the success of a restaurant within the first year because repeat customers account for 63% of sales at family dining restaurants (National Restaurant Association, 2012). Two of the participants aligned with focusing more on a consumer-driven pull marketing strategy, and one participant felt a consumer-driven method could have been valuable during the first year of operation. None of the participants scheduled time for marketing, and all relied on others to implement social media strategies.

Ma et al. (2014) found that loyal customers were integral to the success of restaurants and cited a need to understand their customers to build loyalty. Customers who express loyalty to a restaurant are one of the strategic competitive advantages leading to referrals, higher market share, and overall survival (Ma et al., 2014). Two of the participants agreed 100% with pull marketing and said it has worked for them. One participant thought that customers knew the restaurant's reputation in the industry, and it was not something that needed to be pushed on customers. All of the participants

indicated that loyal customers provide valuable feedback to the owners and spread the word about the restaurant to their friends.

Small business leaders must understand the value of marketing. Independent restaurants can benefit from focusing on customer relationships and understanding competitor knowledge to increase business success (Brown, Spillman, Min-Young, & Lu, 2014). All participants seemed to understand the importance of customer relationships for the overall success of their restaurants and the need to create marketing strategies to engage customers. Bae and Kim (2014) recommended that restaurant managers focus on customer waiting time as a marketing opportunity with tools like tablets, electronic devices, interactive menus, and detailed printed menus to improve customer satisfaction and function as a recommendation tool.

Moriuchi and Takahaski (2016) applied the extended marketing mix framework to incorporate consumers' shopping experiences when developing a more consumer-centered business model. The extended marketing mix theory applies to this study as well in understanding how people influence marketing in independent restaurants. All of my participants agreed that consumer-driven marketing through word of mouth influences other customers and overall restaurant success. Two of the participants felt that marketing should be continued even during profitable times to keep the name in customers' minds for when times change, and social media could help with that effort. Service marketing managers should understand how consumer experiences integrated into the marketing mix can lead to customer satisfaction, loyalty, and positive brand image (Moriuchi & Takahaski, 2016).

Several recommendations based on my study results included the crucial focus restaurant leaders must have on people when creating a marketing mix. The people or personnel of the restaurant have a 62% influence on customers (Madiba, 2009). All of my participants relied on employees to provide excellent customer service, listen to customer feedback, and implement changes to meet customer needs. This finding aligns with the conceptual framework that service-oriented businesses must consider people, both customers and employees, when developing marketing plans. Applying the extended marketing mix covers the service side that other theories do not (Madiba, 2009).

Small businesses lack the resources or time to establish a traditional marketing plan. Social media can assist small business owners in gaining business leads, increasing awareness, and building traffic at a significantly lower cost than traditional marketing (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). All of my participants agreed that social media use could be one of the most successful strategies to reach customers during the first year. Even though social media was not the main marketing method used by all participants, they agreed that social media use could be the most important aspect when attracting customers during the first year. Somera (2014) found that 54.8% of restaurants did not have any posts on their Facebook pages, and for those that did have posts, 64.2% did not respond to user posts on their pages. Two of my participants stated they do not usually solicit customer posts about the restaurant on social media but could recall at least one event that did increase word of mouth and consumer engagement through social media.

Restaurant leaders who want to attract new customers and build customer relationships use their Facebook pages to engage customers and respond very quickly to

customer posts on their pages (Somera, 2014). Restaurants with active Facebook pages are using visual elements and daily promotions to engage with customers. All of my participants were active in social media through Facebook. Perry (2014) found that 98% of independent restaurants maintain a social media presence by having a Facebook page. All of my participants agreed on the value of social media. One of my participants stated that word of mouth and social media allows 100 people to hear about a special in 5 minutes if one person likes it.

Lee (2015) studied the impact of social media on a restaurant's value within the restaurant industry and found a positive linear relationship between a restaurant's social media activity and firm value. Increased positive customer engagement via social media can influence a restaurant's value within financial markets (Kim et al., 2015).

Independent restaurants could build their social media presence to engage customers, promote positive word of mouth, and develop a customer base. All of my participants want to increase their social media presence and have employees grow their Facebook page by posting events and specials and offering free appetizers and desserts to those who post on Facebook.

