SOCIAL CRM APPLICATIONS AND IMPACT IN SMALL BUSINESSES

by

Levi W. Bridge

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University

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Abstract

The present study explored the effect social customer relationship management (CRM) on. Small businesses typically have limited resources and thus use an informal CRM system causing them to not realize the full sales potential or customer engagement that could occur. The qualitative study consisted of 10 small businesses that utilize social media to engage with customers. The agency theory and resource based view served as the theoretical foundation for the study. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the employee responsible for managing the social media content. From the interviews, three themes emerged that are critical for social CRM success: visibility, interactivity, and being relational. If the social media posts are customer-oriented then those themes should be a direct result from social media engagement. Each of the participating small businesses stressed the fact that social media provides two-way communication, bringing value to both the business and the customer through direct feedback and the creation of an online community. The more frequent the interaction, the stronger the loyalty the customer develops for the business.

Key words: social customer relationship management (CRM), limited resources, agency theory, resource based view, customer engagement, visibility, interactivity, relational, social media engagement, online community, customer loyalty

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Dedication

I dedicate my applied doctoral research project to my family and friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my wife, Holly, who was a constant source of encouragement throughout the doctoral process and pushed me to do my best.

I also dedicate this research to my parents, Michael and Robin Bridge, who have sacrificed for my education in many ways. Their dedication to provide me and my sister with better opportunities and a better life have driven me to face the challenges presented to me and succeed. I love you both and appreciate your sacrifice.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Social media can have a profound effect on customer engagement with small businesses. This qualitative study explored how small businesses use social media in customer relationship management initiatives. Social media can be a proper channel for connecting with customers where they participate online, as well as a way that is financially responsible for the small business, due in part to limited available resources. By reaching out to establish and build a relationship with customers, small businesses can tailor business practices to better fit better customer needs. Providing personalized attention and service gives small businesses an advantage over larger competitors. Understanding the goal of social customer relationship management and its practical application for businesses may identify gaps to be addressed that may assist small businesses to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

Background of the Problem

Harrigan and Miles (2014) discussed the disruption social media has caused for small business customer relationship strategies. Doern (2009) addressed the fact that most small businesses have limited available resources, along with narrowly trained expertise, and impact the environment which in turn directly impacts marketing abilities. With limited resources and expertise, small business owners may be entering into a new marketing strategy without the proper tools to ensure success. Customer relationship management should focus on the customer needs and communications should be directed through communication channels where customers are most likely to interact and respond. Social media is a free channel, other than time taken to interact with the

medium, for which small businesses can connect with the current customer base. Small businesses can also foster a stronger customer relationship to generate repeat business ultimately increasing positive word-of-mouth extensions to potential customers.

Building strong customer relationships is necessary to compete effectively for a small business, but having the necessary skills and resources to make that happen can be a hindrance. Small businesses typically do not purchase customer relationship management software, in part due to the software being a large expense, and participate in customer relationship management instinctively (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). When small business owners or managers do pursue customer relationship management software, it may be with a lack of knowledge and expertise of the full potential of the product based solely on the company's promises (Newby, Nguyen, & Waring, 2014). Parry, Jones, Rowley, and Kupiec-Teahan (2012) studied the marketing of small business firms and found that there is a need for small businesses to balance innovativeness with customer orientation to survive. Looking for new opportunities to address customers and build a relationship requires management support to create solutions with limited resources.

Problem Statement

The general problem addressed by this research was that limited knowledge on social CRM practices might cause small businesses to not realize the full impact customer engagement, through online communities, may exert on sales potential. Incorporating social media into building customer relationships is a relatively inexpensive method for sharing business information with customers who are social

media followers. Small business owners typically do not have access to the necessary

resources, knowledge, or skill to be impactful in their CRM efforts (Harrigan & Miles,

2014). Due to limited resources, small business owners do not implement mainstream

CRM analysis methods (Zhou, Xiao, Liu, & Ai, 2013). Instituting the knowledge of how

social media may impact CRM efforts has the potential to reduce or remove the need for

purchasing CRM software and is a strategic approach to delivering targeted messages via

social media.

To capitalize on the strategic aspect of the social media message, the proper

understanding of target market wants and needs, and their activity online will drive the

development of specific messages to share and communicate with followers. Small

business owners need the ability to find the assistance they need to acquire proper

business background knowledge to effectively design and implement a social CRM

strategy to increase business capacity and revenue. To build relationships, customers

want personalized attention from businesses. Thus, easy and effective methods need to be

established for small businesses to adapt to product and service offerings. Chen, Yeh,

and Yeh (2011) described trust as being the main attribute for effective CRM initiatives.

Trust is a key component in a relationship, and quality products and services lead to a

strong business-to-customer relationship.

