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# Integrating Consumer Feedback Into Business Marketing Strategies

Elijah G. Clark  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Elijah Clark

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2017

Abstract

Integrating Consumer Feedback Into Business Marketing Strategies

by

Elijah G. Clark

MS, Full Sail University, 2010

BS, Art Institute of Pittsburgh, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

January 2017

## Abstract

Consumer feedback and reviews are critical to the success of businesses because 49% of consumers trust online reviews more than other sources. The purpose of this multicase study was to explore marketing managers' strategies for using consumer reviews to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and their clients' profitability. The conceptual framework for this study was built upon organizational theory and disruptive innovation theory. The participants were recruited through local events, social media, and e-mail. Data were collected from public online records and semistructured telephone interviews using 1 marketing manager from each of 5 marketing agencies in North Texas. Thematic analysis and methodological triangulation of the data revealed themes of marketing objective, response, and reputation management. Based on the findings, the successful businesses focused on building relationships with consumers, and the business leaders prepared responses to reviews to ensure appropriateness. Other marketing managers can review the findings' relevance to create or enhance successful marketing strategies, which could help to increase profitability. The implication for social change is that jobs would be created for enhancing the local economy and residents' standards of living.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my wife Anastasia for enduring my long nights of research and writing and for her unconditional love and support during the journey.

## Acknowledgements

The advancement of this study simply would not have been conceivable without the help of many individuals. I first want to express gratitude toward God for gifting me with the knowledge, wisdom, and determination. I would like to thank my boys, Malachi and Elisha, for their understanding and patience while I completed my work instead of spending time with them. I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to my Chair, Dr. Denise Hackett for her mentorship and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. Gregory Banks, Dr. Al Endres, Dr. Rocky Dwyer, and Dr. Yvonne Doll for their support and guidance.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Consumer reviews encourage other consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. In a study of 2,139 participants, researchers found that 49% of consumers trusted online reviews more than other sources (Flanagin, Metzger, Pure, Markov, & Hartsell, 2014). These reviews are vital to the success of marketing firms in developing strategies (Cui, Lui, & Guo, 2012). Marketing managers use them to help forecast profits, influence consumers' perceptions, and increase customer satisfaction (Cui et al., 2012). The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore how knowledge of consumer reviews helped marketing managers in the North Texas region develop successful marketing strategies.

### **Background of the Problem**

The Internet has become a critical source of communication for consumers and businesses (Pomirleanu, Schibrowsky, Peltier, & Nill, 2013). Consumers rely on consumer reviews more than any other medium when evaluating commercial information and making purchases (Aral, 2014; Flanagin et al., 2014). Consequently, consumer reviews have become an area of interest for marketing managers seeking to increase brand awareness and profits (Malbon, 2013). Some marketing managers neglect to develop the necessary knowledge for successfully integrating consumer feedback into business marketing strategies (Utz, Kerkhof, & Van Den Bos, 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

Consumer reviews provide the best methodology and opportunity for facilitating product and brand discussion by weighing one opinion against another (Kietzmann &

Canhoto, 2013). The general business problem was that a lack of knowledge about consumer reviews could lead to a loss of marketing success for organizations seeking to generate brand awareness and profitability. The specific business problem was that some marketing agency managers lack strategies for using consumer reviews to effect marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, multicase study was to explore marketing managers' strategies for using consumer reviews to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and their clients' profitability. The targeted population of the study included marketing agency managers located in North Texas who had demonstrated success in addressing strategies for using consumer reviews to improve marketing, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients. The implication for positive social change includes the potential to improve business and consumer relationships. Better relationships could increase business and yield positive social change by benefiting the local economy through generating more jobs and enhancing communities' tax revenues to increase local residents' standard of living.

### **Nature of the Study**

Research study methodologies are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Using a qualitative research method enables researchers to identify and explore the behavior of individuals, by analyzing details and collecting in-depth data from multiple sources (Šalkovska & Ogsta, 2014). A quantitative approach would have limited me to using structured or raw data and statistics to form and test one

or more hypotheses for answering the research question (Šalkovska & Ogsta, 2014). A qualitative methodology was most appropriate for my study as it enabled me to explore a specific subject and collect and explore participants' decisions and experiences through interviews and public records from Internet sources.

Research designs for a qualitative research study include (a) phenomenological, (b) ethnographic, (c) grounded theory, and (d) case study (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). According to Petty et al. (2012), researchers use the phenomenological design to explore lived experiences and perspectives of individuals. In an ethnographic approach, the researcher observes the lives of the participants by exploring rituals, social behaviors, and regularities (Petty et al., 2012). A grounded theory design works best with an iterative data collection method and analysis to develop theories about social phenomena (Petty et al., 2012). Since I did not seek to research individual world-views or lived experiences on identifiable concerns or create common themes as explained by Yin (2014), I chose not to use a phenomenological, ethnographic, or grounded theory design. Employing a case study allowed me to explore strategies based on the real world situation of marketing managers who work directly with integrating consumer reviews into marketing strategies.

### **Research Question**

The research question was as follows: What consumer review strategies do marketing managers use to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients?

## Interview Questions

Through the interviews, I wanted to learn about the strategies marketing managers used with consumer reviews to increase marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients. Questions 1-3 were initial probe questions, Questions 4-10 were concept questions, Question 11 was a follow-up question, and Question 12 was a wrap-up question.

1. What types of products or services does your organization offer?
2. What is the goal of your marketing and advertising strategies?
3. What consumer review utilization strategies do you use to generate marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for customers?
4. In regards to organizations that you assist with marketing, what past experiences have those organizations had with positive or negative consumer reviews?
5. How are consumer reviews important for your bottom line?
6. What type of priority does your organization place on understanding and addressing positive and negative consumer reviews?
7. How does your organization currently influence positive consumer reviews?
8. In regards to the person responsible for managing brand reputation and consumer feedback and reviews, what qualifies this person for the position?
9. How have actual consumer reviews influenced the development of marketing strategies within the organizations that you work with?

10. What challenges have you encountered while developing consumer review strategies, and what have you and your agency learned from those challenges?
11. What is the most important thing to know about integrating consumer review knowledge in marketing strategies?
12. What additional information can you share regarding consumer review utilization strategies?

### **Conceptual Framework**

I chose the lenses of organizational theory and disruptive innovation theory as the conceptual framework. Modern organizational theory originated during the Industrial Revolution in the late 1800s and early 1900s by theorist Max Weber (Chess, 2001). I used organizational theory by evaluating how businesses identify and solve problems that affected efficiency and productivity. Organizational theory also offers a perspective for understanding effective communication and the risk of improper communication. Business communication with consumers and consumers' perceptions of businesses play a key role in influencing corporate practice and efficiency (Chess, 2001).

In 1997, Christensen popularized disruptive innovation theory, which is appropriate for identifying changes in the market (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). The theory can be beneficial for marketing managers and could be applied within organizations to help anticipate their futures. A combination of organizational theory and disruptive innovation theory constitutes an ideal framework for researching consumer reviews (Yu & Hang, 2010). Since consumer reviews influence consumers' perceptions and provide insights into their needs, Yu and Hang suggested that this framework was



optimal for marketing managers and organizations who sought to better understand how to communicate with consumers in order to obtain positive reviews.

### **Operational Definitions**

*Consumer reviews:* The opinion or feedback of a product or service as determined by a consumer and based on that consumers' personal experience with the product or service (Chuang, Lin, & Wu, 2014).

*Marketing strategy:* A comprehensive process or model for implementing the goals and objectives presented in a business plan (Xun, 2014).

*Marketing success:* To successfully implement marketing goals and objectives while increasing business sales and loyalty (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014).

*Social influence:* For this research study, social influence refers to the feedback and opinions of active and influential community members (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013).

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

Assumptions are facts that I considered truthful and accurate but without proof. Vernon-Dotson (2013) described an assumption as an indication that a distinct study topic is valid based on common and predetermined factors. Vernon-Dotson (2013) defined limitations as implied vulnerabilities and circumstances out of the researcher's control. Limitations are possible shortcomings or conditions of my research. Both could affect the study's scope and validity. Vernon-Dotson (2013) communicated that delimitations were characterized as elements which portrayed the extent of the study. The delimiting criteria of the study, as per Vernon-Dotson, were the geographical territory, focus of study, and participants.

**Assumptions**

I assumed that study participants provided valid and sufficient data to classify their business as a marketing firm. There was an assumption that participants were honest and forthcoming with information. I assumed that interview questions and public data would provide sufficient data for answering the central research question. Additionally, I assumed that this study could yield positive social change by benefiting the local economy through generating more jobs and enhancing communities.

**Limitations**

This study had two principal limitations: (a) the number of five participants was small; (b) marketing managers were limited to the North Texas area and only those who had demonstrated success in addressing strategies for using consumer reviews to improve marketing, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients.

**Delimitations**

Researchers use delimitations to describe the scope of a study and to establish parameters for the study (Jolley & Mitchell, 2010). As the researcher, delimitations were in my control. In this study, they included the geographical area of North Texas and the population of five marketing managers who had developed successful strategies for using consumer reviews in marketing strategies.

**Significance of the Study**

Consumer reviews influence other consumers to purchase products based on the content of the reviews (De Maeyer, 2012; Lee & Shin, 2014). Thus, consumer reviews affect the image and profitability of businesses. Consumer reviews have become more

valuable to potential consumers than marketing efforts provided by product manufacturers (De Maeyer, 2012). Organizations in the food, entertainment, and gaming industry have found that consumer reviews improve product awareness and profits (Cui, Lui, & Guo, 2012). In this study, I provide further insights into consumer reviews and how analyzing them can improve marketing results and thus improve corporate growth and profit generation.

Relationships with consumers are essential for businesses that desire to improve sales and create or maintain a positive brand reputation (Dwesar & Rao, 2014). The findings and recommendations from this study could contribute to social change by identifying potential opportunities or problem areas and help businesses and consumers build better relationships. The findings of this study can also contribute to social change by demonstrating the need for marketing agencies to identify and address marketing trends and technology for improving the methods by which consumers communicate with businesses and followers.

Marketing managers and consultants, particularly those within the online and advertising industry, can benefit from research related to consumer reviews. Marketing and advertising businesses and consultants work with various organizations to improve organizational marketing efficiency and profitability. The data collected from this study might contribute to businesses by identifying problem areas and offering solutions to those problems, which could help marketing managers successfully develop strategies, brand awareness, and increase their clients' profitability. By developing successful consumer review strategies and increasing profitability, businesses can achieve positive

social change by benefiting the local economy through generating more jobs and enhancing communities. A vibrant economy could enhance the standard of living of local residents.

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

The purpose of this comprehensive literature review was to: (a) identify gaps in the literature, (b) increase my knowledge of the research topic that was relevant to the study's purpose, and (c) to explore marketing managers' strategies for using consumer reviews to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and their clients' profitability.

The review contains key and recent writings in business and marketing that address the purpose statement. The review consists of an analysis of consumer reviews, including a brief overview of market research, marketing strategies, and relationship marketing. Research on consumer reviews lends support to the content of this review. An evaluation of consumer reviews in business marketing strategies demonstrates the circumstances that marketing managers face when developing consumer marketing strategies. Discussion of additional research follows on consumer perception, consumer behavior, market trends, review credibility, and data collection.

I organized the literature review according to the following 11 themes: (a) organizational theory, (b) disruptive innovation theory, (c) marketing strategies, (d) market research, (e) relationship marketing, (f) consumer perception, (g) consumer behavior, (h) trends and innovations, (i) consumer reviews, (j) review types' credibility, and (k) collecting consumer review data.

Material for this study consists principally of peer-reviewed articles from sources including SAGE, ProQuest, EBSCO, and Google Scholar. The roster includes 174 total references, 166 (95.4%) of which are peer-reviewed and 152 (87.3%) of which were published within 5 years of 2017, the expected year of CAO approval. Of the 174 references, a total of 94 are cited in the literature review section of the study, of which 84 were peer-reviewed. Table 1 contains the types and counts of total articles, books, and dissertations in the study.

Table 1

*Types and Counts of References*

	Recent (within 5 years of 2017)	Before 2013	Total	% of total references
Books	5	0	5	2.9
Dissertations	3	0	3	1.7
Peer-reviewed articles	144	22	166	95.4
Total	152	22	174	87.3 ( $\leq 5$ years)

The following search terms were used: *consumer reviews, marketing strategies, word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), consumer perception, market research, consumer behavior, big data, and market trends.*

**Organizational Theory**

Researchers use organizational theory to identify how businesses can prevent and solve problems to maximize efficiency and productivity. Organizational theory helps businesses to achieve success by promoting marketing managers' comprehension of organizational change and innovation benefits. An organizational theory conceptual framework is optimal for businesses seeking to better comprehend how to communicate

with consumers through marketing (Yu & Hang, 2010). To advance organizational efficiency, businesses can use organizational theory to identify patterns and structures relating to marketing strategies, market research, and consumer behavior and perception. Using organizational theory provides a perspective for comprehending effective communication and the risk of improper communication. Communication between businesses and consumers, and consumers' perceptions of the business play a key role in influencing corporate practice and organizational efficiency (Chess, 2001).