Flash sale sites. Flash sales, also known as the deal of the day or daily deal, offer consumers a service at a discount for a limited time. Often the sale is while supplies last or for one day or less. The most popular flash sale site is Groupon, which offers various products and service to consumers and had revenue of \$2.23 billion in 2012 (Shi & Chen, 2013). All participants had used a flash sale site during the first year and had success, but had mixed feelings on the effectiveness now. One participant was the highest seller on

Living Social that year and also had 96% positive feedback when using Groupon, and another participant sold the most Groupons for the entire metro market during that time, close to 3,000 in 3 days.

Two participants stated that those types of flash sale sites only increase brand loyalty to the flash sale sites and not to the restaurants, especially in a smaller city. Shi and Chen (2013) also found that consumers in smaller cities are more likely to purchase from local flash site deals. Conversely, another participant stated that flash sale sites continue to be beneficial, and was the only participant who negotiated between Groupon and Living Social to find the most beneficial deal.

Social media challenges. All of the participants noted that they would like to drive their social media efforts with increased activity and encourage patrons to post on social media. However, the available time of the restaurant leaders limits their social media activity. DiPietro et al. (2012) found that restaurants could use social networking to reduce costs and provide a competitive advantage. Restaurant managers reported that social networking was beneficial as a low-cost advertising and marketing strategy (DiPietro et al., 2012). One of the participants agreed that social media is beneficial in reaching more customers and spreading word of mouth but has not been successful in establishing a social media plan in 5 years. The main reasons were lack of time and knowledge to implement a social media plan on a regular basis.

Yelp, the most widely used customer review website, accounts for over 70 million reviews on restaurants and other service related businesses (Luca & Zervas, 2015). There are concerns over review credibility on sites like Yelp, and Luca and Zervas (2015) found

that according to Yelp's algorithm, almost one out of five reviews is fake, is more extreme, and written by newer Yelp users. All of the participants strongly disliked Yelp stating the reviews were highly skewed, falsely posted by competitors or disgruntled ex-employees, and were a major misrepresentation of the restaurant and customer service. One of the participants stated that as a small restaurant, one bad review can hurt business, and people tend to be very negative and vindictive when posting on Yelp. While it is important for small independent restaurant owners to address customer concerns, getting into a Yelp battle with a disgruntled customer is not a good use of time or resources. Instead, focusing on promoting positive word of mouth and providing good customer service while customers are at the restaurant are strategies that are more successful.

Need for Integrated Marketing Mix

All of the participants were the restaurant owners and handled the majority of the marketing decisions for the restaurants, while none had marketing expertise in their background. All three independent restaurant leaders indicated a lack of time, resources, and marketing knowledge to develop a formal marketing plan and could benefit from establishing best marketing practices. Two of the participants stated that they do not have a formal social media plan, but have family members that usually handle social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, and their website.

Danaher and Dagger (2013) found that despite the effectiveness of email marketing more traditional media such as direct mail, television, and radio were the most useful types of media. All of the participants used coupons or promotions during the first year of business. One of the participants said that coupons were great during the first year

to build a lunch crowd. Another participant stated that one particular print coupon does unbelievable in this demographic, and that after stopping the placement of the coupon advertisement for two months, the restaurant had a 5% decline in sales.

All participants realized the importance of print media and coupons to develop a customer base, but were very selective about which print media outlets they would advertise in and evaluated the coupon results to make future marketing decisions. Katona and Savary (2014) found traditional and emerging media differed mainly due to social media's ability to lower cost, develop higher quantity and quality of messages, provide a real-time response, and reach a larger target base. All of the restaurant leaders only used one or two local print media sources to increase positive brand image and to keep their restaurant on top of customers' minds. All participants indicated that evaluation of print media was difficult in the beginning but are able to track coupons and develop a more comprehensive customer database with the implementation of new point of sale (POS) systems.

Utilizing multiple marketing methods like social media, word of mouth, cause-related marketing, and limited print media is the most successful strategy for small independent restaurant leaders. Companies must consider moving towards integrated marketing communications plans that interact with consumers allowing them to be active in building marketing messages (Bacile et al., 2014). All participants desired to increase social media usage, develop a more robust customer database, and evaluate print media efforts to remain successful after the first year.

One participant has used free appetizer cards since opening to spread word of mouth of the restaurant, and continues to use the cards today at events to solicit new customers. All of the participants stated that various marketing methods could be beneficial in building a customer database. The participants all admitted that time constraints, lack of knowledge, and small budgets influenced the use of formal marketing strategies in the first year of business. All three small independent restaurant leaders agreed that developing an integrated marketing plan is a beneficial idea that could help in reaching customers, building loyalty, and surviving the first year of business.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings of this study indicate that word of mouth is the number one driver for independent restaurants, and leaders must incorporate social media and limited print advertisements into marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year. The innovations of social media and the Internet have modified how consumers and companies communicate about brands and products (Campbell et al., 2014). Leaders of independent, full-service, family-oriented restaurants could apply the study findings to create effective marketing plans, as well as develop and maintain a customer base. All participants indicated that social media and word of mouth, with limited print media, are the most successful marketing methods to develop a customer base.

