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CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IMPLEMENTING  
MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

by

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in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for University Honors Scholars

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## ABSTRACT

Small businesses are crucial components for not only the US economy but for economies around the world. Many of the firms struggle to stay in business and do not perform effectively and profitably, especially in the marketing aspects of business. The marketing strategies that larger organizations use do not necessarily work the best for small businesses. Therefore, small businesses are mostly conducting basic marketing principles by practicing customer relationship management (CRM). However, many of them are not unlocking their full potential by utilizing the Internet, E-mail, database software, and other marketing technologies. Thus, this paper offers research evidence to provide help with small businesses planning on implementing those marketing technologies. A quantitative online survey approach was chosen and distributed to 300 small businesses in the Polk County, Florida area. This study found seven distinct considerations that work together to provide insight into the implementation process for those small businesses. The findings of the research also lead to the creation of a model using these considerations that encompass the benefits, obstacles, and other aspects of the implementation of marketing technology. Findings show that even though small businesses recognize the benefits of implementing marketing technology, they are hesitant because of the obstacles they may face, and the lack of marketing knowledge needed to plan the implementation process strategically.

**Keywords:** Small Business, Marketing, E-Marketing, Marketing Technology

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# CONSIDERATIONS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IMPLEMENTING MARKETING TECHNOLOGY

## Introduction

Small businesses are the very backbone of this country. In the U.S., 86 percent of businesses employ no more than 20 employees, and 80 percent have sales of less than \$1 million per year. According to the United States Small Business Profile given by the Small Business Administration, over 99 percent of businesses that employ workers were considered small businesses in 2014. The profile also shows that small businesses employed about half of the nation's private workforce in 2012. On average, 50 percent of small businesses close within the first five years (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012). Two of the major factors behind this are inadequate marketing, or poorly focused and executed marketing (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012).

Marketing has had a strong impact on business and the very way that companies go about conducting their own. In the industrial era, businesses were solely focused on turning a profit. As new businesses emerged, they started recognizing customers had more choices when deciding on products and services, so businesses began focusing on earning customers' trust and loyalty. The focus on customers over profits was the start of modern marketing. Over the years, there have been significant advances in the way businesses implement marketing strategies, and with the latest marketing technological advances, marketing has become far more efficient and beneficial. In this paper, the term marketing technology is used to identify a type of software; platform; database; social media presence; the internet or other advancements in technology that add to marketing. Electronic-Marketing (E-Marketing) is changing traditional marketing. Marketing is shifting from concentrating on face-to-face interactions to creating and maintaining relationships through online interactions. This fact is evident in Kalyanam and McIntyre's (2002) "e-

marketing mix” where they add several new focuses based on the internet to the original 4 Ps of marketing. This “e-marketing mix” is discussed later in this paper.

If a business is not taking advantage of marketing technology, it is not giving customers value-added services and is not competing to its full ability (Ab Hamid & Kassim, 2004). The benefits of using marketing technologies are significant and include things such as maintaining and more importantly, improving customer relationship management (CRM) (Ansari & Mela, 2003; Zontanos & Anderson, 2004) and customizing advertisements to specific customers and their needs (Ansari & Mela, 2003). While large companies can quickly take advantage of the latest marketing technologies, small businesses typically do not (Alford & Page, 2015). Small businesses face different obstacles than larger companies when it comes to marketing. The first hindrance to strategic marketing is funding (Alford & Page, 2015; Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; Zontanos & Anderson, 2004). Another major obstacle for small businesses is that the owner/manager is typically solely responsible for planning and implementing a marketing strategy (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012). Cronin-Gilmore says that the problem with this is that most owner/managers lack the knowledge and experience to choose a marketing plan that fits the business (2012).

While the inclusion of the Internet, marketing technologies, and E-Marketing is easier for larger corporations, small businesses struggle with implementing these new techniques and strategies. Even though the understanding of marketing strategies’ and marketing technologies’ benefits are evident to small business owner/managers, the cost and risk of implementing these strategies hold back many small businesses from doing so (Alford & Page, 2015). Small businesses may be more fruitful and competitive if they better allocated their resources to use marketing and marketing technologies strategically.

This thesis will objectively examine small businesses' adoption of marketing technology and E-Marketing and identify underlying factors to determine why and how those businesses do or do not utilize these features. These factors range from the benefits from implementing E-Marketing to how small businesses communicate with their customers and how small businesses manage their customer information. This paper also focuses on ways that small businesses should carry out their E-Marketing activities in order to improve their competitiveness and is structured as follows. First, a literature review of relevant topics such as small business marketing, CRM, and E-Marketing. Next, the methodology of the survey conducted is laid out. Then, the statistical results and findings of the survey are presented and discussed. Finally, the practical implications of this study are discussed to show how this study contributes to the theory and practice of small business marketing.



## Literature Review

Many studies have been conducted to find how businesses are implementing marketing technologies, and how these marketing technologies are changing the businesses' marketing strategies (Ab Hamid & Kassim, 2004; Alford & Page, 2015; Ansari & Mela, 2003; Capon & Glazer, 1987; Kalyanam & McIntyre, 2002). Some even focus on how small businesses approach their marketing strategies and the adoption of marketing technology into those strategies (Alford & Page, 2015; Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003; Simpson, Tuck, & Bellamy, 2004; Zontanos & Anderson, 2004). The themes identified in this literature review will examine small businesses' approach to marketing, how E-Marketing and marketing technology is reshaping traditional marketing, along with the factors of small businesses implementing marketing technologies and their benefits reaped and obstacles faced.