### **Disruptive Innovation Theory**

Disruptive innovation is a theory for identifying market changes and new entries within established markets (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). Understanding disruptive innovative theory assists researchers in evaluating market trends of new business products and services (Obal & Lancioni, 2013). Businesses should remain present and ahead of trends by improving business structures and using innovative technology fully (Obeidat, North, Richardson, Rattanak, & North, 2015). As a result of Internet and technology advancements, online shopping has significantly affected consumer behavior compared to traditional shopping (Richard & Habibi, 2016). Furthermore, consumers have the ability to influence the development of brands considering the utilization of online social media networks, which are optimal for mining data (Song et al., 2014).

### **Marketing Strategies**

Marketing strategies can provide advantages for businesses seeking better understanding of current and potential consumers' needs (Ritter, 2016). They help managers in evaluating business needs and influence purchases of consumers (Woo, Ahn,

Lee, & Koo, 2015). To develop a successful marketing strategy, managers should focus on developing knowledge of consumer demands and lifestyles (Nica, 2013). The purpose of a marketing strategy is to assess the essential needs of businesses by evaluating consumer demands and developing relevant procedures to positively influence consumer purchasing decisions (Woo et al., 2015).

Marketers use strategies to address business goals and concerns by surveying and assessing organizational knowledge, effectiveness, threats, and opportunities (Lipnická & Ďaďo, 2013). A marketing strategy should assist businesses in achieving brand awareness, promoting business trust, and improving profits and investor wealth (Ritter, 2016). In addition, marketing strategies are pivotal for discovering potential risks within organizational operations, increasing knowledge of consumers, and competitors (Lipnická & Ďaďo, 2013).

### **Market Research**

Marketing managers use market research data in developing successful marketing strategies (Pomirleanu, Schibrowsky, Peltier, & Nill, 2013). As market research grows in popularity, practitioners must continuously react to the market demands and innovations (Yadav & Pavlou, 2014). In a study of 1,957 marketing articles, researchers found that there were 68.5% of marketing research studies published between the years 2005 and 2013 (Pomirleanu et al., 2013). In developing marketing strategies and enhancing knowledge, it is essential for marketing managers to conduct market research (Pomirleanu et al., 2013). Furthermore, Yadav and Pavlou (2014) expressed that

marketing research knowledge had significantly increased in response to an increase in disruptive innovation including the Internet and technology development.

Market research is optimal for repositioning businesses and product advancement, notwithstanding the distribution of the repositioning across configurations (Bjerrisgaard & Kjeldgaard, 2013). Marketing managers use market research to help discover marketing opportunities and expand market shares through various conveyance channels (Pisano, 2015). Marketing research influences the performance and effectiveness of marketing strategies (Lages, Mata, & Griffith, 2013).

### **Relationship Marketing**

Establishing business-to-business (B2B) relationships is paramount for sustaining long-term business success for many organizations (Dwesar & Rao, 2014). Furthermore, relationships with consumers are essential for businesses that desire to develop sales and generate a positive brand reputation (Dwesar & Rao, 2014). To build B2B relationships, businesses should first develop relationships with consumers to help improve the perception of the business (Viio & Grönroos, 2014). In working to build consumer perception through relationships, consumers frequently recognize business relationships as having a personal connection with the organization (Bettencourt, Blocker, Houston, & Flint, 2015). In analyzing whether consumers looking for relationships with businesses actually desired a genuine personal relationship with the business, Bettencourt et al. (2015) discovered that a majority of business-to-consumer (B2C) relationships were inauthentic when contrasted with genuine individual affiliations.



The use of social media provides benefits for organizations attempting to cultivate relationships and identify areas concerning consumer decision making, which could help construct successful marketing strategies (Vinerean, Cetina, Dumitrescu, & Tichindelean, 2013). The foundation of relationship marketing includes commitment, trust, comprehension, and quality (Jussila, Kärkkäinen, & Aramo-Immonen, 2014). In an additional study, Vinerean et al. (2013) inferred that relationship quality significantly affected consumer loyalty. Subsequent to directing an examination of 306 online surveys, Jussila et al. (2014) confirmed that the four measurements of relationship quality influenced loyalty. Nevertheless, only the consumers' perception and comprehension of quality and value influenced purchase intentions (Jussila et al., 2014). Successfully establishing business relationships positively influences consumer perception and organizational sales (Bettencourt et al., 2015).

Business marketing accomplishments require businesses and marketing managers to improve beyond minimal services and exchanges with consumers (Bettencourt et al., 2015). By creating successful B2B relationships, businesses could increase revenue and brand loyalty from relationship partners (Perez, Whitelock, & Florin, 2013). Nevertheless, businesses often neglected to develop effective relationships with consumers (Bettencourt et al., 2015). After evaluating the effect of technology start-ups on consumers within B2B markets, researchers proposed a model for effectively evaluating consumers (Perez et al., 2013). By using the model, the researchers suggested businesses use developed B2B and B2C relationships to help innovate and generate brand loyalty.

## **Consumer Perception**

Consumer perception is a significant predictor of consumer purchasing intentions (Lim, 2013). Consumers write reviews as either positive, negative, or neutral based on perceived experiences with businesses (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013). Reviews regarding product trust principally affect consumer perceptions of products and organizational brands (See-To & Ho, 2014). Consumer perception of purchasing processes influences online consumer reviews, business reputations, and sales (Chuang, Lin, & Wu, 2014). Furthermore, the demographics of consumers have an influence on consumer reviews. Consumers with a positive perception of a business react differently to reviews compared to consumers that do not have a positive perception (Chuang et al., 2014). Furthermore, consumer demographics has no significant influence on the quality or value of consumer reviews (Chuang et al., 2014).

Consumers with limited or no perception of a business developed a more concrete perception when considering reviews before making purchases (Böttger, Emrich, Lee, & Rudolph, 2015). Based on shopping goal theory, peer perception influences certainty and motivates initiatives (Böttger et al., 2015). Consequently, marketing managers should seek to position product knowledge at the beginning of a consumers' journey (Böttger et al., 2015). While attempting to examine the relationship between consumer uncertainty reduction and value perception, researchers found that uncertainty influenced the value perception of businesses (See-To & Ho, 2014). To reduce the potential concern of consumer uncertainty, businesses should display reviews publicly to assist in improving the value perception of the business (See-To & Ho, 2014). Moreover, consumers who

value reviews and have a positive perception of a business are more likely to become brand ambassadors and will pay a premium price if they believe they will be satisfied with the purchase (De Maeyer, 2012).

### **Consumer Behavior**

As a marketing manager, the goal to develop a successful strategy includes an analysis of consumer behaviors, which should assist in developing a strategy based on those identified behaviors (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014). Successful marketing strategies start with an examination and cognizance of consumer behavior and variables that influence consumer behavior (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015). Understanding consumer behavior is valuable for gaining insights into human motivations and how consumers allocate resources in various circumstances (Griskevicius & Kenrick, 2013). Consumers use social behaviors as protection from disingenuous businesses by promoting strength for consumers while appeasing concerns (Griskevicius & Kenrick, 2013). Consumer socialization is valuable for anticipating correspondence and consumer behavioral attitudes (Vinerean et al., 2013). Additionally, personal values have a significant influence on consumer behaviors (Vincent & Selvarani, 2013). Personal values were an underlying determinant of the attitudes and behaviors of consumers and could surpass other major constructs of research by allowing for measuring variables (Vincent & Selvarani, 2013).

Successful marketing strategies start with an examination and cognizance of consumer behavior and variables that influence consumer behavior (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015). Establishing an understanding of consumer behavior is central to developing

successful marketing strategies (Griskevicius & Kenrick, 2013). Consumer behavior is vital for marketing managers exploring opportunities to develop successful strategies, influence consumer decisions, and expand brand awareness (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015). Moreover, attempting to offer a product without understanding consumer behavior could cause losses of revenue and time (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015).

Businesses should concentrate on comprehending consumer behavior processes by adequately engaging with various types of consumers (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015). To better understand consumer behaviors in an online environment, Lim (2013) assessed the theory of online buyer behavior for presenting evidence supporting the existence of a relationship between consumer behaviors and purchases. Lim collected data from mall-intercept samples for structural equation modeling. The study participants consisted of 350 consumers, comprising of 69% females, ranging in the ages of 18 to 51. Of the participants, 57% were between the ages of 21 and 30 years. Lim concluded that consumers' attitudes and behaviors depended on their perceptions of value, ease of use, and convenience. Lim asserted that knowledge of consumers in an online environment was pivotal for developing knowledge and influencing consumer behaviors.

Consumer behavior relates to purchasing decisions, and a common variable exists that links personality, values, attitudes, interest, and lifestyles (Vincent & Selvarani, 2013). The common variable is defined as values and lifestyles (VALS) and interpreted as a proprietary research method for developing and comprehending psychographic market segmentations (Vincent & Selvarani, 2013). VALS is beneficial for comprehending individuals' express personalities through behaviors (Vincent &

Selvarani, 2013). Personal values have a more significant effect on consumer behavior compared to other psychographics considering personal values link centrally to an individual's cognitive system (Vincent & Selvarani, 2013).

Personal values were defined by Vincent and Selvarani (2013) as an underlying determinant of the attitudes and behaviors of consumers. Likewise, Griskevicius and Kenrick (2013) stated that consumer behaviors were valuable for gaining insights into human motivations and how consumers allocated resources in various circumstances. To direct the study, Griskevicius and Kenrick dissected how, why, and when motives most affected the behavior of consumers. As indicated by Griskevicius and Kenrick, motives and the behaviors of consumers changed predictably.

### **Trends and innovation**

Understanding disruptive innovation theory assists researchers in evaluating market trends (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). For innovation to be advantageous within businesses, a business must have a strategy for informing consumers on the specific benefits of the product or service from the trend or innovation (Obal & Lancioni, 2013). By using disruptive innovative theory, Song et al. (2014) expressed that the use of social media was a developing trend, and users of social media network systems influenced the advancement of brands. Consequently, the authors advocated that marketing managers develop strategies incorporating knowledge of trends and areas identifying with technology, Internet, innovation, and social media (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013). Innovation of the Internet and social media aligns with the conceptual framework of disruptive innovation theory, which assists in identifying market changes and new entries

within established markets (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). Consumer behavior correlates with society and behavioral reactions (Richard & Habibi, 2016). Trends affected by consumer choices, the Internet, social media, and technology have a greater influence on consumer behavior than conventional advertising (Richard & Habibi, 2016).

**Technology trends.** Technology influences consumers in regards to business sustainability and corporate responsibility (Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2014). Emerging innovative technology propelled businesses to develop by providing a medium for evaluating choice patterns of consumers (Gruber & Schlegelmilch, 2014). Some researchers follow disruptive innovation theory, which assists in evaluating market trends such as innovative technology (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). Technology has influenced a growth in consumer social communication, which aligns with disruptive innovation theory (Flanagin et al., 2014). Additionally, consumers rely on and solicit the opinions of family and friends via social networks when evaluating products and services (Flanagin et al., 2014).

The advancement of technology influenced the value of products and services (Pisano, 2015). Moreover, by using technology, marketing managers could develop strategies that decidedly enhance perceived product value (Perez et al., 2013). Marketing managers could additionally utilize innovative technology to improve marketing research knowledge (Yadav & Pavlou, 2014). Considering innovative technology and growth in the Internet, market research knowledge has grown significantly. Furthermore, employing innovative technology helped to advance market research (Obal & Lancioni, 2013). For technology to remain beneficial within markets, a business must have a system for

effectively using technology to train and educate consumers on the benefits of a product or service (Obal & Lancioni, 2013). The findings from the study aligned with disruptive innovation theory, which helps to identify market changes and new entries within established markets (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014).