This study could assist independent restaurant leaders in understanding the concept of utilizing word of mouth and social media marketing strategies to create best practices for developing a customer base, increase profitability, and survive past the first year of operation. Independent restaurant owners have identified customers as the top

external factor to success over location choice, the economy, and the competition (Mandabach et al., 2011). Independent restaurants rely on local customers to increase profitability and survive past the first year. These restaurants must continue to implement integrated marketing strategies through social media to reach customers and develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Independent restaurant owners can engage customers and promote positive word of mouth through social media tools but must spend the time to create a social media element to their marketing strategy. Companies must consider moving towards integrated marketing communications plans that interact with consumers allowing them to be active in building marketing messages (Bacile et al., 2014). It is important to overall business success to integrate select print media options into an independent restaurant's marketing plans, ensuring that print media evaluation methods are in place to determine the best use of advertising funds.

Word of mouth and social media are vital for independent restaurants when developing a customer base and surviving past the first year of business. Companies must integrate pull marketing methods like opting in for newsletters and blogs and providing useful content on social media sites to engage customers (Winterberg, 2013). The advent of consumer-driven marketing requires independent restaurant leaders to move beyond traditional push marketing strategies and respond to customer requests via online reviews, social media posts, and other online forums.

The goal of this study is to offer independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders marketing strategies to develop a customer base. Establishing best

practices may ensure that independent restaurants can attract customers and maintain market share within their local area. Owning a small business can be a challenge with almost 50% of all small businesses failing within 5 years (Small Business Administration, 2014). This study could assist independent restaurant leaders in developing their customer base during the first year of operation through use of marketing strategies, including social media and limited printed media.

Implications for Social Change

This study may promote positive social change by presenting marketing strategies that can increase a restaurant's ability to implement cause-related marketing campaigns. Cause-related marketing benefits both the for-profit business implementing the campaign and the featured nonprofit organization (Furlow, 2011). Consumers are more likely to stay loyal to brands that support cause-related marketing (Furlow, 2011). All participants were involved in cause-related marketing through local community projects and charitable giving of gift cards, gift baskets, scholarships, and sponsorships of local events and charitable organizations.

A restaurant can increase brand loyalty with customers while implementing positive social change through cause-related marketing. Independent restaurants can create social change by implementing cause-related marketing strategies within their local markets. When restaurants participate in cause-related marketing, it helps to build a positive brand image and increase engagement with customers (Hanks et al. 2015). All of the participants stated that participation in these charitable efforts were not to attract customers but to remain a good corporate citizen.

Another way this study may contribute to social change is by creating social responsibility through understanding consumer needs via marketing strategies.

Consumers are reaching out to companies on social media and demanding that they are meeting social responsibility to society (Kotler, 2011). A business can create campaigns through marketing to promote their efforts to remain sustainable and elicit requests from customers. Given the results of this study, I hope to contribute to social change by providing independent family-oriented, full-service restaurants information to develop marketing strategies that will assist in developing a customer base, creating profitability, and overall business success. The success of independent restaurants can contribute to social change through promoting the development of other local small businesses and the overall viability of their local communities. Small business success can stimulate economic growth and promote sustainability beyond their local community.

Recommendations for Action

I have three recommendations for action based on the findings that emerged from this study. To improve the overall profitability and market share of independent, family-oriented, full-service restaurants, the restaurant leaders would be responsible for implementing marketing strategies to enhance the development of a loyal customer base. I recommend that restaurant leaders: (a) create an integrated marketing strategy that focuses on social media, word of mouth, and limited print media to develop a customer base; (b) incorporate evaluation methods of marketing strategies into existing POS systems; and (c) increase employee participation and knowledge of social media and word of mouth through staff meetings and sharing customer posts, reviews, and feedback.

If independent restaurant leaders create an integrated marketing strategy using pull marketing tactics and promote word of mouth via social media, they could develop a loyal customer base during the first year of operation. Encouraging positive word of mouth and promoting customer engagement through social media may allow independent restaurant leaders to implement cost effective marketing strategies that can increase customer engagement, build brand loyalty, and support overall business success during the first year of operation and beyond.