The specific problem addressed by the current research was how small business

owners and managers view the direct impact of social media on an increase in sales and

loyalty from their customer base. The focus of this study was to examine how small

businesses owners utilize social media, what value they see from engaging with their

customers, and what they think should be included in a social CRM strategy.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the impact customer

engagement, through online communities, has on small businesses. Harrigan and Miles

(2014) conducted a quantitative study to determine the factors that influence social

customer relationship management activities in small businesses. The conclusion was

that social media interaction is key for enhancing customer engagement. The authors

suggested that a qualitative study should be conducted to investigate further the effect of

reaching customers through online communities and the impact that has on future

business (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). This research builds on that recommendation.

Small businesses typically have an intuitive, rather than a formal, customer

relationship management program due to limited resources for a formal customer

relationship management program (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). Due to these limited

resources, small businesses typically cannot purchase a customer relationship

management software program that will gather customer data, and design communication

messages for them. Small businesses may then be inclined to communicate with

customers via social media due to immediate availability and as an effective means of

sharing information with customers. Social media is a good source of communication for

small businesses because customers who are intentional about supporting local businesses

want to be part of a community and vocal about their allegiance. Social media thrives on

this activity and is an advantage for small businesses owners to engage with their

customers rather than having a formal CRM program that is purchased.

With social media being a prime opportunity for engaging with customers, small

business owners may lack suitable knowledge and strategy in using social media

communication to build relationships with customers and engage them on a deeper level.

Seventy-five percent of companies have not defined CRM for their business and sixty-

one percent do not have a formalized strategy for CRM framework (Payne & Frow,

2006). This study explored the extent to which the business owners' knowledge of social

media is used to engage customers through social media and online communities. The

goal of social media engagement is to initiate and develop a relationship to ultimately

build loyal and engaged customers for increased business success.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this research was qualitative research focused on determining the

level of customer engagement through social media in small businesses. The study

compared literature on the effective use of social customer relationship management

(social CRM) attributes to actual business practices. Social CRM is the use of social

media to develop and manage relationships with customers. The literature consistently

uses qualitative research methods when studying customer relationship management.

Businesses want to see quantifiable metrics measure the increase in business from

customers, but social media is about users' feelings and engagement. For this reason, this

study concentrated on using qualitative research to measure actual business social media

strategies.

Method

Qualitative research seeks to discover descriptions and interpretations of phenomena relevant to specific situations (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research is appropriate for this case study to determine if actual business practices support literature claims. Literature consistently uses qualitative research while studying customer relationship management (Chickweche & Fletcher, 2013; Elbeltagi, Kempen, & Garcia, 2014; Mende, Bolton, & Bitner, 2013; Parsons, 2013; Stelzner, 2012). Elbeltagi, Kempen, and Garcia (2014) chose qualitative research to provide contextualized data in determining how CRM answers questions through a social media channel. The current research study is addressing social media's effect on CRM and its added-value that is supported by the qualitative research method.

Chikweche and Fletcher (2013) used a qualitative research method when studying the underlying concepts of customer relationship management and the framework for implementation. Understanding the proper structure, as presented by Chickweche and Fletcher, will provide a valid comparison against the current business application. A constant measurement must be used upon which to compare the social media strategies small businesses have developed on their own. Comparing small business owners and managers' reasoning and decisions will provide data to compare against literature for this study. Elbeltagi, Kempen, and Garcia (2014) used qualitative research in studying customer relationship management because theses authors were seeking to answer questions through a social channel. Exploring how businesses utilize social media, which is a social channel, and the value added to the customer experience is a subjective result.

Quantitative research is used for exploring the relationship between variables in theory (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research is experimental and uses numerical measurements (Creswell, 2014). This study expanded upon a quantitative study and looking at comparing what the literature claims may happen when small businesses incorporate social media or online communities into customer relationship management plans versus how small businesses communicate with customers via online methods. With this approach, purely quantitative measurements would not capture fully the level of customer engagement felt or experienced by consumers, which are subjective and better explored through qualitative data.

Design

Qualitative research may be conducted by using the following designs: ethnography, grounded theory, case study, narrative, and phenomenology. Ethnography is a study of an entire culture. Whitehill (2007) suggested that ethnography research could apply to not just a people group culture, but an organization and how it interacts with an established corporate culture. Using ethnographic research as an observer as a participant is "where the researcher observes and asks questions of the participant" (Whitehill, 2007, p. 688-689). Ethnography research could be appropriate for the study of small businesses and the value they have on customer relationship management practices, but this is only one part of this study and does not fully address the end goal that would not produce the best results. Based on this, an ethnography research design was not be used.

Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce (2011) discussed grounded theory as evolving from data in hopes of developing further theory. The grounded theory does not fit the aim of this research which is focused on the experiences a customer sees from engaging with companies whose plan is to develop long-term customer relationships.

A phenomenological research design asks questions aimed at discovering the essence people experience regarding a particular phenomenon (Creswell, Hanson, and Plano Clark, 2007). This qualitative study is seeking to understand customer engagement that is felt internally, and on a personal level which could be referred to as the essence of the experience, but on a smaller scale than that utilized in a phenomenological research design. Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce (2011) discussed that phenomenology research examines the human experience, meaning, and reflection that people link to specific experiences. The phenomenological research design was not used.

Narrative research asks chronological or story based questions (Creswell et al., 2007). Creswell (2014) further explains that narrative research is information retold by the researcher. The narrative research design seeks to determine life experiences over time. This study is not addressing life experiences of the small business owners or managers or their customers. The narrative research design was not used.

Case study research requires the observer to immerse himself in a situation to gather data. Creswell et al. (2007) described case study research design as in-depth, descriptive questions seeking an understanding of particular cases and the insight that can be derived from them. Discussing the implementation process of a social CRM program and its perceived value fits the case study research methodology as this research

addressed small businesses in specific industries and in Springfield, Missouri. Direct communication through interviews will further allow for insight into customer engagement.

A case study research design was conducted using interviews completed by small business owners that are semi-structured to allow for the participant to answer and apply the questions specifically to one's business. An appropriate way to measure this impact is to gather information from small business owners who can see the direct impact on their business. Stake (2010) explained that qualitative research is useful when attempting to gather interpreted information by the participant through open-ended questions to determine the extent social media and online communities can have on their customer relationships.

Research Question

The overarching question of this study is what impact customer engagement, through social media and online communities, has on customer relationship management strategies.

1. How do small businesses utilize social media in their customer relationship management strategies?

2. How do small business owners and managers view social media and online communities' effect on their relationships with customers?

3. What skills and tools are required for a useable social CRM plan for a small business?

4. What is a good formula for a social CRM plan for small businesses to implement?

Conceptual Framework

The two theories that have been considered for this research are the agency theory and the resource-based view of the firm. Agency theory explains the interests of managers and shareholders and how businesses need to act in the interests of the shareholders. The resource-based view of the firm describes a competitive advantage as one that is based on how a business structures and influences its internal resources (Connelly, Ketchen, & Slater, 2011). Online communities are a way for small businesses to reach the customer base. Selecting the appropriate social media channel should be based on an understanding of customer interests and activity in an online environment.

Tan and Lee (2015) used the agency theory to study the effect of customer loyalty towards a business, particularly in regards to risk, goal, and information. The agency theory determined customer evaluations of a company and what attributes determine loyalty to a business. Exploring the effect of social media in customer relationship management will require knowing whether the businesses customers value communication through online formats as part of their evaluation of loyalty to the business. Baird and Parasnis (2011) discussed how traditional customer relationship management programs must be adapted to incorporate social media for improved customer engagement. The authors highlight a perception gap between what companies provide via social media and for what customers are seeking.

Garrido-Moreno, Lockett, and Garcia-Morales (2014) studied customer relationship management using the resource-based view of the firm theory to analyze how customer relationship technology factors can be transformed into something of value

for both the company and consumers. Technological forces within the small business act

in accordance with other resource firms and are not isolated (Garrido-Moreno et al.,

2014). Zander and Zander (2005) discussed the resource-based view of the firm as being

traditionally focused inward on the available resources of the firm. They go on to discuss

the narrow view this theory presents unless a business considers the impact customers

have on the distribution of the available resources. Gathering customer knowledge will

help build customer loyalty and trust while being able to anticipate customer needs as

they develop and reduce business response time (Zander & Zander, 2005). Customer

relationship management is about establishing and maintaining a relationship so the

business should act in the customer's interest to generate trust and a loyal commitment.

When considering the resource-based view of the firm, marketing resources

include customer linking, customer equity, and channel relationships (Srivastava,

Shervani, & Fahey, 1998). Through social media engagement, small businesses can

utilize a smaller amount of resources to communicate and reach the customer base.

Social media is free or inexpensive to use and requires time to invest and maintain a

presence. The utilization of resources on social media efforts takes little time and effort

to establish an online presence and can build a stronger link to customers, increase the

customer's equity and dependence on the business, and strengthen customer

relationships.

The agency theory and resource-based view of the firm require a small business to

effectively use their limited resources to maximize the effect they have on their

customers. Reaching the customers where they communicate via social media and online

communities is another touch point for a small business to impact its customers for stronger business relationships positively.

Definition of Terms

Customer engagement – strengthening the customer relationship across various touch points (Goyal & Srivastava, 2015).