**Internet trends.** In 2012, global B2B electronic commerce transactions accounted for \$12.4 trillion (Ueasangkomsate, 2015). B2B sales have seen a significant growth because of the Internet (Lim, 2013). The progression of the Internet will continually add value to business relationships and provide material for future marketing research (Viio & Grönroos, 2014). The development of the Internet linked to disruptive innovation theory, which helps to identify market trends and growth (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). The development of the Internet has shifted businesses from paper-based and people-intensive purchasing frameworks toward electronic frameworks that depended on the Internet (Xiang, Wang, O'Leary, & Fesenmaier, 2014),

Consumers are moving toward the Internet to develop knowledge, business insights, and for other personal reasons (Caniëls, Lenaerts, & Gelderman, 2015). Businesses that utilized traditional marketing techniques and advertising methods had likewise seen a decrease in revenue (Caniëls et al., 2015). Considering the exceptional growth of the Internet, businesses without a viable marketing strategy embracing the Internet witnessed a lack of marketing effectiveness, product sales, and brand awareness (Xun, 2014). To counter the effects of the interpersonal communication that the Internet presented, businesses should develop strategic marketing communication for targeting Internet-based consumers (Caniëls et al., 2015).

Using the Internet to gather information could aid in collecting pertinent data for better comprehending the perceptions of consumers toward a business (Vinerean et al., 2013). Given the development of the Internet, businesses can use the technology for storing and accumulating consumer information (Vinerean et al., 2013). Likewise, because of the significant influence of the Internet, business leaders should use the Internet to help with establishing relationships with business partners (Sarmiento, Simões, & Farhangmehr, 2015). In a similar study, Viio and Grönroos (2014) noted that consumer perceptions often influenced successful B2B relationships. Consequently, to effectively develop business relationships, marketers should seek to comprehend the behaviors and perceptions of consumers. A central aspect of relationship marketing is for businesses to communicate with customers (Sarmiento et al., 2015). Developing effective correspondence is foremost to accomplishing brand loyalty, which supports the development of positive relationships with consumers and businesses (Viio & Grönroos, 2014).

The Internet affects individuals in their everyday lives and produces challenges for businesses considering the openness of social media (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). Online networking has revealed an entryway for consumers to express their concerns to businesses, and the method for correspondence encourages interaction amongst businesses and consumers (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). Subsequently, consumers would appreciate having their sentiments validated (Sarmiento et al., 2015). However, the immediate and open forum of communication presented challenges for businesses (Akdeniz, Calantone, & Voorhees, 2013). Consumers influence brand



awareness considering the opinions of consumers propel brand reputations (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). For instance, inquiries, comments, and reactions on discussion boards often affect brand loyalty, social following, and purchasing habits. Given the Internet, online networking helped enrich and improve business activities as well as increase the value and reputation of businesses (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014; Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014).

The disruption of the Internet and growth in consumer business choices encouraged consumers to express opinions on social media and other online domains (Xun, 2014). Consumers turned to Web 2.0 to communicate positive and negative statements regarding purchases of products and services (Brake, 2014). Consumers seek the opinions of others through reviews when making purchasing decisions (Brake, 2014). Web 2.0 technology influences consumers to post online reviews about products and services on various websites (Li, Guan, Tang, & Chen, 2012). Furthermore, Web 2.0 enables consumers to post reviews easily on social media channels including web forums and commercial websites including Amazon.com (Li et al., 2012). In agreement with previous studies, Li et al. (2012) suggested that consumer reviews affected sales and purchasing decisions.

### **Consumer Reviews**

By successfully leveraging consumer perceptions, businesses can further strengthen brand loyalty and business relationships (Viio & Grönroos, 2014). When attempting to leverage consumers' perceptions, consumer reviews are ideal for encouraging exchanges through the weighing of one opinion versus another (Sheppard &

Jones, 2013). Communication and consumers' perceptions play a key role in influencing corporate practice and organizational efficiency (Chess, 2001). The method of communication is essential to the conceptual frameworks of the study. A combination of organizational theory and disruptive innovation theory is an ideal framework for researching consumer reviews (Yu & Hang, 2010). In assessing the effect of consumer-generated feedback and reviews, Flanagin et al. (2014) determined that 49% of consumers trusted online reviews more than other sources. The benefits of product reviews include influencing consumers to make informed decisions before proceeding with purchases (Cui, Lui, & Guo, 2012). Moreover, marketing managers utilize reviews for projecting profits, comprehending consumer perception, and developing business relationships (Cui et al., 2012). Considering the influence of consumer reviews on business development and profitability, marketing managers should fully comprehend how to capitalize from feedback and reviews expressed by consumers (Cui et al., 2012).

Businesses should utilize product reviews as a resource to improve sales and communicate with consumers and potential consumers (Park & Nicolau, 2015). Marketing managers should comprehend reviewer demographics and characteristics (Park & Nicolau, 2015). A survey by Internet marketing and advertising company comScore found that 24% of online consumers considered online reviews prior to making a purchase (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). Moreover, by examining the influences of reviews and product sales in relation to commonalities between products and consumers, Ritchie et al. (2013) suggested that marketing managers seeking to gain

insights into behaviors of consumers should use consumer reviews as a method of obtaining information.

The value of consumer reviews depends on the quantity of the review's substance, the credibility of the reviewer, and the nature of the review (Fan, Miao, Fang, & Lin, 2013). The Internet provides numerous venues for consumers and marketing managers to share and receive product knowledge through the sharing of experiences and insights (Fan et al., 2013). After analyzing previous research data, Fan et al. (2013) expressed that consumer-generated reviews were more trustworthy and credible than any other form of correspondence. Moreover, using the Internet permitted consumers to purchase products effortlessly and conveniently through websites including Amazon.com and eBay.com, which permitted consumers to search and compare products, brands, and reviews (Van Der Heide, Johnson, & Vang, 2013). In addition to the value of products, consumers consider reviews, seller's notoriety, and promotional product photos as the most influential elements when making purchasing decisions (Van Der Heide, Johnson, & Vang, 2013).

Some consumers are fundamentally influenced by information posted by previous consumers and consider those reviews most credible and trustworthy (Sparks, Perkins, & Buckley, 2013). Content style, source, and peripheral credibility cues in social reviews influence consumer beliefs (Sparks, Perkins, & Buckley, 2013). It is difficult to comprehend the credibility of consumer reviews, and consumer perception of reviews is the most distinguishing factor in purchasing intentions (Zhao, Yang, Narayan, & Zhao, 2013). Expert reviews provide more credibility and trustworthiness (Flanagin & Metzger,

2013). Consequently, guest reviewers, new reviewers, and reviewers with a low number of posts lacked credibility.

Based on an evaluation of 75,226 online consumer reviews from Amazon.com using a web crawler, researchers found that it was difficult for consumers to evaluate all reviews and determine which were most helpful and trustworthy (Baek, Ahn, & Choi, 2012). Instead of consuming time analyzing product details, consumer reviews are beneficial for helping consumers make decisions by analyzing reviews of the products or services (Xun, 2014). Consumer reviews have a significant influence on consumer behavior and brand perceptions (Utz et al., 2012). Potential consumers adopt consumer reviews as information resources for assisting with the decision-making process (Akdeniz, Calantone, & Voorhees, 2013). Likewise, consumer reviews do have a significant effect on consumer purchasing behavior (Korfiatis, García-Bariocanal, & Sánchez-Alonso, 2012).

Online consumer reviews constitute a focal point for evaluating consumer decision making when executing online purchases (Korfiatis et al., 2012). The quality of consumer reviews has a significant effect on the credibility, trustworthiness, and perception of consumers (Korfiatis et al., 2012). Moreover, consumers use reviews to help determine the trustworthiness of online stores based on the rating and quality of reviews (Korfiatis et al., 2012). In using a web-based experiment to examine the quality and effect of product reviews on study participants' decisions, research found that consumers rate reviews based on the quality and extent of the review (Lee & Shin, 2014). High-quality reviews were adequately detailed and generated positive evaluations (Lee &

Shin, 2014). Likewise, in a study of 577 participants, researchers concluded that expert opinion did have a significant influence on the perception of reviews (Situmeang, Leenders, & Wijnberg, 2014). Additionally, visual presentation of reviews had a significant effect on the perceptions of the participants (Situmeang et al., 2014). Furthermore, observable characteristics of products did have a notable effect on product perceptions and reviews (Situmeang et al., 2014).

Variables from reviews and promotional marketing are significant indicators of product demand (Chong, Ch'ng, Liu, & Li, 2015). Saghafian and Van Oyen (2012) agreed with Chong et al. and recommended that variables in online reviews were preferred compared to promotional marketing reviews. Okazaki, Díaz-Martín, Rozano, and Menéndez-Benito (2015) stated that consumer reviews benefited businesses that used reviews to influence sales. For example, businesses could use positive reviews as a way to increase sales for particular products by using a recommender system when potential consumers search for products to purchase or product details (Okazaki et al., 2015). Organizational theory and disruptive innovation theory conceptual framework are optimal for marketing managers and organizations seeking to better understand how to communicate with consumers for obtaining positive reviews (Yu & Hang, 2010). Consumer reviews are additionally beneficial for generating sales considering reviews encourage purchases by avoiding confusion and limiting choice overload (Baum & Spann, 2014).

Consumer reviews and word-of-mouth have always played a significant role in influencing product sales for businesses (Malbon, 2013). Additionally, consumer reviews

help increase product sales, reduce price sensitivity, and increase consumer knowledge, which helps increase consumer satisfaction (De Maeyer, 2012). Likewise, consumer reviews influence potential consumers' purchasing decisions by providing important product attributes that help reduce the uncertainty of purchasing (De Maeyer, 2012). After testing a sample of 203 consumer review community participants on OpenRice.com, researchers determined that 69% of the participants shared reviews and based those reviews on various factors including reputation, sense of belonging, and the joy of helping others (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

**Social Media Reviews.** Businesses should use social media correspondence for presenting marketing endeavors and for influencing relationships between businesses and consumers (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013). Social media reviews align with disruptive innovation theory considering the affect it has on establishing new markets (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). Having an influential social presence is critical for businesses attempting to propel marketing and brand development strategies (Meuter, McCabe, & Curran, 2013). Increasing knowledge and knowing how to use social media correspondence strategies and brand showcasing can benefit businesses by exploiting opportunities that social networks present (Jin & Phua, 2014). Consumers use social media to socialize with one another, and the form of communication has a significant impact on consumer decision making, which affects business marketing strategies (Vinerean et al., 2013). In conducting a study consisting of 236 social media users' online interactions to evaluate predictors relating to social media sites, Vinerean et al. (2013)

concluded that online networking had a significant effect on consumers' perceptions of online marketing and advertisements.

Businesses can fail to understand fully how to leverage social media and consumer-generated reviews (Utz et al., 2012). The development of the Internet provided an essential source for correspondence between consumers and businesses and additionally extended word-of-mouth correspondence (Labrecque et al., 2013). Social media is a fundamental source of influence for managers and businesses seeking to enhance consumer satisfaction, expand brand awareness, generate profits, and develop healthy business relationships (De Maeyer, 2012). The innovation of the Internet influenced consumer reviews and enabled businesses and marketing managers to identify problem areas related to the offering of services, products, and consumer loyalty (De Maeyer, 2012; Utz et al., 2012).

Online social influence could increase product purchases and brand awareness (Ahrens, Coyle, & Strahilevitz, 2013). In a large-scale field experiment comprising 45,000 participants of an online mall, Ahrens, Coyle, and Strahilevitz (2013) found that both financial and value incentives were significant influencers for generating brand awareness through social members. Barnes and Jacobsen (2014) concentrated on providing knowledge to major sectors of the United States and examined how businesses failed to comprehend completely and respond to online discussions. If marketing managers managed to become aware of how to capitalize from online discussions, they could develop strategies that affect business reputations, profits, and brand awareness

(Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014). Observing consumer behaviors is beneficial for developing social media marketing strategies for businesses (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014).

To effectively utilize social media, businesses should screen social behaviors and develop objectives for tracking social media accounts (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014).

Businesses should utilize social media correspondence for implementing marketing strategies (Laroche et al., 2013). Various businesses use social media communication to develop relationships with businesses and consumers (Laroche et al., 2013). Having a solid social presence is fundamental for businesses attempting to propel marketing and brand development strategies (Labrecque et al., 2013). Knowing how to advance social media correspondence strategies could benefit businesses by exploiting opportunities presented through using social media (Okazaki et al., 2015). Observing consumer behavior online could help with developing marketing strategies for social networking (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014). To effectively utilize social media, businesses should screen social behaviors and develop objectives for following social media accounts (Okazaki et al., 2015). Moreover, to trace social media behaviors, businesses should have a strategy with objectives that require tracking measures, site visits, and the quantity of followers of the social media influencer (Agnihotri et al., 2015). Additionally, businesses should hire staff responsible for social media functions (Okazaki et al., 2015).