### Small Business Overview

In 2014, there were almost 28.5 million small businesses (defined as organizations that meet the small business requirements of the United States government) in the United States (Small Business Administration). This number accounts for 99.7% of all employers nationally and in 2012 small businesses employed about half of the nation's workforce (Small Business Administration). Tagliavini, Ravarini, & Antonelli (2001) found that small businesses are the fastest growing segment of almost all economies in the world, and compared to larger companies; they seem to be more entrepreneurial regarding strategy and structure. Therefore, their roles in not only the US economy but also around the world, cannot be taken too lightly (Street & Meister, 2004). Nor can the differences between larger and smaller companies, especially when it comes to their marketing approaches.

Small business owners and managers experience different opportunities and constraints than the decision makers of larger companies (Hills & LaForge, 1992; Hunter, 2004; Xu, Rohatgi, & Duan, 2007). These constraints include their lack of resources (time, money, human resources, etc.), expertise, customer and environmental impact (Tynan, 1995). Therefore, most small businesses suffer from tactical and strategic customer-related problems (Harrigan, Ramsey, & Ibbotson 2011; O'Dwyer, Gilmore, & Carson, 2007). Problems they can't easily solve due to being limited to solutions because of financial resources and expertise, which reduces their growth potential and overall profitability (Tynan., 1995; Doole, Grimes, & Demack, 2006; O'Dwyer et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2007).

The main difference regarding expertise between small and large businesses is that those large firms benefit from having a team of specialists in the fundamental aspects of business, while small businesses are usually limited to the knowledge of the owner/manager (Tynan, 1995; Doole et al., 2006). More specifically, the marketing function tends not to be well developed and in most cases altogether ignored (Walsh & Lipinski, 2009). Another aspect larger companies tend to maintain better control over is their external environment, which helps them adapt to their customer base and combat their competition (Carson & Gilmore 2000; Kocak & Abimbola, 2009). There are benefits to being a smaller company, however. Smaller companies tend to have better employee loyalty, customer closeness, strategic flexibility, opportunistic response time, and being able to figure out information about their markets (Hills, Hultman, & Miles, 2008; Kocak & Abimbola, 2009; O'Dwyer et al., 2009; Pinho, 2007).

### CRM for Small Businesses

Customer Relationship Management is often put into the relationship school of thought for marketing. Relationship-focused marketing encompasses every relationship with employees,

government agencies, distributors, suppliers, customers, and any other internal or external stakeholders, while CRM is solely focused on customer relationships (Harrigan et al., 2011). The benefits of CRM to increase customer loyalty, brand awareness, and overall profitability has been widely recognized for larger organizations by many researchers (Harrigan et al., 2011; Zontanos & Anderson, 2004). The large firms are using this information to their benefit. This is evident because of how many of them have started utilizing teams and software dedicated solely to CRM by building and maintaining customer relationships (Coltman, 2007).

However, there is dramatically less research done for CRM in small businesses. Small businesses tend to be mainly characterized by, and build their business from, their relationships with customers (Harrigan et al., 2011). A major ability they have is to be more agile and adaptable when it comes to customer relationships compared to larger companies (Harrigan et al., 2011; Ritchie & Brindley, 2005; Stokes, 2000). This CRM ability is seen as a key marketing strength that allows small businesses to compete with their larger counterparts and is one of the most important aspects of their business that small companies need to focus on (Harrigan et al., 2011; Ritchie & Brindley, 2005; Stokes, 2000). Small businesses mostly carry out CRM through face-to-face methods, which can be costly and very labor-intensive (Gilmore, Carson, & Rocks, 2006; Harrigan et al., 2011; Ritchie & Brindley, 2005).

An even smaller amount of research is being done on how small businesses should implement and utilize E-Marketing to improve their CRM attempts. A major issue is that while small business owners/managers' marketing efforts resemble CRM and relationship marketing, those same owners/managers don't understand what they're doing or how their efforts fall into the marketing concept (Harrigan et al., 2011; Zontanos & Anderson, 2004). Unlike the larger companies, small businesses don't fully carry out formal CRM methods (Hills et al., 2008).

Larger companies have the advantage of utilizing marketing programs, software, and other technologies to empower their CRM, whereas smaller firms carry out more limited, simpler activities such as maintaining social media accounts, e-mail correspondence, and some basic data mining (Harrigan et al., 2011; Wilson, Daniel, & Davies, 2008). Small companies tend not to commit major resources to conduct CRM methods similar to that of larger firms, partially because they aren't sure of the advantages CRM brings to companies (Cooper, Upton, & Seaman, 2005). Harrigan et al. (2011) describe this "paradox" of limited CRM activities being conducted as something small businesses do intuitively but are not able to label its actual worth to their business. An interesting find by Cooper et al. (2005) is that even though the small businesses' CRM activities are different than the ones used by larger firms, they aren't necessarily any less productive or profitable. In summation, while small businesses are doing some CRM, they won't fully commit and invest the resources needed to reap the full benefits of CRM

#### Owner/Manager Effect on Small Business Marketing

Small businesses are more likely to use a marketing strategy and adopt marketing technologies into the businesses' marketing strategies if the owner/manager has a positive attitude towards marketing and the proper knowledge of how to do so (Alford & Page, 2015; McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003). The level of entrepreneurial direction of the primary decision-makers of a firm is the most influential in determining the strategic approach to marketing strategies (Alford & Page, 2015). McCartan-Quinn & Carson (2003) found that the owner/manager usually has limited or no knowledge about marketing strategies and how to utilize them. Most of the time, even with their lack of knowledge, owner/managers are the only basis of their business's marketing plan. The biggest problem in small business marketing is that

the owner/managers have knowledge of the product or service that they are offering to customers. However, they do not fully understand marketing concepts and struggle with incorporating a strategic marketing plan and other elements necessary to reach the most people that would be interested in their product or service (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012). Typically, small business owner/manager's marketing knowledge, or lack thereof, is the extent of the capability of the firm's entire marketing effort.