Customer experience – the process of experiencing or perceiving aspects of value in a customer's everyday life (Tynan, McKechnie, & Hartley, 2014).

Customer relationship management – "strategic approach to managing customer value and experiences" (Plouffe, Williams, & Leigh, 2004, p. 324).

Online communities – "an aggregation of individuals or business partners who interact based on a shared interest, where the interaction is at least partially supported or mediated by technology and guided by certain protocols and norms" (Porter & Donthu, 2008, p. 115).

Social customer – trust their peers, are connected via the web and mobile devices, expect information to be available on demand. They are driven by a relationship of trust. (Greenberg, 2010).

S*ocial customer relationship management* – use of social media and data to aid in company's customer relationship management strategies (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The research assumes that the sample of small businesses has a social media presence. Participants were validated by the researcher viewing each participant's social

media accounts. Once a social media presence has been validated the participant can be interviewed in the study.

The small businesses had basic knowledge of how to utilize social media. Study participants were screened to ensure participation in social media. The small business must participate in more than one social media channel to demonstrate basic knowledge on the utilization of social media. The assumption is if the small business has a social media presence on more than one social media channel then basic knowledge of social media utilization is possessed. Proper utilization is not being assumed rather the interview questions will search for more detailed information. If the small business does not possess basic knowledge of how to utilize social media, then the information obtained from the participant will not address the research questions.

A business strategy is being implemented to engage with customers. Social CRM is a strategy, and a small business' social media presence should be geared toward a customer base. Random posts or information is not the preferred method of enhancing customer engagement. As part of the interviews, a question was asked of the participants to identify social CRM and additional questions that would identify the key components of a strategy including reason for social media use and particular channel, information received, and impact of social media presence. This information contains the necessary components for a small business social media strategy that can be used by the participant to formalize a structured strategy if one does not currently exist.

Limitations

Limitations of this study were the scope of small businesses interviewed. Participating businesses are located in Springfield, Missouri. Businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry, also including service restaurants and retail stores, will be included in the study. These types of small businesses do not encompass all industries where small businesses exist. In the Springfield, Missouri area, these are prominent industries for small business and thus reflect existing businesses.

Delimitations

This study addressed what the literature confirms as an effective social CRM strategy against the practical business application. The study focused on three main aspects of social CRM, relationships, technology, and company culture. The study did not address traditional CRM programs that are generally out of reach for small businesses to implement due to high costs and time requirements to interpret gathered data.

<p align="center">Significance of the Study</p>

Reduction of Gaps

This study explored existing differences between what literature says concerning necessary components for a social CRM program and what small businesses are doing. Comparing actual practice versus literature will open doors for more effective business practices and improvements in building relationships with customers via social media.

Implications for Biblical Integration

Customer relationship management is geared towards establishing long-term relationships with current customers, so that value is received on both ends. Wrenn,

Hoover, and Warwick (2013) interpreted marketing as all parties seeing value being present to exchange. They go on to discuss the importance of understanding "customers' needs, sense of value, perceptions of other organizations' offerings, etc." (p. 15) to effectively compete and operate in today's business environment. Social CRM is seeking to add value to customer relationships through engaging online where customers are spending time and resources.

Adding value is one thing and delivering on it is another. Reaching customers through multiple channels provides a small business with an opportunity to connect with a different touch point. Social customers are customers who engage through social media and rely on trust to drive their purchase decisions (Greenberg, 2010). Establishing long-term relationships is key, and Psalm 15 talks directly to this aspect.

> "O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved" (ESV).

This passage provides eight characteristics for which a blameless and righteous person would act: integrity, service, respect, charity, faithfulness, truthfulness, humility, and perseverance. Conducting a business in this way will encourage repeat customers and

increase business. Customers become loyal when they feel valued and trusted with respect.

Psalm 15 provides a code of conduct that should influence all decisions. Communication is imperative in marketing and thus should be done in a manner as to engage with customers through solid business practices and trust. Psalm 19:4 says "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (ESV). Proverbs 15:1 "a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (ESV). These two verses can be directly applied within the context of social media. What a business portrays via social media directly reflects their business. With two-way communication, negative feedback will be given because mistakes do happen, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23 (ESV). All people make mistakes and are not perfect, it is how those mistakes and errors are corrected that makes a difference in a customers' perception of the business and for the Lord. Not responding to negative criticism that does not have merit or quickly addressing a relevant problem demonstrates to customers what type of customer service they can expect from the small business and can influence trust and respect which in turn creates customer loyalty.

This study measured the practices of current small businesses and what customer relationship management strategies are employed. Leading into how said strategies are being used to build a loyal relationship with customers. How a small business conducts operations is representative of its marketing strategies.