In seeking adequately to understand the influential effects of social media, researchers concluded that the development of online social media affected marketing and business relationships (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013). Considering the development of the Internet and the impacts of consumer reviews, online social influence could expand



product purchases and brand perceptions (Wang, 2014). Consequently, businesses should manage brand perceptions using social media, which could help define the consumer-related portions of a business marketing strategy (Mostafa, 2013). Maintaining active social media accounts can help develop business branding and advertising campaigns targeted toward consumers (Mostafa, 2013).

Online networking is a gathering of Internet-based applications built on the foundation of ideology and technical specifications of Web 2.0, which allows for the development and exchange of user-generated content (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Social media is a critical area of enthusiasm for marketing managers and practitioners seeking to evaluate and influence consumers' perceptions (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Researchers found that 88% of marketers used social media and spent over \$60 billion per year consistently on social media marketing (Whiting & Williams, 2013). The most valuable social media tools for gathering marketing data are LinkedIn®, Twitter, Facebook, and online blogging (Laroche et al., 2013). The essential marketing applications of social media include content marketing, market research, and business networking (Laroche et al., 2013).

Social media is a practice for soft marketing via relationship and brand development and influences business and consumer interactions (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, & Krush, 2015; Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). Social media influenced a dynamic sales increase for salespersons using social media practices (Agnihotri et al., 2015). In the event that sales representatives used social media, it could affect data correspondence behaviors (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). Furthermore, using social media allows for

businesses and marketing managers to develop and expand correspondence with consumers (Agnihotri et al., 2015). Businesses should use social media to influence a positive relationship with consumers notwithstanding building customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Agnihotri et al., 2015).

Social influence is characterized as a propensity to accept data as evidence about reality (Flanagin et al., 2014). For instance, with online movie ratings, consumers frequently rate movies based on previous ratings by other consumers (Flanagin et al., 2014). Social media has a significant influence on the actions and suppositions of consumers, and influences purchasing intentions (Flanagin et al., 2014). Some consumers of online social communities felt they had a moral obligation of sharing their experiences through feedback and reviews (Cheung & Lee, 2012). The more active the community member, the more influential their opinion (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013). Consumer social influence is most significant when the review directly relates to the potential consumer, or when the review describes in detail the complaint or issue with the product or service (Flanagin et al., 2014).

For an individual to be influential on social media, they need to present relevant substance within reviews and have a reasonable social following (Labrecque et al., 2013). Business marketers could regain influential power by identifying, reaching, and bargaining with exceptionally social consumers (Labrecque et al., 2013). To develop relationships of power, businesses should solicit influential consumers and provide product samples and ask that the influencers share evaluations and feedback on social networks (Labrecque et al., 2013). The advantage of using social media for businesses is

to connect with consumers, which could decidedly influence the brand's notoriety and awareness (Vinerean et al., 2013). Businesses should use consumer socialization to comprehend consumer behavioral attitudes (Vinerean et al., 2013).

Social media users have a preference for which platform to use when posting social reviews (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013). Moreover, consumer reviews have a significant effect on the sales of brands (Babic, Sotgiu, de Valck, & Bijmolt, 2015). However, no evidence has been found supporting whether one social platform had more of an affect than another (Babic et al., 2015). To help investigate the influence of social media platforms, Babic et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of 1532 participants across 96 studies covering 40 platforms and 26 product categories. Based on the study, Babic et al. stated that social media reviews correlated positively with sales, but did not have a unique effect based on a particular social platform.

**Electronic word-of-mouth.** Consumers often use social media channels when purchasing products or services (Meuter, McCabe, & Curran, 2013). Social media channels including Facebook, Amazon, and Yelp are greater influences than electronic word-of-mouth communication on company websites and through the form of testimonials (Meuter et al., 2013). Electronic word-of-mouth has a significant influence on the success of businesses (Okazaki et al., 2015). Growth in social media affected the reputation of various brands because of the personal relationships that previous consumers had with potential consumers (Meuter et al., 2013).

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become a significant influence on consumer decision-making processes, and businesses have worked diligently to prevent

negative reviews and generate positive reviews to help increase product sales (Fan et al., 2013). Consumers depend heavily on the opinions generated by eWOM (Fan et al., 2013). EWOM was a paramount influential factor in online communication advancement and has significantly affected businesses by providing a platform for consumers to influence potential buyers' purchasing decisions (Babic et al., 2015; Fan et al., 2013).

The innovation of online social media had a significant effect on marketing and businesses (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013). Furthermore, eWOM and online reviews were developing because of the Internet, and presenting challenges for various industries (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013). The development of eWOM introduced a method for increasing online sales and consumer awareness for businesses including the travel industry (Sotiriadis & Van Zyl, 2013). Additionally, Cantallops and Salvi (2014) assessed eWOM within the hotel industry and found that the Internet and information technology prompted a change in consumer behavior. Because of technology advancements, a change in marketing strategy development should occur (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). Lis and Nebler (2014) described eWOM as a method for presenting recommendations, online reviews, and opinions, which had continually developed with the emergence of new technology and the Internet. The main contrast between traditional word-of-mouth and eWOM was that eWOM had a greater reach and accelerated interaction (Lis & Nebler, 2014). Considering the simplicity of accessing eWOM reviews, businesses had progressively sought to comprehend factors and results influencing eWOM (Lim, 2013).

EWOM and traditional word-of-mouth communication have extended to online communication and networking through social forums, review sites, and news sites

(Cheung & Lee, 2012). Various levels of mood-enhancements, escapism, experiential learning, and social interaction have mixed effects on eWOM (Lis & Nebler, 2014). A growth in eWOM helped shape consumer purchasing behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Considering a growth in eWOM, future studies were necessary to help comprehend the full effects and rationale for the growing trend (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

Abrantes, Seabra, Lages, and Jayawardhena (2013) evaluated the relationship between *in-group* and *out-of-group* electronic word-of-mouth. Abrantes et al. defined the term *in-group* as eWOM directed toward individuals' close friends and family. *Out-of-group* eWOM referred to individuals beyond the reviewers' social, family, and collegial circle (Abrantes et al., 2013). There is a positive relationship between experiential learning and eWOM for *out-of-group* relationships, while no relationship exists in experiential learning and eWOM for *in-group* relationships (Abrantes et al., 2013).

Interested consumers have repeatedly relied on consumer reviews when making a purchasing decision (Hu, Bose, Koh, & Liu, 2012). Sales of products are significantly dependent on eWOM influences (Hu et al., 2012). Moreover, eWOM affects the trust and perception of businesses and the products they offered (See-To & Ho, 2014). When there is a large number of positive eWOM referrals, sales and business profits increase (See-To & Ho, 2014). Additionally, positive eWOM influenced purchasing behavior of consumers considering it promoted trust and expectations (See-To & Ho, 2014).

**Focus groups.** Focus groups provide businesses with resources to seek legitimate feedback, conduct beta testing, and evaluate consumers' perceptions through real-time reviews (Miles & Sparks, 2014). Focus groups take into account in-depth interviews with

participants that are useful for expanding consumer and product knowledge (Šalkovska & Ogsta, 2014). Businesses have an expanding interest in the service and the results that focus groups generate (Woodyatt, Finneran, & Stephenson, 2016). In assessing the influence of consumer-generated feedback and reviews, researchers noted that endorsed opinions and homogeneity in reviewers' impressions enhanced the sales of products and services (Jabr & Zhiqiang, 2014). Online focus group organizations help businesses and marketers observe the responses of consumers concerning specific concepts and ideas (Sheppard & Jones, 2013). Focus groups are ideal for acquiring data for measuring status and trends (Danielsen et al., 2014). Moreover, unlike local focus groups, online focus groups provide businesses the opportunity to decide the cost of products and services based on the opinion of topographically diverse participants (Woodyatt et al., 2016).

Focus groups are underutilized research approaches (O'hEocha, Wang, & Conboy, 2012). Furthermore, the core theoretical components of focus groups are in-depth data, local focus group interactions, and a humanistic character (O'hEocha et al., 2012). The core segment of focus groups are the connections among the participants (O'hEocha et al., 2012). In particular, the interaction with participants helped researchers gather less accessible data, which would not have generally come to surface using traditional data collection methods. Business and marketing managers should use focus groups for acquiring and analyzing data for exploring product awareness and consumers' perceptions (Danielsen et al., 2014). Likewise, consumer reviews were eight times cheaper than traditional data collection methods but lacked the geographical reach of focus group research methods (Danielsen et al., 2014). Additionally, focus groups were

more reliable because of careful validation processes that considered time, commitment, and credibility of the results (Danielsen et al., 2014).

Researchers of focus group studies recommended subjects and probing open-ended questions (Sheppard & Jones, 2013). The drawbacks of using focus groups are that using the method do not help researchers observe participants in a natural setting, which often have an effect on the results (O'hEocha et al., 2012). In an attempt to analyze the reliability of focus groups, Danielsen et al. (2014) concluded that the group setting was as reliable as other methods of interviews, and the credibility relied on the participants. Considering focus groups take place within a group setting, participants could affect the decisions of other individuals (Danielsen et al., 2014). Using a structured process is critical to the success of focus groups (Danielsen et al., 2014).

### **Review Types' Credibility**

EWOM is more trustworthy and credible than any other form of communication (Fan et al., 2013). Consumer reviews receive their value based on factors including the credibility of the reviewer, the quantity of the reviews content, and the quality of the review (Fan et al., 2013). After analyzing the writing style of reviewers and the effectiveness of manipulated reviews through sentiments, readability, and ratings, researchers determined that 10.3% of products were subject to online review manipulation (Fan et al., 2013). To counter the effects of manipulated reviews, potential consumers should thoroughly analyze reviews before making purchases based on the content of a review (Hu et al., 2012). In evaluating the value of perceived credibility in the decision-making process of online consumers, Hu et al. (2012) confirmed that

credible eWOM sources positively influenced consumers. Moreover, the quantity and quality of the review's content determined its credibility (Hu et al., 2012).

A source's credibility consists of expertness and trustworthiness (Hansen, Lee, & Lee, 2014). Reviews are significant for marketing managers seeking to analyze consumer reviews effectively (Hansen et al., 2014). For example, a review is more credible when posted by a consumer rather than a business employee or manufacturer (Sparks et al., 2013). Review consistency and the expertness of the reviewer determines the credibility of the review (Baker et al., 2015). Expertness in writing reviews relates to whether the reviewer is qualified to discuss the subject and could perform tasks related to the subject (Hansen et al., 2014). Credibility was additionally determined based on whether the review could be accepted or approved without further research or evidence (Hansen et al., 2014). Comprehending review credibility could positively influence marketing methods for marketing managers seeking to increase product awareness and profits.

**Negative word-of-mouth.** After conducting a study for analyzing the effects of negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) online, researchers suggested that businesses develop an appropriate response to counter the effects of NWOM communication (Lang & Hyde, 2013). How a business responds to NWOM is crucial for whether the business will suffer negatively from the effects of the NWOM (Barnes, 2014). NWOM plays a pivotal role in influencing purchasing decisions and how potential consumers perceive businesses (Lang & Hyde, 2013). By examining theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and directions, Barnes (2014) found that multiple consumer reviews helped to increase credibility compared to a single review without peer agreement. When there is significant



agreement on NWOM, potential consumers are influenced to follow the greater opinion (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014).

Sensory marketing helps to identify and comprehend the senses and influences of marketing engagement in light of consumers' perceptions, behaviors, and judgments (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014). Businesses should develop a suitable reaction to counter the impacts of NWOM correspondence (Lang & Hyde, 2013). How a business reacts to NWOM is critical for determining whether the business can recuperate from the negative reviews and feedback (Barnes, 2014). In another study, researchers expressed that negative reviews greatly affected consumers seeking to make a purchase online (Cui et al., 2012). While positive reviews did have an influence on consumer decision making, one negative review from a disgruntled employee had a more significant effect on product ratings. Conversely, negative reviews have less of an influence when contrasted to a vast majority of positive reviews (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014). Consumers who post NWOM reviews have the expectations that marketing managers will read their postings and offer incentives to remove the negative review (Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013).

Businesses are aware of the effects of consumer reviews, and many businesses work to manipulate online reviews of products to increase sales and profits (Hu et al., 2012). Consumer review manipulation occurs often, but there is no firm evidence suggesting which businesses or industries are using the unethical practice (Malbon, 2013). Marketing managers should assess statistical methods for detecting review manipulation and the effects of manipulated reviews on online shoppers (Ong, Mannino, & Gregg, 2014). Researchers have also found that businesses and marketers often

manipulated reviews to increase ratings and influence consumer product evaluations (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2013). As a result of the study, the researchers concluded that manipulated reviews more often affected easily influenced consumers than consumers who were less swayed by consumer-generated reviews.