The researchers, Simpson et al. (2004) and Slater and Olson (2001), conducted an interesting study where they performed a survey of business owners and divided the owners into different subgroups, describing how much they know about marketing strategy and what drives them in decision-making. Some of the forces behind the owners'/managers' decision-making are the capability for growth, profitability, and teamwork (Simpson et al. 2004), while others are maintaining close relationships with customers and providing a high-quality product or service. Slater and Olson (2001) found that these driving forces are the main ones small businesses use when choosing a strategy.

## E-Marketing

The most basic ideology of marketing is the 4 P's: product, price, promotion, and place (Kalyanam & McIntyre, 2002). Kalyanam and McIntyre (2002) identify how the introduction of the internet has reshaped the idea of the basic 4 P's into what they call the "e-marketing mix." Their e-marketing mix includes the 4 P's but adds personalization, privacy, customer service, community, site, security, and sales promotion (2002). The addition of these other focuses better optimizes an approach for a company wanting to implement E-marketing and marketing technologies. These marketing technologies offer many benefits for small businesses, but their owners/managers face many obstacles in trying to implement these into their marketing strategy.

## CRM to E-CRM

Harrigan et al. (2011) ask the question, “if small businesses intuitively follow relationship marketing and CRM principles, what potential is there for technology to facilitate this process?” There is plenty of evidence in current research that reveals how much firms can benefit from implementing marketing technology in their CRM activities and that traditional CRM can barely compete with the capabilities of electronic CRM or E-CRM (Pan & Lee, 2003). E-CRM is CRM with the use of technology (Ortega, Martinez, & De Hoyos, 2008). A more in-depth definition of E-CRM is given by Lee-Kelley, Gilbert, and Mannicom (2003)

e-CRM refers to the marketing activities, tools, and techniques, delivered over the Internet (using technologies such as Web sites and e-mail, data-capture, warehousing and mining) with a specific aim to locate, build and improve long-term customer relationships to enhance their individual potential (p. 241).

By helping businesses improve their marketing direction and strategy, and customer focus; e-CRM can be a critical performance booster for small businesses (Dibrell, Davis, & Craig, 2008; Harrigan et al., 2011). E-CRM can also help increase sales, provide cost savings in marketing activities, enhance customer service, improve customer loyalty, help with customization and personalization, and also help businesses have better market awareness (Ab Hamid & Kassim, 2004; Harrigan et al., 2011; Teng, Soo, & Poon, 2007). The cause of these benefits can be broken down into two primary strategic uses for e-CRM in all businesses, not just small.

### Customer Communication using Marketing Technologies

One of the principal purposes of e-CRM is to create better communication with customers. Better communication with customers is at the heart of marketing and can be

separated into three types, constant, informal, and open; all with the purpose of creating a value-added relationship (Gilmore et al., 2006). Most of these communications for small businesses tend to lean towards face-to-face interactions (Gilmore & Carson 1999). Therefore, customer communication for small firms is pretty different from customer communication for large companies. That being said, marketing technology can significantly improve these communication efforts (Tan, Yen, & Fang, 2002). These marketing technologies include E-mail, websites, social media, and any other form of communication done using the internet (Geiger & Martin, 1999 Tan et al., 2002). Ansari and Mela (2003) created a model that shows the benefit of using E-mail communication. E-mail customization represents a key feature that differentiates traditional marketing from e-marketing (Ansari & Mela 2003). Their research found that the customization of e-mails increased traffic to the firm's website by 62% (2003). Using all of these communication methods collectively can work together to improve customer relationships, increase brand awareness, and increase overall profitability.

#### Customer Data Management using Marketing Technologies

The other principal use of e-CRM is customer data management. Harrigan et al. (2011) found that small businesses must also be able to acquire and manage information on their customers in conjunction with their communication with them. Obtaining this information can aid in marketing decisions, more specifically in having customers' details, order histories, and help predict future orders (Keh, Nguyen, & Ng, 2007). Since small businesses do not have the capabilities to employ the costly, complex, customer data obtaining software that large businesses can; they need to maintain their customer relationships to collect the needed information (Keh et al., 2007). Small businesses tend to gather this information by face-to-face interactions, but Harrigan et al. (2011) explain that marketing technology can play a significant

role in the collection of customer data by aiding in the administration, storage, and processing of said data. Ross (2005) discusses how these marketing technologies have the ability to help companies separate customers by their value to the organization. In short, E-CRM and marketing technologies help provide companies get a better picture of their customer overall, which can lead to better relationships and improved overall profitability.