Relationship to Field of Study

Greenberg (2008) stated that social CRM is the company's reaction to the customer's participation and ownership of the conversation. Incorporating social media into marketing efforts must acknowledge collaboration between both the business and customers. Marketing is now a two-way street. Carlson and Lee (2015) discussed social media being used for customer relationship management systems and tailoring specific marketing messages to target audiences. Reaching customers where they are participating and spending time can encourage a better receptiveness of the marketing messages being sent by small businesses. Tuleu (2015) further stated the necessity of marketing towards the individual customer and to interact with them in real time through online methods. Employing a social CRM strategy is an option for small businesses to engage with customers outside of their website or physical location and build a long-term relationship with repeat business.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The general problem was that limited knowledge on social CRM practices might cause small businesses to not realize the full impact customer engagement, through online communities, can have on sales potential. The specific problem addressed was how small business owners and managers view the direct impact of social media on an increase in sales and loyalty from the customer base. The focus of this study was to examine how small businesses owners utilize social media, what value they see from engaging with their customers, and what they think should be included in a social CRM strategy. This literature review includes an overview of the term social CRM and how

the term originated from traditional CRM practices as marketers began utilizing social media to engage with customers. It also includes current literature that examines how social CRM practices can be a business strategy by delivering additional value and engaging customers where they are choosing to participate online. While social media may improve customer relationships for a small business, there is a struggle for small businesses due to the potential lack of formalized training and knowledge when implementing a business-to-consumer social media plan. The literature will discuss CRM success and failures and conclude with a formula for a social CRM plan to be compared in this study to actual business practice. The literature selected for this dissertation relates to the purpose of this study and the research questions by providing a foundation of previous findings by which to compare actual business practice against for the research interview method used in the study.

What is CRM?

Customer relationship management (CRM) began taking shape in the late 1990s (Garrido-Moreno, Lockett, & Garcia-Morales, 2014). As CRM has emerged with business trends, social media has been incorporated by small businesses to reach their customer base to develop stronger relationships. For this study, CRM is viewed as a strategy for the co-creation of value between the small business and the customer by using data and customer knowledge to best communicate said value (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014). Companies are using CRM initiatives to generate loyal customers by enhancing customer services, retention, and satisfaction. Satisfaction is being determined by discovering customers' desires changing, personalizing offered services, and

differentiating themselves from their competitors to establish a competitive advantage (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2014). Gathering information about customer demographics and behavior allows a company to target customers with special promotions and develop a relationship that will benefit both the customer and company long-term. A specific example of utilizing social CRM is when a small business offers a discount or free items or service if you "like" or "share" their Facebook page. As most Facebook users "like" or "share" the page, the business' exposure grows which can positively affect the company's future sales. As customers participate and "like" a page, posts will appear on their newsfeed through Facebook and will remind the customer of the product or service they offer on a regular basis. Social media, such as Facebook, permits a new way for businesses to collect data that would be more difficult with traditional CRM strategies.

Traditional CRM strategies, including data collection and tracking, can impose difficulties on small businesses when establishing the correct information necessary to gather and analyze the information into a cohesive strategy. Time, money and effort are required when focusing on gathering the required information to specifically target customers, which can be limited for small businesses due to fewer employees and limited expertise. One perspective is that small businesses typically have fewer amounts of resources, knowledge, and impact, which directly affect the success of their marketing efforts (Doole, Grimes, & Demack, 2006; Harrigan & Miles, 2014; O'Dwyer, Gilmore, & Carson, 2009). The affected areas could be initiatives without proper resources, limited marketing experience and issues such as customer lifetime value or CRM technology (Parry, Jones, Rowley, & Kupiec-Teahan, 2012). Social CRM forces small businesses to

adapt to innovative solutions of communicating with social customers, creating stronger perceived value through online communities and empowering employees to benefit as well (Band & Petouhof, 2010). Some small businesses cannot afford to implement marketing plans as traditionally suggested (Harrigan, Ramsey, & Ibbotson, 2012). With limited financial resources, larger scale marketing campaigns and advertising must be focused to specific customer bases to be most effective with the available resources. Large companies have the resources to hire web designers and a marketing team to develop a social media marketing strategy whereas small businesses do not have such capacity (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). Thus, small businesses tend not to adopt traditional CRM strategies and software packages and collect data through different methods (Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Zhao, 2009). A basic overall knowledge or step-by-step plan to implement CRM strategies, gather crucial data, and marketing is needed to avoid critical mistakes that can end the business. Small businesses should focus on a simple and feasible approach that is both affordable and efficient and that aligns with the marketing strategy (Harrigan et al., 2012).