Marketing managers and business owners are aware of the effects of consumer reviews and sometimes succumb to the temptation of generating *fake* reviews to help promote products or services (Malbon, 2013). Website owners and policymakers are responsible for discovering and removing fake reviews (Ong et al., 2014). The drawback of manipulated reviews is that they could unduly damage the reputation of businesses and review websites (Heydari, ali Tavakoli, Salim, & Heydari, 2015). An additional concern with such reviews is that they are difficult to find and report considering reviews have no definite structure or requirement (Heydari et al., 2015). Governments and regulators should reprimand fake reviewers and businesses promoting fake or manipulated reviews as they can cause a loss of confidence in the marketplace (Ong et al., 2014).

### **Collecting Consumer Review Data**

Marketing research could affect marketing execution and adequacy (Lages et al., 2013). Furthermore, businesses should develop marketing strategies to address the local market when the business begins to see a decrease in sales performance (Lages et al., 2013). Because of developments in the Internet, data mining knowledge and interest will likewise continue to increase (Chen et al., 2015). Consequently, marketing managers could utilize the data to help develop marketing strategies and consumer knowledge by analyzing patterns and behaviors. After conducting a study based on two stages of data

collection and datasets, researchers stated that not all consumers were affected by reviews and that the effect of reviews was dependent on a person's education and personal experiences (Noone & McGuire, 2013).

Provost and Fawcett (2013) defined *big data* as datasets that were too large for conventional data processing technologies. Practitioners use datasets for various tasks including data mining and data processing (Provost & Fawcett). Data mining sources include web blogs, forums, wikis, and social media, which are ideal for mining data (Kacen, Hess, & Chiang, 2013). Okazaki et al. (2015) evaluated consumer engagement on Twitter using data mining and determined that social media were helpful in identifying patterns of eWOM. In convincing key stakeholders to take measures to modify the perceived value of the consumer, data should be collected and sorted for assessing the market and developing a marketing strategy for actualizing ideas (Provost & Fawcett, 2013).

Song et al. (2014) concluded that *attention economy* was a system in which consumers shared data and ideas online, and the idea with the most feedback received monetary value. Comprehending the needs of consumers helped to establish future direction and defining product status. Additionally, online data mining from social media networks was advantageous for gathering data quicker and easier than surveys and questionnaires (Song et al., 2014). Benefits of data mining include the capacity to better comprehend consumers by knowing and assessing the networks in which they gather (Chong et al., 2015). Moreover, data mining is also useful for analyzing consumer

behavior, which could assist in establishing a future course for identifying and implementing businesses' marketing strategies (Chong et al., 2015).

Researchers found that 93% of U.S. consumers used the Internet for e-commerce-related activities (Flanagin et al., 2014). In addition to general data mining using the Internet, social media were likewise useful for gathering location-based data about consumers (Chen, Vorvoreanu, & Madhavan, 2014). Data mining also identified with online photograph sharing and the tourism industry and photographs enabled travelers to share their location through geotags, which provided marketing managers with data for using geotag knowledge in marketing strategies (Majid et al., 2013).

### **Summary and Transition**

Section 1 included the problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, and the research question, which helped define and guide the stages, reporting, and analysis of the study. Consumer feedback and review knowledge are fundamental for marketing managers seeking to develop strategies that influence brand awareness and profitability. Pursuing knowledge of consumer reviews as a core element of strategic marketing can generate significant difficulties for marketing managers. These difficulties produce complications in marketing firms, where a lack of knowledge of consumer reviews and clarity create barriers to producing successful marketing strategies.

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore consumer review strategies marketing managers use to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients. The review of professional and academic literature contains

key and recent writings in the business and marketing field. Reviewing the content of the literature review enabled me to compare research articles relating to my topic.

Section 1 included (a) interview questions, (b) conceptual framework, (c) operational definitions, and (d) assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Section 1 also included the significance of the study and a review of literature. The literature review comprised key and recent writings in the business and marketing field. The review of literature consisted of an analysis of consumer reviews, including the subjects of (a) market research, (b) marketing strategies, (c) relationship marketing, (d) consumer perception, (e) consumer behavior, (f) market trends, (g) review credibility, and (h) data collection.

Section 2 covers the following topics: (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) study participants, (d) research methodology and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection, (h) data organization, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity. Section 3 includes the (a) presentation of the findings, and (b) implications for social change, (c) recommendations for action and further research, and (d) closes with research reflections and my overall conclusions.

## Section 2: The Project

Consumer reviews help other consumers make informed purchasing decisions; they are essential to the success of marketing managers seeking to develop marketing strategies (Cui, Lui, & Guo, 2012). Marketing managers use consumer reviews to help forecast profits, influence consumers' perceptions, and increase customer satisfaction (Cui et al., 2012). Section 2 covers the following topics: the purpose statement, role of the researcher, study participants, research methodology and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection, data analysis technique, and plans for assuring the study's reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, multicase study—which used one successful marketing manager from each of five marketing agencies in North Texas—was to explore these managers' strategies for using consumer reviews to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and their clients' profitability. Data collected from this study can contribute to businesses by identifying problem areas and offering solutions to those problems, which could help marketing managers successfully develop strategies, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients. By developing successful consumer review strategies and increasing profitability, businesses can effect beneficial societal and community change by generating more jobs, enhancing communities, and benefiting the local economy.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, it was my responsibility to, first, decide the most suitable research methodology and then to search and interact with the participants through (a) preparing research protocol, (b) soliciting, (c) corresponding, (d) interviewing, and (e) member checking. I was responsible for analyzing transcripts and for collecting company data including (a) business goals, (b) plans, (c) marketing strategies, (d) analytics, and (e) other public documentation for assessing strategies for integrating consumer reviews in business marketing strategies.

Given that I have a direct involvement in the marketing industry, my education and contacts developed potential participant affiliations. Moreover, my personal dispositions and convictions toward the marketing industry derive from my experience and training as a marketing consultant. However, I did not use my influence to lead potential participants to believe that participating in this research could result in rewards, relationship benefits, or special favors.

Bias in interviews occurs when researchers encourage or persuade participants to choose one answer over others (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). Though my industry experience and education have informed my interest in the topic and my interpretation of collected information, I did not influence participants' responses, which helped to assure the accuracy of the collected data (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Understanding potential bias and the effects it could have on the study's results is vital for assuring the validity of research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Bias can occur in the

planning, data collection, and analysis phases of research. Pannucci and Wilkins (2010) stated that bias reflects propensities that preclude impartial considerations of inquiries.

Researchers can use the Belmont Report for summarizing ethical principles signed into law by the National Research Act in 1974, taking into account the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (Adams & Miles, 2013). The Commission concluded that research identifying with human subjects should incorporate statutory guidelines to avert unethical research practices (Adams & Miles, 2013). The Belmont Report highlighted three fundamental systems that summarized ethical principles, which included (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Adams & Miles, 2013). To ensure ethical execution of the study, I followed the specified procedures and processes in the Belmont Report.

Potential biases could have affected the study's validity considering my industry insight and relationship with participants. To mitigate such biases, I used strategies such as bracketing and member checking to assist in ensuring an accurate representation of participants' perspectives. A qualitative semistructured interview is beneficial for generating trustworthy and reliable results (Kallio et al., 2016). I used a semistructured interview protocol (Appendix A) to aid in the interview and research process by providing structure for conducting my interview with each participant.

### **Participants**

Participants for this qualitative multiple case study had a notable association in marketing identifying with consumer perception, influence, and social media. A sample size for a qualitative research study should be between five and 50 participants (Dworkin,



2012). The research included one marketing manager from each of five marketing agencies. The study participants assisted in forming an understanding of the strategies marketing managers employed when integrating consumer reviews in successful marketing strategies.

The participants included marketing firms and agencies that offered marketing services to clients. Considering the influence of online review websites such as Yelp.com and Amazon.com (Meuter, McCabe, & Curran, 2013), I prequalified my research participants by evaluating the participants' reputation on these networks. Moreover, before selecting potential participants, I considered how reputable the business was as determined by the quantity of clients and analysis of the social media channels and reputations of their firms' clients.

After receiving IRB approval (10-21-16-0542155), I selected potential participants by interviewing lead marketing managers to gain insights into the organization and develop a perception for how the organization integrated consumer reviews in marketing strategies. To further select participants, I (a) attended local business events and associated with marketing groups and professionals to establish new relationships, and (b) searched the Internet for local marketing firms and contacted the marketing department through telephone and e-mail as approved by the IRB.

Throughout the recruiting and research, I followed the suggestions of McDermid et al. (2014) by establishing trust by clearly communicating with participants.

Upon selecting the preferred candidates, I established contact through telephone and e-mail with details explaining the study and prerequisites. I followed-up with a demographic survey which included the following items:

1. What is your current job title in the agency?
2. What is your age?
3. Has this agency been successful at implementing consumer reviews in business strategies?

### **Research Method and Design**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore solutions for marketing managers within organizations seeking to integrate consumer feedback and reviews in business marketing strategies. Drawing from public records and interviews with marketing managers of marketing firms within the North Texas region of the United States, I assessed collected data of consumer review strategies by the firms. The findings and conclusions from the research should help present various approaches to resolving problems and potential risks within organizations seeking to gain a better understanding of feedback and consumer reviews and how to integrate consumer feedback in business marketing strategies.

### **Research Method**

Research study methodologies are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). A qualitative research method is a tool for assessing the conduct of individuals and barriers that affect reasoning by analyzing details and collecting in-depth data from multiple sources (Šalkovska & Ogsta, 2014). A quantitative

methodology includes structured or raw data and statistics to form and test one or more hypotheses for answering research questions (Šalkovska & Ogsta, 2014). Using a mixed methods approach combines qualitative and quantitative methods for addressing a research question (Yin, 2014). A qualitative methodology was most appropriate for this study as there were no variables to compare or examine as within a quantitative or mixed method approach.

For a qualitative study, using an interview method with open-ended questions is advantageous for gathering data (Yin, 2014). Researchers can use a qualitative research method to assist in comprehending and discovering experiences, perspectives, and insights of participants (Lewis, 2015). Using a qualitative exploration procedure facilitates assessing why individuals behave in a particular manner (Yin, 2014). Moreover, employing a qualitative exploration helps researchers analyze points of interest and gather in-depth information (Šalkovska & Ogsta, 2014). Additionally, using a qualitative method enables researchers to elicit experiences, information, opinions, and feelings of participants (McDermid et al., 2014).

An advantage of employing a qualitative approach is that there are no constraints on study participants to foreordained responses (Yin, 2014). A drawback of the qualitative method in regards to collecting data is that it is costly considering the time expected to gather the data (Yin, 2014). Researchers use the qualitative method to study the lived experiences of participants and to interpret the data collected about phenomena (Šalkovska & Ogsta, 2014). A qualitative study approach produces discoveries that are frequently not decisive and are exploratory in nature (Yin, 2014).

## Research Design

The four principal research designs for qualitative research include: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, (c) grounded theory, and (d) case study (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Researchers use a phenomenological design to explore lived experiences and perspectives of individuals as they experience a phenomenon (Petty et al., 2012). In an ethnographic approach, the researcher observes the lives of the participants by examining rituals, social behaviors, and regularities (Petty et al., 2012). A grounded theory design is most beneficial with an iterative data collection method and analysis to develop theories about social phenomena (Petty et al., 2012). Considering I did not research individual world-views, lived experiences on identifiable concerns, or create common themes as explained by Yin (2014), I decided not to use a phenomenological, ethnographic, or grounded theory design.

A case study design is particularly valuable for exploring real world situations (Lewis, 2015; Yin, 2014). Case studies are in-depth explorations of unique situations; permitting the advancement of further elaboration and future research (Yin, 2014). Employing a case study design helps researchers to explore strategies based on real world circumstances (Lewis, 2015). Yin (2014) clarified that case studies can include various explorations of the same phenomenon within real life context. The sampling method for this study was purposive sampling. Researchers use purposive sampling to ensure the study addresses the business problem (Barratt, Ferris, & Lenton, 2015). Yin wrote the design is what connects the empirical data to the initial research question and

conclusions. Researchers use case studies to collect various types of data—not just interviews—from multiple sources.

I incorporated methodological triangulation by using multiple types of data including interviews and public records from Internet sources. Furthermore, I used bracketing and member checking to assist in ensuring an accurate representation of participants' perspectives. The processes of member checking are beneficial for developing trust between researchers and study participants. Moreover, I continued member checking until saturation was achieved. Limitations of case studies include the inability to generalize findings (Yin, 2014). I conducted this case study research using structured and open-ended interview questions. I initiated with *what* oriented questions and extended to *how* to help develop a more descriptive case study.