#### Benefits of E-Marketing for Small Businesses

Additionally, there are also many other advantages for small businesses if they include marketing technology in their marketing strategy. Simpson et al. (2004) describe how knowledge has become a primary commodity, and that capitalized knowledge of technology is becoming a major asset to businesses. Capon and Glazer (1987) found that too narrow of a view on technologies' role in a firm diminishes the business' opportunity to exploit what could be a valuable asset. According to Ab Hamid and Kassim, marketing technology can be used to help improve customer relationship management (2004). They say, "From a marketing perspective the Internet is not just another marketing tool, but a tool that can reach far to help companies understand customers better, to provide personalized services and to retain customers" (Ab Hamid & Kassim, 2004, p. 103). This idea of improving and maintaining customer relationships is the basis of CRM.

A study done by Zontanos and Anderson (2004) shows how much a relationship marketing approach can benefit a business even if that business is a small olive oil processor in rural Greece. The owner in this study was highly involved in his community and built strong relationships with the citizens of his town. His dedication to helping his community and fellow citizens dramatically improved his business (Zontanos & Anderson, 2004). Similarly, the Internet can aid firms in conducting CRM. The Internet can have a significant impact on



understanding customers' behavior better, personalizing marketing towards customers, and obtaining customer loyalty (Ab Hamid & Kassim 2004).

#### Obstacles of E-Marketing for Small Businesses

The final theme pertains to the barriers that small businesses and their owner/managers face when trying to implement a marketing strategy and marketing technologies within those strategies. The major barrier for almost all small businesses' marketing approach is resource factors (e.g., time and money). These limitations are well-documented in the small business literature (Alford & Page, 2015; Capon & Glazer, 1987; Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003; Simpson et al., 2004; Slater & Olson, 2001; Zontanos & Anderson, 2004). McCartan-Quinn and Carson (2003) found that small firms struggle when it comes to implementing a marketing strategy because of the limited customer base. Small businesses tend to have reactive rather than a proactive approach to marketing, and difficulties in exploiting marketing opportunities. McCartan-Quinn and Carson (2003) also found that traditional marketing techniques' structure, like the 4 P's discussed early, either do not fully fit a small business or minimizes any competitive advantages a small business might have. Most owner/managers rely solely on experience and common sense when approaching marketing, instead of venturing out and trying new things (Alford & Page, 2015; Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003; Simpson et al., 2004). This lack of risk can hinder a small business from reaching its fullest potential and maximizing customer relationships.

In summation, small businesses utilize CRM in the most basic ways without the knowledge of doing so most of the time. They would greatly benefit from a better strategic marketing plan and by implementing marketing technology into their marketing strategy. The main issue is that the owner/managers lack the knowledge to apply strategic planning when

determining a marketing strategy for their company. Despite increasing coverage in the small business literature relating to marketing technologies, there remains a lack of conceptual and empirical studies to explain how small business owner/managers should develop effective marketing strategies using marketing technologies (Alford & Page, 2015).

## Methodology

The primary reason for this exploratory study was to examine and identify how owner/managers of small businesses feel about and view their approach to their marketing. This study also strives to identify key factors behind why or why not owner/managers implement marketing technologies into their marketing plans and strategies, and that implementation's benefits and obstacles. A survey questionnaire was administered to 300 small businesses with 36 responses from various businesses in the Polk County region of Florida to accomplish these tasks.

### Sample Characteristics

Since there are so many different qualifications to be considered a small business in the United States for almost every different industry (**Small Business Administration**), this study defined small businesses as any business that employs less than 100 workers. This study also ensured that each business had a website and a valid email address in order to screen out businesses that did not have at least this amount of technological setup for implementing marketing technologies and other Internet-based tools (Harrigan et al. 2011). Business contact information was pulled from the different cities' Chamber of Commerce's within the Polk County, Florida area. Polk County, Florida was chosen as the location of this study for a few reasons. The first reason is that Polk County is the surrounding area of the researchers and the institution of the researchers. The second being Florida ranked third in having the highest number of small businesses, while also having the fourth highest number of small business employees in the United States in 2012 (Small Business Administration). Small businesses make up 98.9 percent of all employers in the state of Florida, and they employ over two-fifths, or 3 million workers of the state's private workforce (Small Business Administration).

The business databases from the Chamber of Commerce's provided relatively up-to-date contact information and website links, which allowed the study to reach the highest number of businesses in the shortest amount of time. From those databases, 300 businesses had a current, valid email address. The sample for this study consisted of 36 businesses that can be segmented into three different industry sectors; service providers, retailers, and manufacturers. Service provides made up 69 percent, Retailers made up 22 percent, and manufacturers made up the last 9 percent. Small business owners/managers tend to be sole decision makers for the business and more importantly the marketing of their business (Alford & Page, 2015). Because of this fact, this survey was directed to be answered by those decision makers.

#### Data collection

An exploratory survey research method was the preferred method for this study because of its ability to obtain quantitative information and help enhance the generalizability of the findings (Ilieva, Baron, & Healey, 2002). This questionnaire was distributed online through the email addresses obtained from the Chamber of Commerces. The email distribution method was deemed appropriate since the nature of the study was to investigate the implementation of marketing technology and e-marketing. Selm and Jankowski (2006) found that studies that have a nature-based around Internet use often utilize online surveys because of their ability reach a population that has Internet access and experience. Another reason is that email distribution provides the easiest way to reach the most participants in the shortest amount of time (Sills & Song, 2002). The last reason is that online surveys provide an easier way to manage and analyze the responses (Ilieva et al., 2002). The survey was available online from June through August of 2017. Since the whole group that was contacted was relatively small and the sample of businesses that responded was even smaller each participant that completed the questionnaire

was used for analyzation. There were 36 usable responses that represented a response rate of 12 percent. This response rate is about average for email distributed survey request (Ilieva et al., 2002).