Taneja and Toombs (2014) reported the number of small businesses who utilize social media in their marketing efforts has doubled since 2008. Although social media is being used, the question still remains as to what is the best method for putting together a social CRM strategy and gathering customer data. Payne and Frow (2006) reported seventy-five percent of companies do not have a working definition of CRM and sixty-one percent do not have a developed CRM framework. So although social media is being used by small businesses, Payne and Frow's research suggested that a formalized

marketing plan that includes social media does not exist. Rather, untargeted attempts are made with the hope of attracting customers and that no formalized strategy will prove beneficial for the company. How then are results tracked and what measurements are in place to prove that the social media efforts that are being pursued are in fact beneficial and aiding in additional sales and improved customer loyalty for the small business? The Small Business Success Index commissioned a survey of 500 small businesses and found that 75% of small businesses have a presence on social media, 61% utilize presence to attract potential customers, and 45% expect to see additional profits within 12 months of a social media marketing effort (Number of small businesses using social media doubled since 2008, 2010). With 45% of surveyed small businesses expecting to see profits within 12 months, it is crucial that a social CRM strategy is formulated and executed to track customer and company social media efforts and customer-related decisions. According to a CIO Insights Sales Performance Optimization (2012) study, 15% of businesses reported an increase in revenue from social media efforts (Rodriguez, Ajjan, & Peterson, 2016). Social media strategies should be included with sales processes, human resources capabilities, and have strong management support (Marshall, Moncrief, Rudd, & Lee, 2012). Social media allows small businesses the opportunity to gather information that would otherwise be unavailable due to limited resources.

What is Social CRM?

To make CRM strategies available to small businesses, social customer relationship management integrates social media as a convenient and low-cost method to reach customers. Stelzner (2012) surveyed 3,800 small businesses to gather an overall

understanding of the reasons for pursuing social media efforts. The small businesses

reported that social media generated more awareness for business, increased traffic and

provided consumer insight. Social CRM assists small businesses in making effective use

of the resources that are available to them by incorporating social media into reaching

customers in real-time and through interactive avenues (Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

The benefit of actively communicating with customers is the potential attachment

the customer develops for the business through awareness, increased attention, and

feedback. Mende, Bolton, and Bitner (2013) associated attachment being synonymous

with closeness. Closeness is comprised of the frequency of interaction between the

customer and the business, various channels of communication and interaction, and the

amount of influence one has on the other. Utilizing the social media environment, small

businesses can strengthen customer loyalty through brand image and stimulate

attachment towards the branding while exhibiting stronger brand loyalty (Orzan, Platon,

Stefanescu, & Orzan, 2016). Mende et al. studied an insurance company for its

closeness and attachment style to determine how attachment occurs. The research

concluded that understanding whether consumers were anxious or avoidant determined

how attached they felt during business interactions. For anxious customers, social media

and personal interaction enhanced attachments, while the insurance company reduced the

amount of targeted social media and personal interaction with their avoidant customers.

This reaction enhanced the attachment with avoidant customers because they felt they

were heard and were able to interact on their own terms. A stronger attachment directly

relates to developed loyalty to the brand and business that can be represented in increased sales.

Dahlgren (2011) found that the stronger the brand loyalty the more sales that are realized for the brand and an increase in customer lifetime value. The degree of brand loyalty is based upon the customer's decision to identify with the brand and allow that identification to alter behavior. Dahlgren discussed cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral aspects that correspond to the degree of loyalty and attachment. Cognitive represents a customer's thoughts about a brand, attitude is based on their cognition, and behavior is the action resulting from both the thoughts and actions. Thus the more connected a customer feels about a brand the more behavior can be influenced. Social media can play a large role in consumer behavior, attitude, and thoughts. The more touch points, any form of interaction, a customer has with a business can increase cognition for when a product is needed for easy recall. The more positive experience the customer has with the business can impact attitude, which reinforces the need for specific and tailored messages that customers may find appealing. Based on these aspects and goals of social media, the result should be a positive impact on behavior resulting in a purchase and positive feedback on social media to positively impact other potential buyers as well. Gecti and Zengin (2013) proposed a model that directly correlates brand trust to both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. Trust is developed through close examination and experience resulting in developed loyalty through both attitude and behavior. Enhanced loyalty can open opportunities for communication with potential customers that have previously been unreached by the business.

Social CRM allows the opportunity for new market development (Warfield, 2009) as individuals are more and more dependent on sharing aspects of personal life through social media that provides ample information for small businesses to gather and use for targeting new and existing markets. Appealing to potential customers via social media drives consumer-brand identification that allows for identifying new opportunities in the marketplace (Elbedweihy, Jayawardhena, Elsharnouby, & Elsharnouby, 2016). Small businesses that engage through social media use this platform to build personal brands and influence consumers in a direction to best position company products in the market (Harris & Rae, 2011). Social media assists in real-time, two-way interactive communication between the business and the customer (Van Bruggen et al., 2010). The stronger the attachment or connection between the customer and the small business, the higher the likelihood for customer loyalty to the small business brand and product.