### **Population and Sampling**

In a qualitative study, the researcher must decide who and how many participants to include in the study, and what the researcher requires knowing (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). I chose to use a multiple case study with a population of individuals who satisfied the participant criteria in multiple companies. The industry and study population for this research was marketing managers of firms in the North Texas area that offered marketing services to businesses. For this study, I concentrated on marketing firms and agencies that had various types of consumers in regards to social status, industry type, and brand ubiquity and status. I established relationships with multiple leaders and managers to enhance the trust and increase data collection (McDermid et al., 2014).

Robinson (2014) outlined a sampling approach for qualitative interview-based explorations and noted the principal types of sampling were (a) random selection, (b) quota sampling, (c) accessibility sampling, (d) stratified sampling, and (e) a unique selection strategy. Determining a sample size in qualitative research is reliant on and influenced by practical and theoretical considerations (Robinson, 2014). Robinson further stated that researchers selected sample sizes depending on the quantity of participants the researcher could manage.

The population of the study included one marketing manager from each of five marketing agencies located in North Texas who had demonstrated success in the field of marketing using consumer review strategies. I incorporated methodological triangulation by using multiple types of data including interviews and public records from Internet sources. Additionally, I utilized strategies such as member checking to assist in concluding an accurate representation of participants' views. I continued member checking until achieving data saturation. I cross-checked both between and among the data sources to assure data saturation

### **Ethical Research**

I followed structured procedures and processes to ensure ethical execution of the study. My study conformed to the requirements for minimal risk to satisfy the terms of Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is responsible for developing, adopting, and enforcing guidelines for safety and ethical practices to protect study participants (Wilson, Kieburtz, Holloway, & Kim, 2014).

Participants received a letter explaining the details and intent of the study. The letter also included an attached Informed Consent Form for review and approval by the participant. Informed consent is a manner of obtaining approval from an individual to participate in a research study (Schrems, 2014). The Informed Consent Form included details of questions, processes, and data collection methods used for the study. As recommended by Drake (2013), I informed potential study participants that they could withdraw from the study for any reason including personal commitments, concerns, or disagreements of the results or processes of the study.

The participants could withdraw either by emailing or through telephone. There were no incentives in exchange for study participation. Upon receiving IRB approval, I contacted the participants through telephone and e-mail to confirm and schedule dates to conduct the interviews. Limiting participant risks is vital in research studies (Johnson, 2014). As measures to assure the ethical protection of participants, I did not identify participants involved and the name and exact location of the organization in which the participants work. However, I did inform the participants of potential risks associated with sharing company information and personal opinions as requested by the research questions.

The interview data will remain confidential and safely maintained for 5 years to protect the rights of the participants, and be available to the participants. I only collected publicly available documents and marketing strategies relating to, and consisting of, consumer review knowledge and research. I collected the information from public

information available via company websites and other online media outlets including social media, forums, and directories.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

For this qualitative case study, I was the data collection instrument. Researcher as the instrument alludes to researchers who are active in research processes (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). As the instrument, a researcher must use proper judgment to gather and analyze collected research data (Pezalla et al., 2012). To collect data, researchers should develop trust from participants to influence comfort for sharing data and resources (Denzin, 2013).

A good interviewer should have knowledge in the areas of technical and interaction competence (Yin, 2014). As the data collection instrument, researchers can establish relationships with participants while actively observing phenomena (Mansfield, 2013). Interviews are effective methods for researchers seeking to collect data (Hedlund, Börjesson, & Österberg, 2015). Moreover, considering the depth of being the instrument, knowing how to respond to collected data and personal bias are vital (Pezalla et al., 2012). When the researcher is the instrument in a semistructured qualitative interview, personal sentiments can subliminally influence the results of the study (Pezalla et al., 2012).

Reflexivity is a situation in which the researcher influences participants using bias (Yin, 2014). While there were hindrances of being the instrument, such as potential biases, I worked to incorporate all applicable research documentation and not influence personal responses of the participants. To mitigate such biases, Houghton, Casey, Shaw,



and Murphy (2013) recommended using strategies such as member checking to assist in ensuring an accurate representation of participants' views. I used bracketing as suggested by Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) as a means of putting aside my knowledge and experience to help minimize bias throughout the research process. Researchers should member check to improve the validity and reliability of data (Milosevic, Bass, & Combs, 2015). O'Reilly and Parker (2013) reasoned that researchers use member checking to reduce the probability of unreliable data in a study.

As the data collection instrument, I utilized Google Voice cloud phone for recording the phone call and afterward downloaded the audio file for transcription. I maintained only one audio recording per the protocols outlined for ethical research. I used the interview questions to guide the interviews. Qualitative researchers use semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Semistructured interviews are ideal for gathering data from a small quantity of participants (Anyan, 2013). I completed semistructured interviews based on open-ended questions, and collected data pertinent to the objective of the research. I used a semistructured interview protocol (Appendix A) to assure the same structure for each participant. Zhou (2013) recommended that researchers use robust data collection methods to ensure validity and reliability.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Researchers can use interview to help generate trustworthy and valid results from collected data (Kallio et al., 2016). A disadvantage of using interviews as a data collection technique is the potential for bias during the planning and analysis phases of

research (Houghton et al., 2013). To mitigate such biases, I used quality assurance processes such as member checking and bracketing to assist in ensuring an accurate representation of participants' views.

I worked toward the data collection phase by contacting select individuals and several organizations to determine the knowledge and availability of each firm. Initially, I contacted potential participants using e-mail to introduce myself and the study. After explaining the research intent through e-mail, I scheduled a phone meeting to discuss the study further. After selecting potential participants, I provided the participants with a demographic survey and consent form. Upon approval of the documents, I scheduled a time and location for each interview. Before each interview, participants received a copy of the questions for review to address potential concerns. As recommended by Bell (2013) and Glover, Jomeen, Urquhart, and Martin (2014), I recorded the interview and used predetermined questions while conducting the interview. During the interview, I applied bracketing and techniques suggested by Hyden (2014), who noted not to include expressions and remarks. While asking follow-up questions, I reemphasized the commitment to maintaining participants' confidentiality and the proprietary nature of the data.

A semistructured interview is beneficial for generating trustworthy and valid results from collected data (Kallio et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers should use semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to collect data (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Semistructured interviews are ideal for gathering data from participants (Anyan, 2013). I used a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix A) to assist in the

interview and research process by providing structure for each interview. In addition to the recording of the interview, public data types that I collected included sample strategic planning documentation and historical and marketing data collected from the organization's website and social media pages. After completing the interview, I followed the recommendations of Tellado, Lopez-Calvo, and Alonso-Olea (2014) and transcribed the data before member checking by sharing my interpretation of the interviews with the participants.

After recording the phone call and downloading the audio file for transcription, I maintained only the better version of any recordings per the protocols outlined for ethical research. Additionally, I took notes from observations, thoughts, and collected documentation. Furthermore, I compared my interviews with findings in the literature review to develop a conclusion based on similarities and differences.

### **Data Organization Technique**

The tool I used for quickly searching through and organizing the collected data was NVivo for Mac, which researchers use to effectively import data, and examine imported data. I used the NVivo software to help organize and analyze collected data. Moreover, I used NVivo for transcribing the recorded interviews. I coded the interviews by using NVivo to help place text into categories (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Pierre & Jackson, 2014). The collected data from the recorded interviews included assigned coding based on the participant, marketing firm, and collection technique. The advantage of using codes is that it enables researchers to organize raw data for understanding a phenomenon (Bell, 2013; Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

I stored data for maintaining integrity of the transcribed interviews, recordings, and backup copies of collected data (Anyan, 2013). I securely retained the data using password-protected folders on encrypted cloud-based servers including Dropbox and iCloud servers while conducting the research. When the research is completed, I will delete the data files from the server including all historical archived copies. As required by the Walden University, I will store all data in the securely encrypted folders for a period of 5 years. After the 5 years, I will delete the files and any archived copies.

### **Data Analysis**

The use of methodological triangulation allows for collecting and comparing findings from multiple types of data (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Triangulation is a method that encourages developing a thorough comprehension of data (Heale & Forbes, 2013). An advantage of using a triangulation approach is that it aids in affirming data and expanding the credibility of research (Carter et al., 2014; Heale & Forbes, 2013). In this qualitative multiple case study, I incorporated methodological triangulation by using multiple types of data including interviews and public records from Internet sources.

Data analysis involves categorizing, testing evidence, determining a conclusion, and analyzing collected data (Yin, 2014). I completed the data analysis of the transcribed interviews and utilized codes to identify recurring themes. Moreover, I analyzed the themes from the interviews and compared the codes with components from the conceptual framework. I used NVivo for assisting in transcribing data from the

interviews. NVivo is a tool for facilitating qualitative research and organizing and analyzing data relating to interviews, open-ended questions, and the Web.

The tool used for searching through the collected data was NVivo for Mac, which researchers use to effectively import and examine data. Goble et al. (2012) and Yin (2014) proposed that researchers use data analysis to prepare and arrange data into codes and themes. Coding data enables researchers to organize text into categories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Pierre & Jackson, 2014). Furthermore, using codes facilitates researchers indexing raw data for understanding a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Pierre & Jackson, 2014). The collected data from the recorded interviews included assigned coding based on the participant number and the distinct marketing firm.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability in semistructured interviews is dependent on protocols for assuring dependability and consistency (Foley & O'Conner, 2013). Demonstrating credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are criteria for assuring validity in qualitative research studies (Kim & Li, 2013). Transferability is when study findings have applicability in other contexts (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Researchers found that there was a connection between dependability and reliability (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014). Dependability occurs when a researcher can follow and duplicate the results of a previous study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Confirmability occurred after demonstrating credibility, transferability, and dependability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

**Reliability**

Reliability is characterized as a method for assuring the credibility, dependability, and consistency of data not comprising of biases or influences (Noble & Smith, 2015). Assuring reliability enables the researcher and participant to cultivate a trusting relationship through rapport building (Kim & Li, 2013). Reliability in semistructured interviews is dependent on protocols for developing validity and dependability (Foley & O’Conner, 2013). Moreover, to sustain consistency, the researcher should demonstrate transparency in the research process (Noble & Smith, 2015).

To assure reliability, I conducted a case study that was transparent and clear by following an interview protocol (see Appendix A). Although my industry involvement with the study had potential setbacks including bias, it was possible to conduct research in a well-documented, unbiased manner. To mitigate such biases, I used strategies such as bracketing and member checking to assist in ensuring an accurate representation of participants’ views (Houghton et al., 2013; O’Reilly & Parker, 2013). Bracketing is a means of putting aside the researcher’s own knowledge and experience to help minimize bias throughout the research process (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). Researchers should use member checking to reduce the probability of unreliable data in a study (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013). The processes of member checking are beneficial for developing trust between researchers and study participants by assuring both reliability and validity (Milosevic et al., 2015).

**Validity**

In qualitative research studies, (a) credibility, (b) transferability, and (c) confirmability are criteria for assuring a study's validity (Kim & Li, 2013).

Transferability is a transfer of knowledge beneficial for future researchers' use and assessment (Yin, 2013). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) recommended that researchers use confirmability to compare results from related studies using similar protocols. I used confirmability to assist in preventing bias.

Research validity includes credibility, authenticity, and trustworthiness (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). As the data collection instrument, I used protocols amid the research and interview process to assure validity (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). To mitigate potential inaccuracies in this research, I used strategies including bracketing and member checking to aid in ensuring an accurate representation of participants' views.

Triangulation is a method that assists in acquiring a thorough understanding of data (Heale & Forbes, 2013). In this qualitative multiple case study, I incorporated methodological triangulation by using multiple data types and member checking to demonstrate data saturation. An advantage of using a triangulation approach was to help marketing managers affirm data and demonstrate the credibility of the study (Carter et al., 2014). To ensure that I adhered to proper triangulation and validity methods, after completing the interview and transcribing the results, I utilized bracketing and member checking for assuring the study's accuracy and validity.

### **Summary and Transition**

Section 2 comprised of describing and justifying the design. Additionally, Section 2 included headings describing the (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) study participants, (d) research methodology and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection, (h) data organization, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity. In Section 3, I provided a presentation of my findings. Section 3 further includes implications for social change, recommendations for action and research, and closes with my reflections stemming from completing the study, and conclusions.



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

In this section, I present research findings in addition to recommendations. I additionally discuss how the research findings relate to the review of literature and the conceptual framework. Section 3 includes (a) an overview of the study, (b) presentation of the findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) summary and conclusions.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore the strategies marketing agency managers employed to utilize consumer reviews to effect marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients. Consumer review knowledge helped marketing managers in the North Texas region develop successful marketing strategies. The selected participants were one marketing manager from each of five marketing agencies. The central research question was: What consumer review strategies do marketing managers use to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients? The inclusion criteria for the study participants interviewed were: (a) be a marketing manager in a marketing agency located in North Texas who demonstrated success in the field of marketing using consumer review strategies, (b) be at least 18 years of age, and (c) be fluent in English.