#### Questionnaire measures

The survey questionnaire included questions based on previous literature and research to gain a better understanding of the previously mentioned factors behind this study. These resources were used to create questions that measured the traditional CRM practices and methods already being done by the small businesses, if and how small businesses were already using marketing technology and other Internet-based tools, and the benefits and obstacles faced by both. To gather more in-depth information about those topics, more specific questions were included to examine the level of traditional CRM being done currently. This section included questions about how the owners/managers felt about their current CRM methods, how they perceived the customer viewpoint on those methods, and the benefits and obstacles they recognized during those CRM activities. Another section encompassed questions that asked about the level of E-marketing within those small businesses. More specifically how the owners/managers felt their business marketing plan utilized E-marketing. Also, how they conduct CRM (or e-CRM) using those Internet-based marketing tools, how they feel their customers react to their e-CRM activities (i.e., updating websites and social media, customer communication and personalization, and customer data management), and the benefits earned and obstacles faced originating from those activities. The different items were assessed using a five-point Likert type scale based on agreeability of the statements presented.

## Results

### Statistical Methods

The available statistical methods for this survey were limited because of the low number of responses. However, statistical approaches were utilized to get a better understanding of the survey questionnaire. After collecting the responses, they were totaled and segmented for each question and the type of industry the businesses stated they more closely resemble. Doing this provided more in-depth information and allowed for the results to be more generalized for those different segments. Using the Likert Scale for each of the questions allowed for the responses to be averaged and helped determine the standard deviation. Both of these methods were done to the total responses and also for each of the different industry type segments for each question. The responses were also broken down into percentages for each of the options (1-5 on the Likert Scale). Then those percentages were further segmented into the three different industry types represented. This segmentation proved to help compare the different business industries which show in the interpretations later in the paper.

Before continuing, it is important to note the limitations of the current research. First, the entire group chosen was relatively small. Only having access to 300 businesses lowered the amount expected for the actual sample. That being said, the sample was also a limitation. Even though the response rate for the email survey was around average, there were only 36 responses. This lowers the potential in generalizing the results to a larger population of small businesses. Another limitation is the skewed industry segments for the respondents. There was a large portion of service providers (25) compared to retailers (8) and manufacturers (3). This also leads to a lesser potential to generalize the results for those segments that are not represented enough. Also, there may be limitations based on the methodological approach and statistical methods of

this study. However, the survey questionnaire was developed after a thorough review of the previous literature and research done on the topic.

### Considerations

The statements and responses were broken down into seven harmonizing yet different considerations that were identified that help explain how and why small businesses implement marketing technology and other internet-based tools. The first consideration is titled “Internet-Based Marketing Tools Benefits”. The statements in this consideration describe a range of business benefits brought by implementing Internet-based marketing tools. The benefits included items such as enhance customer service, improve customer loyalty, and improve overall profitability. Consideration 2 is titled “Customer Data Management”. The statements in consideration two were based on if the business had a database to aid in customer information management. It also included statements about how the business utilizes that database and how useful that database is. Consideration 3 is titled “Internet-Based Business/Marketing Strategy”. This section contained statements revolving around an Internet-based business/marketing strategy for the owners/managers’ business and more specifically, if they had one, how management feels and views that strategy, and how management views future strategies. Consideration 4 is titled “Traditional CRM Methods and Benefits”. This section is all about the firm’s CRM methods. It assesses how they use those methods and what positive business impacts occur when a firm utilizes CRM effectively. Consideration 5 is titled “Worth of Customers’ Value”. The statements in this section focus on how a firm views the worth of a customer’s value. More specifically, how they would utilize marketing technology and other Internet-based tools towards customers of different value to the firm. Consideration 6 is titled “Channel Preferences”. This section includes statements that look at some of the channel

preferences of their own firm and customers and issues that arise from the implementation of marketing technology for E-marketing. Consideration 7 is titled “Customer Communication”. This final section includes statements that assess how small businesses prioritize communications with their customers. It also delves deeper into the impacts of the role electronic communication has within E-marketing.



<i>Factors and Questions</i>	<i>Overall Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Service Mean</i>	<i>Service STDEV</i>	<i>Retailer Mean</i>	<i>Retailer STDEV</i>	<i>Manufacturer Mean</i>	<i>Manufacturer STDEV</i>
<b>Consideration 1</b>								
<i>Internet-based marketing tools help improve market awareness</i>	4.22	0.63	4.2	0.57	4.5	0.71	3.67	0.47
<i>Internet-based marketing tools create opportunities for personalization</i>	4.25	0.79	4.4	0.69	4.25	0.83	3	0
<i>Internet-based marketing tools help enhance customer service</i>	3.94	0.74	3.96	0.72	4.13	0.78	3.33	0.47
<i>Internet-based marketing tools help improve customer loyalty</i>	4.06	0.78	4.28	0.76	3.88	0.6	3	0
<i>Internet-based marketing tools generate costs savings in our marketing budget</i>	4.06	0.78	4.24	0.76	3.88	0.6	3	0
<i>Internet-based marketing tools generate more sales/transactions</i>	4.06	1.05	4.08	1.13	4.38	0.7	3	0
<i>Internet-based marketing tools improve overall profitability</i>	3.89	0.97	3.88	1.03	4.25	0.66	3	0
<b>Consideration 2</b>								
<i>Information on customers is central for marketing decisions</i>	4.06	0.94	3.92	1.02	4.38	0.7	4.33	0.47
<i>We have a database to store customer information</i>	4.53	0.55	4.64	0.48	4.25	0.66	4.33	0.47
<i>Our database is a key business tool</i>	4.14	0.75	4.16	0.73	4	0.87	4.33	0.47
<i>Electronic information on customers compliments our other knowledge</i>	4.33	0.58	4.44	0.64	4.13	0.33	4	0