Maintaining strong customer relationships and individualized attention is one way for small businesses to outperform its competitors, especially those competitors not employing CRM strategies, and establish a strong customer base. Haumann, Quaiser, Wieseke, and Rese (2014) pointed out that customer identification with businesses is an active process and becomes a way for the customer to identify and express their personality which in turn should make it difficult for business' competitors to steal those customers. For small businesses, social media may be the best CRM technology and strategy for effective implementation due to available time and effort by owners and managers. Small businesses operate on a smaller staff with limited expertise. Traditional CRM platforms would require technological know-how and data interpretation. Social

CRM allows anyone to engage with another person via social media and gathers feedback in real time and language which is easier to interpret than coded numbers in a report (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). This allows small businesses to review and analyze social CRM efforts. Social media platforms have integrated summary pages for businesses. The ability to review marketing tactics in real time and promote or "boost" posts. This effort is in relation to building stronger relationships with customers to increase engagement.

The adoption of social CRM strategies goes beyond having limited resources because improved customer engagement is a strong benefit of effective strategies. Engaging with customers creates value and social media is an important aspect of value for today's consumers. Value is co-created through the interaction of the business and customer and builds over the consumption process for the consumer (Baumann & Le Meunier-FitzHugh, 2015). For this study, value is defined as "interactive relativistic preference experience" (Holbrook, 1994, p. 27). Since value is co-created, businesses should assess how customers derive value. The nature of customer relationships has become interactive because the customer wants to voice an opinion in the value making process (Moore, Raymond, & Hopkins, 2015). Understanding what motivates customers will enhance the value proposition offered by the business. Regarding social media, a proper understanding of how the customers interact via social media will allow for maximum exposure and value to be co-created.

Social media allows an organization to engage and mobilize customers to participate in activities that create value (Bradley & McDonald, 2011). Agnihotri, Kothandaraman, Kashyap, and Singh, (2012) studied how businesses can best utilize

social media to develop value for customers and found that strategies should be focused on executing service behaviors and active customer engagement (p. 341). Agnihotri et al. also developed a social media framework for businesses to employ which create value for customers through defined goals, exchanging information, exploring the competition's approach to social media interaction, and setting milestones to measure the success or failure of their efforts. Choosing to analyze how the competition interacts via social media is a good channel for developing and enhancing social media presence. This research aims to determine how a small business uses social media in its marketing strategies and how to differentiate its communication from its competitors with the aim of creating value. To effectively target and reach customers a company can divide its customers into segments to better target specific needs. A good example of segmentation was conducted by Payne and Frow (2006) on a customer service business.

Payne and Frow's study revealed how a customer service business divided its customer base into four segments and treated each equally. The authors studied the four segments, as divided by the company, and found those segments were indeed different and thus required a targeted approach for the customer base to derive value from the company. A small business, which capitalizes on the advantages social CRM provides, can discover that value in mass customer collaboration and participation while determining current and future needs for product and service offerings. Engaging with customers for the sake of engaging is not enough; purpose and community must partner the dialogue for true value to be seen from the customer's perspective (Bradley & McDonald, 2011). Establishing a vision for communication messaging and social media

channels will help drive more effective results by targeting customers through the use of the media platform being used. Facebook requires a different message than Twitter or Instagram. All are useful social media channels, but the content has to be tweaked to be effective on each site. Social media is not an avenue for sharing corporate information or an addition to a business's current online strategy because social media allows customers to interact with a two-way communication environment (Parsons, 2013). Sending tailored messages that are specific to the customer and the social media channel helps a small business show the customer personalized attention to compel customers to fully connect with the business (Luigi, Oana, Mihai, & Simona, 2011).

Selecting the appropriate social media platform depends on the customer segment, the target message, and the level of control the business wants over the message (p. 29). Ramsey (2010) discussed the importance of having a communication strategy for each social media tool that a business plans to utilize in a communication strategy. Each social media platform exists for a particular audience and communication method. Hence one message does not fit all in social media. Each social media tool should have a particular communication style, content that both sells and communicates value, accurate content and defined content between what should be present on a company's website and social media sites (p. 29). Parsons study examined 65 businesses chosen from Interbrand Best Global Brands 2010 and Brandz Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands 2011. A comparison of businesses was made from both lists, and 65 were chosen to examine their Facebook pages and how the companies communicated via the social media channel. The findings resulted in companies that communicated specific messages targeted to the

particular customer base, with the main focus on developing customer relationships instead of just listing information (p. 35). Each company used tabs that were specific to the product or service they offered and would be recognizable to the customer base. The companies also posted an average of 24 times per month to ensure their Facebook followers would see the post in their news feeds every few days (p. 35). Videos were often used and polling questions to engage customers on a deeper level than just having them "like" a post. The deeper the interaction, the stronger the co-creation of value from the customer's perspective.