Evaluating and incorporating limited print media options into a marketing plan may assist independent restaurant leaders in effectively utilizing a small budget with selecting only the print options that have a proven return for the restaurant. Independent restaurants do not have a large marketing budget and understanding the most effective print media strategies can promote overall profitability and business success during the first year of operation.

To implement new marketing strategies that will help develop a customer base, independent restaurant leaders must share knowledge with employees through regular meetings. Employees must be encouraged to engage with customers through positive word of mouth and the use of social media tools to promote the restaurant. One method of sharing knowledge with employees is developing a written marketing strategy as a guide for employees. Independent restaurants have family members helping with marketing activities and use employees to carry out marketing initiatives. Educating employees by sharing marketing strategies, customer reviews, and social media usage can

assist in the overall success of pull marketing and lead to profitability and overall business success.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted this study to explore the marketing strategies used by some independent family-oriented full-service restaurants to develop a customer base to survive their first year of operation. Limitations of the study included the experience level of participants, industry, and location. Future studies could explore participants' expertise level of specific marketing tools to improve the marketing practice of restaurants.

Additional research recommendations include an expanded study population to include a cross-section of types and sizes of restaurants such as different cuisines, chain restaurants, and different target markets. Additional research opportunities exist regarding the influence of marketing innovation on how restaurants develop a customer base. I used a qualitative multiple case study to explore marketing strategies used by independent restaurant owners. Future research opportunities include using a quantitative method to survey restaurant owners about specific marketing methods to expand on the findings of this study.

The findings of this study may apply to small business sectors outside of the restaurant industry and future studies could focus on the use of marketing strategies in other service sectors and small businesses. Understanding the value cause-related marketing has on small business profitability could be an additional research topic. Cause-related marketing could increase the social impact of future studies and assist

small businesses, including restaurants, to give back to their local communities and build customer loyalty.

Reflections

I began this journey with high expectations of myself to conduct a beneficial study for businesses that need to use marketing strategies to survive and stay competitive. My experience throughout the doctoral study process has been humbling and I have a better understanding of the in-depth requirement of understanding previous research to develop a successful study. There are many perspectives to consider when conducting research and it is vital to have an in-depth understanding of your support matter and stay confident in your ability to defend your research. I encountered different perspectives along the way and learned how to build upon my skills and knowledge to be comfortable defending my research and decisions I made along the way.

I also have a better appreciation for the need for peer-reviewed research regarding marketing and small businesses, especially independent restaurants. I was surprised by the lack of peer-reviewed research regarding independent restaurants and in particular their use of marketing strategies. When I started my doctoral study proposal, I thought that I would be able to find previous studies on this topic and create a strong problem statement to support the need for additional research. After exhausting all potential research alternatives, I found that not only was there a lack of peer-reviewed literature and previous studies on independent restaurants and their use of marketing strategies; there was also a gap in the literature regarding all small businesses use of marketing strategies. The lack of relevant previous research was not something I expected and

changed my view on the need for additional research regarding various facets of marketing in the small business sector.

Summary and Study Conclusions

This qualitative, multiple case study included an exploration of what marketing strategies independent family-oriented full-service restaurants used to develop a customer base and survive their first year of operation. The study's findings indicated that independent restaurant leaders believe creating an integrated marketing mix, including social media, word of mouth, and limited print media, is the most successful marketing strategy to develop a customer base. Independent restaurant leaders understand the power consumer-driven marketing, and the immediate influence word of mouth can have on developing a customer base. To survive the first year of operation and maintain profitability, independent restaurant leaders must create an integrated marketing strategy that focuses on word of mouth and consumer-driven marketing methods.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Guide

Primary Research Phenomenon Under Study

Explore the marketing strategies independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders use to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Interview Protocol

- Interviews will take place at participants' restaurants during a time when the business is not open or the participant is not distracted to encourage willingness and full disclosure.
- Potential participants for this study will be screened prior to the interview to ensure they meet the following criteria: be 18 years of age or older, use marketing strategies to develop a customer base, be an independent full-service, family-oriented restaurant, and have been in business for at least 2 years.
- All participants will receive and sign the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) before the start of the interview.
- All interviews will be limited to one-hour in time and recorded via audio. The data will be stored securely for 5 years.

Initial Interview Questions

1. What marketing strategies do you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
2. What marketing strategies are most important part when developing a customer base during the first year?