<i>Electronic information is more easily managed than physical data</i>	4.25	0.76	4.28	0.87	4.25	0.43	4	0
<b>Consideration 3</b>								
<i>We are at the leading edge of technological innovation</i>	3.25	1.28	3.2	1.39	3.5	1.12	3	0
<i>Adoption of Internet-based business/marketing tools in stages</i>	3.17	1.17	2.96	1.25	3.63	0.86	3.67	0.47
<i>Management focuses on individual staff training in the use of Internet-based marketing tools</i>	3.42	1.19	3.4	1.26	3.5	1.12	3.33	0.47
<i>There is a clear and well communicated Internet-based business strategy</i>	3.08	1.16	3	1.36	3.38	0.48	3	0
<i>We have a planned-out Internet-based business strategy</i>	3.33	1.08	3.28	1.25	3.5	0.5	3.33	0.47
<i>Management is highly involved in current Internet-based business strategy</i>	3.56	1.17	3.52	1.3	3.5	0.87	4	0
<i>Management is highly involved in future Internet-based business strategy</i>	3.42	1.04	3.32	1.16	3.63	0.7	3.67	0.47
<b>Consideration 4</b>								
<i>We take action to build a trusting relationship with our customers</i>	4.25	0.95	4.4	0.69	3.63	1.41	4.67	0.47
<i>Customer relationships are our organization's marketing focus</i>	4.61	0.72	4.6	0.63	4.63	0.99	4.67	0.47
<i>Relationships improve customer loyalty</i>	4.72	0.45	4.8	0.4	4.38	0.48	5	0
<i>Relationships generate more sales/transactions</i>	4.67	0.62	4.64	0.69	4.63	0.48	5	0
<i>Relationships improve our overall profitability</i>	4.83	0.37	4.8	0.4	4.88	0.33	5	0

Consideration 5								
<i>Customer's worth dictates the use of Internet technology in maintaining the relationship</i>	3.11	1.22	3.28	1.28	2.63	1.11	3	0
<i>Use Internet technology for more frequent customers</i>	3.08	1.06	3.28	1.08	2.5	1	3	0
<i>Use Internet technology for less frequent customers</i>	3.25	1.11	3.48	1.02	2.63	1.32	3	0
<i>Use Internet technology for customers who spend above average per purchase</i>	2.92	1.14	2.96	1.22	2.75	1.09	3	0
<i>Use Internet technology for customers who purchase more products</i>	2.81	1.08	3	1.13	2.13	0.78	3	0
Consideration 6								
<i>It is difficult to develop trust with customers online</i>	4.08	1.04	4.08	1.06	4.13	1.17	4	0
<i>Different customers have different preferences for how they deal with us</i>	4.22	0.95	4.24	0.99	4.25	0.97	4	0
<i>Face-to-face relationships are preferred by customer</i>	4.25	0.98	4.48	0.85	3.63	1.22	4	0
<i>Face-to-face relationships are preferred by our organization</i>	4.17	0.83	4.24	0.86	4	0.87	4	0
Consideration 7								
<i>Communication with our customers is very regular</i>	4.39	0.79	4.48	0.7	4	1	4.67	0.47
<i>Internet communication is key to our business</i>	3.72	0.93	4	0.85	2.75	0.66	4	0
<i>We use Internet communication to build new customer relationships</i>	3.64	0.92	3.8	1.02	3.25	0.43	3.33	0.47

<i>We use Internet communication to improve existing customer relationships</i>	3.89	0.97	4.2	0.94	3	0.5	3.67	0.47
<i>Internet communication has improved communication as a whole with the customer</i>	3.64	1.11	3.88	1.11	2.75	0.83	4	0

## Discussion of Results

### Consideration 1 – Marketing Technology Benefits

The first consideration illustrates the value of marketing technology and E-marketing to small businesses. The benefits that were found ranged from enhancing customer service, generating more sales, improving overall profitability, generating cost savings in marketing, improving market awareness, facilitating opportunities for customer personalization, and improving customer loyalty. Small businesses are showing that they recognize the range of benefits that come from e-marketing, which helps improve almost every aspect of their business overall.

Previous studies and other literature have found the range of benefits for e-marketing to be very evident in large organizations (Boulding, Staelin, Ehret, & Johnston, 2005; Jayachandran et al., 2005; Letaifa & Perrien, 2007; Starkov, 2004; Tan et al., 2002). E-marketing is helping small business be more competitive and successful by building off the tried and true methods of CRM with the inclusion of marketing technology and other Internet-based marketing tools (Chen & Ching, 2007). The results of this study corroborate previous studies and literature by finding that traditional relationship focused marketing and other CRM activities are greatly improved upon with the implementation of E-marketing and more specifically marketing technology (Ab Hamid & Kassim, 2004; Chen & Ching, 2007). The findings of this study show that small business owners find benefits when using marketing technology and other Internet-based marketing tools. The most prevalent benefits were creating opportunities for advertising and other marketing personalization as well as increasing market awareness. The sample had the same mean score of responses when it came to the Internet-based marketing tools benefits of generating more sales/transactions, generating costs savings for the businesses' marketing

budget, and improving customer loyalty. An interesting find was that the benefit with the lowest average response was increasing overall profitability.