I collected data from public online records and by using in-depth semistructured qualitative interviews over a 2-week period. Three themes emerged from the interviews, which were: (a) marketing objective, (b) response, and (c) reputation management.

Analysis of the collected data revealed associated strategies marketing managers used to generate marketing success.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

In this section, I describe the material that I amassed from the collection of data to develop a comprehensive perspective of the study. I incorporated methodological triangulation by using multiple types of data including interviews and public records from Internet sources. The largest amount of data collected came from interviewing participants. I utilized strategies such as member checking to assist in concluding an accurate representation of participants' views. I continued member checking until achieving data saturation. The collected data addressed the overarching research question: What consumer review strategies do marketing managers use to improve marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients?

I identified three themes by coding the collected data from the public records and interview transcripts. The collection of public records enabled me to analyze and compare the interviews with information found on the participants' companies' websites and social media accounts. I coded the collected data by using NVivo to help identify reoccurring themes (Fielding, Fielding, & Hughes, 2013). Three common themes emerged from the research: (a) marketing objective, (b) response, and (c) reputation management. After identifying the themes, I analyzed the findings in relation to those themes using methodological triangulation, and member checking. I extended knowledge by comparing the findings with published literature. Additionally, I compared and examined the findings to, and within the context of, the conceptual framework.

## **Themes**

I identified three themes that emerged from the interview transcripts and the other data sources. The first theme, marketing objective, included statements regarding the marketing objectives and goals of businesses. The second theme, response, composed of statements regarding how businesses should respond to consumer reviews. The final theme, reputation management, stemmed from the participants' views on how to monitor and manage the effects of consumer reviews.

### **Theme 1: Marketing Objective**

The marketing objective theme relates to the central research question by confirming that the agency and business have an objective or business goal that relates to using marketing strategies to generate marketing success. Marketing agencies that have an objective to enhance brand awareness and profitability for their clients can use consumer reviews to help reach that goal. From interviewing marketing agency managers, I discovered that consumer review management was not a primary service offered by the agencies, with only two participants (40%) noting review management as a direct service provided, while other agencies combined the service within a comprehensive reputation management package.

Businesses typically select a marketing agency based on the services offered by the agency. Researchers recommend using consumer feedback to develop business and consumer relationships (Alameddine, 2013; Bloching, Hennig-Thurau, & Hofacker, 2013). As the agency and business client partner in a relationship, the agency must align its objective with the objective of the business client. Participant 5 stated the objectives of

its agency clients were mainly lead generation, brand awareness, and sales increases. The goal of Participant 3's agency was to administer digital marketing and strategy services to clients. Participant 3's agency worked in the areas of improving brand awareness and helping clients minimize business risks. Participant 1's agency offered digital marketing services, web branding, and optimization. Participant 1 noted that his agency had an objective of improving clients' visibility online and increasing sales and return on investment. Participant 2 worked for an agency which offered digital and traditional advertising and marketing that encompassed television commercials, billboards, online advertising, paid display, public relations, website development, and social media development.

Consumer engagement is critical for business managers seeking to develop brand awareness and increase sales (Colleoni, 2013). In an interview with Participant 2 and Participant 3, the marketing managers agreed that the effect of consumer reviews on marketing success depended on the marketing goals and objectives of the marketing strategy. According to Participant 3, negative consumer reviews affected small businesses significantly more than larger businesses. Consequently, depending upon business size, consumer reviews did not always have a significant influence on a business's profitability. Reviews, whether positive or negative, do not have a significant influence on consumers familiar with a business (Del Rio-Lanza, Suárez-Álvarez, & Vázquez-Casielles, 2013). Participant 4 stated that the goal of their agency was to generate leads and increase sales for their clients, and the effect of consumer reviews is minimal in marketing, similar to a tree in the forest. A review *alone* is not going to gain or lose new

business for a client, but can help to sway a potential consumer to make a decision either positive or negative. Participant 4 added that consumer reviews did not prevent the marketing agency from successfully developing marketing strategies or moving forward on projects.

Engaging with consumers is a strategy recommended by marketing agencies to create a competitive advantage by building relationships with consumers (Algharabat, Alhammad, Al-Hyari, Alnsour, & Al-Weshah, 2013). If the objective of the business is customer acquisition, retention, or brand awareness, then consumer reviews can affect the marketing strategy development. Participant 3 explained that integrating or influencing consumer reviews was not a high priority when considering the complete marketing strategy.

The advancement of the Internet and social media link to disruptive innovation theory by interrupting traditional marketing methods used prior to the Internet (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). Because of social media, consumer feedback and reviews can quickly reach a broad audience and have an immediate effect on the success of business marketing efforts. Due to the popularity of the Internet, marketing managers have the ability to analyze and predict consumer behaviors by using social networks and reviewing websites (Alameddine, 2013). However, according to Participant 3, the effect of consumer reviews is not as significant as it once was, and business managers should not place a priority on gaining consumer feedback or reviews to help grow their business. Businesses and marketing agencies should spend marketing dollars wisely, so gaining

more reviews is not as important as generating brand awareness through other reliable methods of marketing.

Participant 2 stated that clients had unique marketing objectives determined by the clients' needs. The marketing agency recommended goals that were most appropriate for the client based on the client's objectives. Marketing managers typically analyze consumer feedback and reviews on social networking sites to help strengthen relationships with consumers rather than focus business objectives on generating immediate revenue (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). Participant 4 expressed that reviews were only meaningful for strategy implementation if there were consumer concerns or if the reviews were negative. Otherwise, Participant 4's agency did not consider reviews to be a significant influence in developing marketing strategies.

Marketing strategies should focus on relationship building with consumers to better develop successful strategies for increasing consumer loyalty and sales (Colvin, 2013). An agency is not effectively accomplishing its marketing objective if a client is receiving a significant amount of negative reviews (Participant 5). If the success of a client's business declines, that affects the agency's objective, which could cause the agency to lose the client considering the negative reviews may hinder the client's ability to pay their marketing expenses (Participant 5).

The findings of this study are consistent with data found in the literature review in concluding that consumer feedback and reviews have a significant effect on marketing strategies and business success (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Internet and technology created a marketing shift where consumer reviews have a significant influence on the

development and success of businesses (Bacile, Swilley, & Ye, 2014). While the study participants agreed that the effect of consumer reviews on marketing success depended on the marketing goals and objectives of the marketing strategy (Participant 2 & Participant 3), they also expressed that increasing sales was the major objective of their clients. The objective of the clients aligned with the published literature, which demonstrated that the importance of consumer reviews was to increase consumer loyalty and sales (Alameddine, 2013). Brand loyalty and customer satisfaction are forefronts for marketing success through the use of consumer reviews (Barger & Labrecque, 2013).

### **Theme 2: Response**

The second theme stemming from the analysis of study data was how the businesses' marketing plans addressed responding to consumers' reviews. Organizational theory assists in comprehending how businesses can engage with consumers through marketing (Yu & Hang, 2010). Organizational theory can be useful for marketing managers seeking to enhance marketing efforts and productivity by better comprehending consumers. With the popularity of social media and the Internet, consumers have high expectations for businesses to engage and respond quickly to questions and complaints (Labrecque, 2014). The marketing objective is always to leave consumers with a positive feeling about the business and the services provided (Participant 1). It is necessary to know how to engage with consumers to influence positive feedback and relationships (Participant 1). The response by Participant 1 was consistent with published literature. Developing effective correspondence was foremost to accomplishing brand loyalty, which supported the development of positive relationships with consumers and

businesses (Viio & Grönroos, 2014). Consumers use social networks to post reviews, and they expect businesses to respond to their concerns (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014). Participant 5 recommended that marketing strategies outline a response plan to counter potential negative reviews. Being prepared and having the ability to identify problems before they affect the marketing objective is critical to marketing success (Participant 5).

Participant 4 stated that its agency worked as a team to monitor and respond to consumer reviews. To monitor consumer reviews, Participant 5 noted that its agency maintained internal and external support staff for identifying consumer reviews. As agency employees and clients monitored negative consumer reviews, the agency worked through the conflict with the client, and in some cases the reviewer to address concerns. Participant 5 further stated that the agency prioritized addressing negative reviews to prevent the negativity from expanding across social networks.

When responding to consumer reviews, the objective of the business managers should concentrate on making certain the message is positive, the matter is resolved, and the consumer is satisfied with the outcome (Boo & Kim, 2013; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013; Xia, 2013). According to Participant 2, considering most consumer reviews are on digital media networks, the individual responsible for responding to customer reviews should have cognitive writing skills and a good compass for creating appropriate responses. Researchers found that 72% of consumers wrote negative reviews with the expectation that businesses would respond and take responsibility (Gurău, 2012). According to Participant 3, empathy, compassion, and having the ability to relate are the primary characteristics needed of an effective review responder. Participant 2 believed



that responses should be prepared in advance to prevent the client or agency from scrambling for a response at the last minute. The team of responders who should help prepare the proper responses includes the customer service department, social media managers, and public relations employees.

Consumers use business responses as a method for better understanding businesses (Xia, 2013). How to respond to a review is dependent on the type of review received (Participant 1). If the response is negative, in addition to replying, the responder could communicate with the reviewer via phone or e-mail to quickly resolve the issue. Participant 2 stated the best course of action was to respond tactfully and in a timely manner and then work with the business client to prevent future problems or concerns from occurring. When a consumer writes a review, businesses should respond promptly with a quality resolution to the consumer's concern (Gurău, 2012). Businesses should respond promptly to negative reviews to prevent consumers from posting the review elsewhere and sharing it with other consumers (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). In addition to empathy, compassion, and problem solving, Participant 3 noted that the responder should have the ability to investigate and satisfy the consumer's issues. Participant 5 recommended using platforms to monitor and engage with reviewers.

### **Theme 3: Reputation Management**

Reputation management relates to the central research question by identifying methods business managers can use to engage with consumers, which could affect the business's reputation and marketing success. Gaining positive consumer reviews for businesses is critical for marketing success. Reputation managers have the responsibility

of responding to negative consumer reviews (Gensler, Völckner, Wiertz, & Yuping, 2013). To generate marketing success, reputation management is necessary to develop positive brand reputation, which can enhance sales (Participant 4). Participant 5 offered various strategies when handling reputation management, which included a moderated review widget that their agency installed on all client websites that enabled consumers to leave reviews and feedback.

The development of the Internet aligns with disruptive innovation theory, where the Internet disrupted traditional marketing and communication methods previously used by businesses to connect with consumers. With the disruption of the Internet and social media, consumer feedback and reviews have the ability to reach a broad audience and have an immediate impact on the success of business marketing efforts (Song et al., 2014). The Internet has provided businesses and consumers an opportunity to instantly communicate, which is beneficial for organizations seeking to increase brand awareness and improve customer support (Gensler, Völckner, Wiertz, & Yuping, 2013). Marketing managers cannot control consumer reviews or where or when consumers write them. Consequently, it is imperative that marketers continually monitor and manage their social networks (Henke, 2013). In maintaining the reputation of its clients, Participant 5's agency created an automated system to e-mail the reviewer and request that they post the review on other social media networks, which could help expand the size of the population's exposure to positive reviews. The posted opinions of consumers on social media and how businesses connect with those consumers can aid in generating brand awareness and marketing success (Participant 4).

When managing the reputation of brands, the individual responsible should understand how to finesse and empathize with reviewers (Participant 1), which is an organizational theory strategy. Historical data show that consumer reviews have always played a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions (Participant 5). Benefits of consumer reviews include the ability to gain insights into consumers' perceptions and behaviors. Participant 1 agreed that the most important aspect of reviews was receiving the opinion and feedback of the consumer whether positive or negative. Participant 5 referred to consumer reviews as *one leg on a three-legged bar stool*, where all the legs were essential in generating marketing success. By combining consumers' insights and knowledge with other marketing methods, businesses could achieve marketing success.