3. What types of marketing strategies do you find are the most successful during the first year?
4. How do you evaluate marketing strategies' success when developing a customer base during the first year?
5. What experiences do you have utilizing traditional marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year?
6. What experiences do you have utilizing emerging marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year?
7. What are your experiences with push versus pull marketing when developing a customer base during the first year?
8. How does customer word of mouth influence the marketing strategies you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
9. How does consumer-driven marketing influence the strategies you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
10. How does innovation influence the marketing strategies you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
11. What additional information you would like to provide that I did not already ask?

Appendix B: Invitational Email

Hello,

My name is [REDACTED], a doctoral student at Walden University, living in the Pittsburgh metro area and I am currently working on my doctoral research study, Marketing Strategies Restaurant Leaders Use to Develop Their Customer Base. The purpose of my study is to explore strategies independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders' use to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

You have been invited to participate in my study because you are an independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leader in the Pittsburgh metro area who has experience using marketing strategies to develop a customer base within the first year of business and have been in business for at least 2 years. The benefits of participating in this study include access to the study results via a 1-2 page summary and the ability to apply study findings to your marketing plan.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a face-to-face interview and document review that will last between 30 – 60 minutes
- Provide secondary data documentation at the time of the interview such as marketing and business strategies, customer base data, and profitability records during the first year of operation
- Be willing to meet with me at your restaurant location during a time that is convenient for you

- Review the interview transcript and answer any follow-up questions

Participation in this study is voluntary and your name, restaurant name, and all gathered data will remain confidential. Your privacy is my priority at every step of this study. Your name and your business name will not appear at any time within the study. Your personal information will not be used for any purposes outside of the study.

If you are interested, please reply to this email and let me know your availability for an interview that is convenient for you. I can also be reached via my cell phone, [REDACTED], if you have any questions about this study.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

[REDACTED]

DBA Student

Walden University

Appendix C: National Institutes of Health Certificate



Appendix D: Consent Form

I would like to invite you to participate in a voluntary study regarding independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders' use of marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year of operation. I am inviting independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders' in the Pittsburgh metro area, who are 18 years of age or older, been in business for at least 2 years, and who use marketing strategies to develop a customer base. This form is part of an informed consent process that allows you to understand the study before deciding if you wish to participate. Please carefully read the study procedures and policies detailed in this consent form and then sign below.

I, Carrie J. Weinreich, am conducting this study as part of my doctorate program at Walden University.

Background Information Regarding Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how some independent family-oriented, full-service restaurant leaders' use marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year of operation.

Study Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to:

- Participate in a face-to-face interview and document review that will last between 30 minutes to 1 hour
- Provide secondary data documentation such as marketing and business strategies, customer base data, and profitability records during the first year of operation

- Be willing to meet with me at your store location during a time when you are not needed for other business activities
- Review an email transcript of our interview session for accuracy
- Agree to participate in any follow-up questions via phone, email or in person

Here are some sample interview questions:

- What marketing strategies do you use to develop a customer base during the first year?
- What experiences do you have utilizing emerging marketing strategies to develop a customer base during the first year?
- How does customer word of mouth impact the marketing strategies you use to develop a customer base during the first year?

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Your participant in this study is completing voluntary and you may decide to withdraw your participation at any point during the study process. If you agree to participate now and later decide you no longer wish to participate, you may leave the study without penalty by contacting me directly.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study

There may be some risks associated with participating in this study such as increased stress level or anxiety –similar to those experienced in your daily business activities. The benefits of participating in this study include access to the study results via a 1-2 page summary and the ability to apply study findings to your marketing plan.

Payment

This study is voluntary and there will be no compensation for your participation in the study.

Privacy

Your privacy is my priority at every step of this study. Your name and your business name will not appear at any time within the study. I will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of the study. The details of the interview will be recorded and saved for 5 years, as required by the university, but will remain confidential.

Researcher Contact Information

If you have questions regarding your involvement in the study, the purpose of the study, or any other concerns related to the study, you may ask them now or contact the researcher, Carrie Weinreich at [REDACTED]. Please print or save this consent form for your records. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 03-31-16-0433628 and it expires March 30, 2017.

Statement of Consent

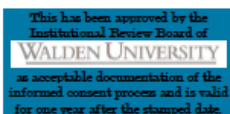
If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about it, please indicate your consent by signing below

Printed Name of Participant Name _____

Date of Consent _____

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature



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