#### Consideration 2 – Customer Data Management

A key proficiency of CRM and additionally E-marketing is the management and storage of pertinent customer data (Jayachandran et al., 2005; Tan et al., 2002). Customer information management revolves around the collection and processing of information from every point of customer contact. Businesses then use that information with other relevant marketing data to help create a better customer insight for future marketing activities (Payne & Frow, 2006). According to Chan (2005), information collected on customers can be examined to create profiles for and segment customers to help a business create opportunities for personalized advertisements and other marketing, predict customer buying behavior, and potentially cross and up-sell to their existing customer base. Marketing technology can help ensure that important, up-to-date customer information is more accessible to owner-managers of small businesses (Jayachandran et al., 2005). The findings of this second considerations show that almost all of the sample (average response score of 4.53) had some sort of database to house customer information they collect. The majority of the sample also found that their database is utilized as a key business tool, the electronic information they collect compliments information they've already collected and that the electronic information is easier to store and manage. Three-quarters of the sample also agreed that the customer information they collect is central to their marketing decision making (68 percent of service providers agreed, 88 percent of retailers agreed, and all the manufacturers agreed). This can be interpreted as more retailers and service providers base marketing decisions on other things besides customer information compared to manufacturers.

### Consideration 3 – Internet-Based Business/Marketing Strategy

E-marketing requires a blend of manpower, technology, and business know-how to help better understand, anticipate, and adapt to the firm's current and prospective customers and their needs (Coltman, 2007; Tan et al., 2002). For that among other reasons, Feinberg, Kadam, Hokam, & Kim (2002) found that E-marketing isn't just a technological tool, but it is a business philosophy within itself. While, although it seems that the Internet and CRM activities were meant to go hand in hand, technology can only empower an already clearly defined and planned-out CRM strategy (Luck & Lancaster, 2003). Just because the Internet and marketing technology can greatly benefit a company does not mean a firm might have to undergo significant change within its organization (Boulding et al., 2005; Tan et al., 2002). This consideration has found that E-marketing methods and E-CRM activities done by small businesses tend to be improvised processes, which usually has the absence of any strategic backing. These findings also confirm previous studies done by Carson & Gilmore, (2000) and Ramsey, Ibbotson, Bell, & Gray (2004), which found that most small businesses lack strategic planning regarding business and marketing plans. Even with the lack of strategic planning, the simple E-marketing and E-CRM still provide a range of benefits for those small businesses. However, those small businesses that are creating strategic plans and are implementing E-marketing efficiently have shown they are reaping more and greater benefits.

### Consideration 4 – Traditional CRM Methods and Benefits

As previously addressed in this paper, a fundamental part of E-marketing; E-CRM is based on relationship focused marketing and traditional CRM principles. Therefore, as previously discussed, it is reasonable to assume that face-to-face relationships with customers are of most importance for small businesses (Gilmore et al., 2006; Ritchie & Brindley, 2005). Based

on previous research and findings of this study, most small businesses are carrying out some CRM, even if it is the most basic methods of CRM activities. This statement is backed up by the understanding that the technical term “CRM” is relatively new and not widely known by small businesses, but the basic principles behind it (relationship management and taking care of customers) have been conducted by businesses for a long period of time (Tan et al., 2002).

That being said, this study found that the sample widely recognizes four benefits that come from traditional CRM methods: improved overall profitability of the firm, increased customer service, and generation of more sales/transactions. The study also found that a majority of the businesses use their customer relationships as their organization’s marketing focus, while a smaller majority of the sample agree that they take action to build trusting relationships with their customers.

#### Consideration 5 – Worth of Customers’ Value

A lot of the previous literature and studies done in the area of E-marketing has promoted that the basis of strategy building should revolve around the differing value of the firm’s different customers (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001; Ryals & Knox, 2001). This ideology allows a firm to devote more labor and money towards marketing to their more profitable customers, where the value is determined by using the customer information and profiles they have collected and developed (Harrigan et al., 2011). This ideal also ties in directly with the Pareto 80/20 rule, where 20 percent of a firm’s customers represents 80 percent of that firm’s revenue (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001; Ryals & Knox, 2001). Based on these ideas a firm should dedicate more marketing resources to that 20 percent that earns them the most profit. However, small businesses in this study do not agree with the strategy that a customer’s value dictates their use of E-marketing and other Internet-based tools. This could be contributed to the idea that small



businesses tend not to analyze the information they collect on their customers to ascertain overall customer profitability (Harrigan et al., 2011).

#### Consideration 6 – Channel Preferences

Harrigan et al. (2011) found that most small businesses struggle to implement additional Internet-based communication into their already existing customer communications. They also found that small businesses worry about a lack of face-to-face contact when conducting CRM activities. The finding confirms this along with other previous research, which, cautioned the role of e-CRM in customer relationships because of it being mistaken as an exclusive technological scheme (Piccoli & Ives, 2005; Ryals & Knox, 2001). In brief, small businesses struggle to understand how E-marketing can accompany and complement their more traditional face-to-face approach to customer relationships. This is evident in the two average response scores for the statements that face-to-face relationships are preferred by the customer (4.25), and face-to-face relationships are preferred by the owner/manager business (4.17). Another interesting find is that a majority of the sample also agree that it is difficult to develop trust with customers online.