In response to determining the management of consumer reviews, Participant 2 suggested not ignoring the opinions of consumers, which aligned with current literature which found that businesses should never leave positive or negative consumer reviews unanswered (Canhoto & Kietzmann, 2013). Reviews are free pathways for gaining insights into consumers' perspectives compared to incentives, surveys, and focus groups (Participant 2). Researchers have reported that unlike positive reviews, negative reviews had a greater likelihood of generating negative emotions and business perceptions (Boo & Kim, 2013; del Río-Lanza, 2013). Reputation managers should have crisis management training for comprehending the proper steps for knowing how to de-escalate emotional situations that drive to the heart of the consumer's issues without the manager being emotionally invested (Participant 5). No matter the ranking or quality of the review, the manager should listen to the concerns of the reviewer, address the issues, and

prevent consumer dissatisfaction from happening in the future (Participant 2 & Participant 4). When consumers write reviews, particularly negative reviews, they expect a response from the business that they are reviewing (Bacilli, Hoffacker, & White, 2014; Bacile, Swilley, & Ye, 2014). Acknowledging consumer reviews could benefit the marketing strategy by gaining insights into unforeseen problems within the company (Participant 4).

**Review credibility.** Review credibility is important, particularly in situations where reviews are clearly untrue (Participant 1). Determining review credibility relates to the central research question by evaluating whether the notoriety of the reviewer or authenticity of the reviewer's content influenced the review's value. Knowing which platform on which consumers prefer to express their views is essential for monitoring reviews (Participant 5). There are specific review sites for every industry, and the agency and client must determine the value of the review based on the credibility of the reviewer and the location of the review (Participant 5).

The Internet has provided consumers an easy means of communicating and sharing experiences with products, services, and businesses (Bacile, Swilley, & Ye, 2014). When a consumer posts a review, there are three groups affected: the consumer, the sharer, and the subscribers of the consumer and sharer (Rui, Shi, & Whinston, 2014). Participant 3 stated that consumer reviews were not as influential as they were a few years ago, and consumers were now more likely to ask and seek the opinion of friends, family, and groups that they follow rather than those of strangers.

Consumers are aware of *artificial* reviews, and according to Participant 3 and Participant 5, business managers frequently try to catalyze positive reviews. Additionally, review platforms including Yelp are influencing and authorizing unauthenticated reviews, which was a concern of all study participants. Determining the credibility and affects of review platforms aligned with current literature, which suggested that manipulated reviews on review websites could unduly damage the reputation of businesses (Heydari, ali Tavakoli, Salim, & Heydari, 2015). The Yelp platform contains an algorithm that automatically determines which reviews are “most useful” without actually authenticating the reviews (Participant 5). Yelp has no verification process as to whether the reviewer participated in any transaction with the business, which enables fraudulent reviews by Yelp users and business competitors (Participant 4 & Participant 5).

Participant 2 stated that its agency did not actively manage reviews for its clients. Additionally, the agency did not influence positive reviews because it believes in respecting and trusting the integrity of consumer reviews. Participant 4 noted that many of their clients did not see value in asking consumers for reviews. Consumer reviews on social networks affect unknown numbers of followers and individuals (Boo & Kim, 2013). Participant 5’s agency used an automated system where businesses could upload a list of their clientele and have an e-mail sent to the recipients. The goal of the e-mail was to encourage and incentivize past consumers to leave reviews. The method employed by Participant 5's agency directly contrasted with practices used by Participant 4, who noted that the objective of their marketing agency was not to influence clients’ reviews through promotional methods.

**Influencer marketing.** Consumer feedback and reviews are influential and can affect how consumers engage with businesses (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2013). The influence of a review is dependent on the value the review reader places on the individual posting the review (Participant 3). Potential consumers can use consumer reviews to prequalify businesses by gaining insights into business ethics, products, and services offered (Participant 5). For reviews to be influential, the review must be honest, credible, and written by actual consumers and not the business's marketing department (del Rio-Lanza, Suárez-Álvarez, & Vázquez-Casielles, 2013). However, the effect of Influencer marketing is ending as consumers have come to realize that businesses can affect the selection of reviews as a marketing tactic (Participant 3).

**Marketing automation.** Some businesses and marketing agencies use software and automated systems to manage brand reputation and responses to consumer reviews (Labrecque, 2014). Businesses use automated software for responding to consumer reviews on social networks using a technology that deciphers human text and provides a response to the reviewer (Labrecque, 2014). Technology has significant benefits for enhancing business and consumer relationships. However, consumers do not prefer automated responses because it makes consumers feel that the issue was not resolved satisfactorily (Labrecque, 2014).

**Negative reviews.** Responding effectively to consumer reviews can influence consumers' perceptions of the business, which can increase consumer loyalty and sales (Colvin, 2013). Participant 2 stated that their agency placed a priority on responding to reviews that were negative. However, negative reviews were not a primary driver for

whether the marketing objective was accomplished (Participant 2). Negative reviews create potential communication issues between the business and the reviewer, and the business manager should use those reviews to resolve communication issues (Participant 2). In evaluating the effect of consumer reviews, Participant 4 referenced an instance where negative reviews caused the agency to recommend a business client change their business name. The number of negative reviews was so extensive that the agency believed rebranding and restructuring the business was the best solution, which demonstrated the potential extent to which consumer reviews can affect a business's success.

Marketing managers should prioritize negative reviews, consumer feedback, and consumer sentiment when seeking to develop a successful marketing strategy (Participant 5). Consumer reviews can significantly influence potential consumers of a company (del Rio-Lanza et al., 2013). When negative reviews spread to potential consumers, a business's reputation can be negatively affected (Boo & Kim, 2013). From an overall brand perspective, negative reviewers could hinder brand awareness by creating consumer doubt, which can decrease leads and referrals (Participant 5).

**Monitoring reviews.** Researchers use organizational theory to identify how businesses can prevent and solve problems to increase efficiency and productivity. The findings from this study aligned with organizational theory since the data confirmed consumer reviews helped identify marketing problems that affected organizational success. Consumer reviews often cause negative effects on the efficiency and

productivity of organizations. Communication and consumers' perceptions play a key role in influencing corporate practice and organizational efficiency (Chess, 2001).

Monitoring social networks for consumer reviews enables businesses to develop consumer relationships, which can enhance the business's reputation and value (Bruce & Solomon, 2013). Participant 4 and Participant 5 agreed there was a need to regularly monitor networks that promoted reviews. Consumer reviews can require an immediate need to respond, particularly when working toward preventing negative reviews from influencing potential consumers (Participant 2). Considering the potential effects of consumer reviews, the agencies of Participant 2 and Participant 5 offered services for monitoring social media networks for reviews.

To monitor and identify consumer reviews, Participant 5's agency used a review monitoring tool that enabled the agency to acknowledge positive reviewers and perform conflict resolution for negative reviews. When a consumer writes and posts a review, the review has the possibility to spread to a larger audience (Bacile, Hoffacker, & White, 2014). Participant 2 stated that there were services including Bazaar Voice and Yelp that helped with monitoring consumer reviews. Business managers should use review monitoring tools when appropriate for handling crisis management, which can include conflict resolution for negative reviews or other tools for sharing positive reviews (Participant 5).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The findings stemmed from this study could offer marketing managers strategies that could help better engage with consumers through the use of consumer reviews.



Marketing managers can benefit from this study by increasing their knowledge and effectiveness in consumer engagement and understanding of consumer reviews. The findings of this study could provide marketing managers with successful concepts to use when developing business marketing strategies containing consumer reviews. Marketing managers and consultants, particularly those within the online and advertising industry, can benefit from research related to this study by generating marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for clients by providing insights for understanding and managing consumer behavior and opinion.

The participants' responses in this study lead to the following recommendations for marketing managers seeking to utilize consumer reviews to affect marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients: (a) continually monitor and respond to consumer reviews, (b) focus on relationship building with consumers, (c) when responding to reviews, ensure that the message is positive, the matter is resolved, and the customer is satisfied with the results, (d) work with business leaders to prepare messages in advance to ensure appropriate responses, and (e) use consumer reviews to resolve organizational issues and develop relationships.

### **Implications for Social Change**

In alignment with disruptive innovation theory and organizational theory, reflecting on the findings from this study can enable businesses to identify market trends by providing insights into current methods for solving marketing problems and improving marketing efficiency and productivity by better comprehending and using consumer reviews. By developing successful consumer review strategies and increasing

profitability, businesses can positively affect beneficial societal and community change by generating more jobs, enhancing communities, and benefiting the local economy. A vibrant economy could enhance the standard of living of residents.

Relationships with consumers are essential for businesses that desire to improve sales and create or maintain a positive brand reputation (Dwesar & Rao, 2014). The findings and recommendations from this study could also contribute to social change by identifying potential opportunities or problem areas and help businesses and consumers build better relationships. Positive relationships with consumers are essential for businesses that desire to improve sales and create or maintain a positive brand reputation (Dwesar & Rao, 2014). The findings of this study can also contribute to social change by demonstrating the need for marketing agencies to identify and address marketing trends and technology for improving the methods by which consumers communicate with businesses and followers.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to explore the strategies marketing agency managers employed to utilize consumer reviews to generate marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients. Business managers should concentrate on comprehending consumer behavior processes by adequately engaging with consumers (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015). Considering the influence of consumer reviews on business development and profitability, marketing managers should fully comprehend how to capitalize from feedback and reviews expressed by consumers (Cui et al., 2012).

In situations where consumer reviews are important, marketing managers should monitor review networks, effectively respond and resolve consumer concerns, and prevent future problems or concerns from occurring. Considering the potential effects of the Internet and social media, marketing managers should develop marketing strategies that address consumers' expectations and needs. Also, marketing strategies should define and evaluate methods for communicating with consumers and responding to consumer concerns. By focusing on customer satisfaction, businesses can enhance relationships with consumers, which positively affect brand awareness, profitability, and marketing success.

I intend to use the findings of this research in my businesses, including addressing the strategies for the development for my clients. Additionally, I intend to use this data as a business consultant in developing training materials and content relating to addressing consumers' behaviors and insights.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Vernon-Dotson (2013) defined limitations as implied vulnerabilities and circumstances out of the researcher's control. The primary limitations of this study included the population size of case participants. I had not considered the viewpoint of the director of operations, sales manager, or employees who are responsible for corresponding directly with consumers. Furthermore, the geographical area was limited to the North Texas area. Additional limitations included the data collection method of using public records and conducting interviews with marketing managers. To address the limitations of this study, future researchers should conduct a study on a larger

geographical area and compare the data collected from this study. Additional research should address how businesses can have negative reviews removed. Furthermore, I recommend conducting a quantitative design to determine the extent to which customers with negative experiences are likely to purchase again from the company.

The data collected for this study contribute to existing literature of consumer related feedback and reviews in the field of marketing. While there is literature of consumer reviews, no extensive literature exists regarding the integration of consumer reviews in business marketing strategies. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this study will contribute to the existing literature through addressing the impact that consumer reviews have on developing successful marketing strategies that can help generate marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability. Chuang, Lin, and Wu (2014), De Maeyer (2012), and Wang (2014) conducted comparable studies concerning consumer reviews and business development. This qualitative multiple case study provides additional perspectives on the existing literature. Once in ProQuest, the data from this study may likewise help other student researchers.

### **Reflections**

I found the doctoral study process challenging in addition to exciting and rewarding. As a business consultant, I had a previous interest in consumers based on my beliefs and experience, which has shown that the opinion of consumers was critical to generating marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability. My findings from this study demonstrated the significance of consumer perceptions and why maintaining a

positive relationship with consumers is important for businesses' growth and profitability.

Prior to conducting the research, my objective was to find ways in which marketers could use the opinion of consumers to develop successful methods for enhancing a brand's reputation and generating revenue. I had believed that the opinion of consumers was critical to marketing success. After conducting the research, I concluded that consumer reviews are important, but the reviews' level of importance is dependent on specific marketing objectives. Consumer reviews are most important when the objective of the marketing strategy is to increase customer acquisition, retention, and brand reputation.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this multicase study was to explore the strategies marketing agency managers employed to utilize consumer reviews to affect marketing success, brand awareness, and profitability for their clients. The study consisted of data collected from public online records and semistructured telephone interviews with marketing agency managers. The results stemming from the data revealed the potential importance and relevance of integrating consumer feedback for developing successful marketing strategies.

Thematic analysis of the collected data revealed that successful marketing managers (a) monitored social media and review networks, (b) responded to and resolved consumer concerns, and (c) prevented future problems or concerns from occurring. The results of the study not only identified the importance of consumer reviews to businesses,

but also the potential importance of using consumer reviews to build business and consumer relationships.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. Contact participant(s) via e-mail or phone.
2. Explain research intent to the participant(s) to evaluate knowledge and qualifications.
3. Schedule meeting with the participant(s) to discuss interest to participate.
4. Conduct demographic survey interview.
5. Schedule interview time and location.
6. Use recording device to record the interview.
7. Conduct interview using interview questions.
8. Conclude interview with follow-up and additional question(s).
9. Reemphasize privacy summary.