#### Consideration 7 – Customer Communication

The final consideration serves as just another emphasis on the fundamental concept that customer relationships are the basis behind almost everything that a small business does, regardless of their knowledge of CRM (O'Dwyer et al., 2007; Stokes, 2000). Building and maintaining these close relationships with customers allow small businesses to obtain information about their competition, as well as beneficial knowledge regarding their customers' buying preferences, trends, and personal information (Harrigan et al., 2011). Developing these key customer relationships also give small businesses a closer view of their market, which grants them the ability to more efficiently and quickly adapt to the ever-changing market demands

(O'Dwyer et al., 2009). As previously discussed, this operating method unquestionably ties directly in the ideals of theoretical relationship focused marketing and other CRM principles.

This final consideration also demonstrates that Internet-based communication is similarly very important for small businesses because of its ability to improve overall communication and the quality of relationships with customers (Harrigan et al., 2011). More specifically, those improvements mostly come from the role of E-mail communication and increasing the opportunities and productivity of more personalized communications (Ansari & Mela, 2003; Harrigan et al., 2011). Chaston and Mangles (2003) have praised the role of the Internet in customer communication because the concept of community is the very basis of the internet. Therefore, even though many small business owners/managers see implanting marketing technology as a potential detriment to maintaining those customer relationships, it doesn't have to be one. Harrigan et al. (2011) say that those owners/managers need not see E-marketing and E-CRM as a detriment because "e-CRM is not a substitute for face-to-face contact; it is a compliment". By creating the potential for more efficient communication, E-marketing frees up owners/managers to conduct more of face-to-face meetings (Chong, Bian, & Zhang, 2016). It also has the capability to create deeper and more loyal bonds which are improved upon by the firm's in-depth knowledge of their customer base (Rai, Patnayakuni, & Seth, 2006). Findings show that the sample has very regular communication with their customers. That being said, the sample also proved that they find it difficult to include Internet-based communications in their overall communication. These findings substantiate the points discussed earlier that small business finds Internet-based communications to be more of a deterrent and disconnect with their customer base. However, previous research has shown how E-marketing and E-CRM can improve customer communication by enabling personalization of marketing efforts,

implementing different communication channels, and encouraging interchange between customers and the business (Day & Hubbard, 2003).

#### Model

Based on the results of the study, a model was created by using the considerations that were found during the study. This model can help the small businesses that are hesitant about implementing E-marketing and other marketing technologies. While it does not solve the problem of creating a sure-fire way of implementing E-marketing, it can help small businesses realize what goes into the implementation of E-marketing and the benefits that go along with it. These considerations include marketing technology benefits, Internet-based business/marketing strategy, traditional CRM methods and benefits, worth of customer value, channel preferences, customer communication, and customer data management.



## Conclusion

Even though small businesses face tougher and more challenges implementing E-marketing and marketing technology, they are conducting fundamental practices of E-marketing and more specifically E-CRM. It is widely acknowledged that small businesses have fewer resources such as financial power, owner/manager expertise, manpower, and they find it difficult to fully develop and implement marketing technology into their marketing efforts (Street & Meister, 2004). Small businesses are utilizing their basic E-marketing activities to improve their customer data management abilities, improve their overall communication with their customers, and by using both of those improvements to create better customer and market insight.

This study has contributed to knowledge by presenting that small businesses are achieving a range of benefits by utilizing basic forms of E-marketing on an impromptu basis, while small businesses that strategically plan out and use E-Marketing are reaping more greater benefits while facing fewer obstacles in the implementation. It is widely accepted that traditional CRM helps small businesses compete not only within their own market but against larger organizations as well. This study goes to some extent to prove that including marketing technology with those already done CRM activities to create E-marketing and E-CRM can greatly benefit small businesses by strengthening face-to-face relationships and communication. By utilizing relatively simple and easy-to-use technologies such as e-mail, websites, and database management software, E-marketing becomes a more easily implemented strategy to carry out for small businesses that lack the financial resources and expertise of larger firms. Therefore, it is recommended that small businesses utilize software like Microsoft Excel, Access, and Outlook as well as others. However, ultimately the decision to implement those marketing technologies often falls on the shoulders of the small businesses' owners/managers. Most of the

time, these decision makers lack the marketing and technological knowledge and expertise to create a well-designed strategic plan to implement these technologies into their marketing efforts fully.

This study has also led to the creation of a model that identifies seven different items that small business owners/managers should consider when deciding to implement E-marketing and marketing technologies. These considerations encompass the different aspects that small businesses should study and focus on when making decisions about implementing marketing technologies into their marketing strategy. While this model does not map out a perfect route for the small businesses to take, their owners/managers can look upon these considerations to help lead them to which direction and decisions to make.

This study has contributed to theory and practice of small business marketing and E-marketing by recommending that small businesses should make efforts to implement marketing technology into their already established customer-oriented marketing processes to reap a variety of benefits. These marketing technologies do not need to be overwhelming, business strategy changing investments; in fact, for small businesses beginning E-marketing activities they should be relatively small technological ventures such as e-mail, database management, and websites. Customer relationships are usually the most important means of competing for small businesses, and E-marketing helps them improve their overall customer relationship management.

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