Consumers utilize various social media accounts for different purposes, and thus, small business owners and managers need to research where their customers are engaging so an effective social CRM strategy can deliver maximum value possible. Bradley and McDonald (2011) suggested maximizing value exchanges with customers; businesses should treat social media as more than a technology, but as a tool to strengthen current strategies and the community it can develop. Quinton (2013) pointed out that social media may be used as a research tool which strengthens communication strategies. Observation of consumer posts and interviewing can take place via social media. Post, tweets, pictures, blogs, etc. provide data that reflects true feelings about consumer lifestyle and attitude towards a brand or product. A clear definition and approach to social CRM are required before strategies can be developed.

Social CRM as a Business Strategy

Integrating the desire of the customer to co-create value, the need for quality customer service to provide customer interaction to increased perceived value, and

incorporating social media into the sales process as a strategy aligns with the theoretical

foundation of the resource based view (Trainor, 2012). Rodriquez and Honeycutt (2011)

focused on sales personnel and the sales process as co-dependent variables to a successful

social CRM strategy. Customer relationships with the business are a direct reflection of

the sales force's ability and focus on a quality customer experience through which the

sales process is improved and larger profits realized by the business. Greenberg (2010)

portrayed social CRM as a business strategy, with a technology platform support,

business rules, and processes that are targeted to engage customers in a conversation to

provide mutually beneficial value. Both owners and customers must see value for true

exchange to occur. Businesses need to have a communication plan with targeted

messages that customers are inclined to pay attention and react to, both with engagement

on social media and purchases of products or services. Understanding Greenberg's

definition of social CRM provides a foundation upon which to establish a formula for a

social CRM strategy.

Social media has introduced new customer-focused tools that encourage customer

interaction within their social network as well as within businesses social networks

(Trainor et al., 2013). LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the main social

media outlets that can be explored by small businesses (Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

Snapchat and Instagram are two other outlets that are being used by small businesses as

well (Joe, Seung-A Venus, & Jihoon, 2016). It is important for small businesses to know

where a target market is engaging and target those specific social media outlets.

Hootsuite allows a business to post a message to multiple social media sites in one

application. Hootsuite then formats the message to each social media site to be attractive to viewers. Hootsuite is an answer to the problem of having limited time and resources because that application does the majority of the work for the person posting information. Hubspot (2013) stated that 21% of marketers report the growing importance of social media to client companies. Social media has transformed communication between businesses and customers (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014).

The increase of social media use is why this can be an effective tool for small businesses and managing customer relationships. The first research question is to determine how small businesses utilize social media in current strategies. Ninety-two percent of customers trust word-of-mouth from family and friends over other forms of advertising which is an 18 percent increase from 2007-2011 (Nielsen, 2012). This shows how important and impactful social media can be given that it allows word-of-mouth and reviews to be seen by many family and friends of the customer who posts product reviews online. Schmitt, Skiera, and Van den Blute (2011) found the value of a customer referral is worth more than a non-referred customer. This is due to the trust placed in word-of-mouth from family and friends. Research has found that social media can have a positive impact specifically on sales performance in relation to creating opportunities to engage with customers as well as manage those relationships to see a positive change in customer behavior (Rodriquez, Peterson, and Krishnan, 2012). The shift in valued information sources supports a shift from company to consumer marketing to consumer to consumer marketing (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014).

Choudhury and Harrigan (2014) conducted a study of businesses and the effect social CRM strategies had on their businesses and found that social CRM did have positive effects on their relationships with customers. The businesses reported that customers felt an increase in loyalty and identification with the business. The above channels are the most popular social media outlets and determining what channels are used the most will help formulate an adaptable plan by small businesses to maximize efforts in engaging with customers. The biggest majority of users with purchasing power utilize social media channels to communicate and gather information themselves. Rodriguez and Honeycutt (2011) studied 70 businesses that reported CRM activities positively impacted sales effectiveness and performance. CRM accounted for 47% of the variance and 48.8% of the variance in performance (p. 13), showing a strong correlation between CRM and realized outcomes. Businesses are trying to reach customers and need to do so where the customers are choosing to engage.

The larger the presence and reminder of business, product, or service, the more likely one is to patron the business being advertised or engaged with. Harrigan and Miles (2014) surveyed 250 small businesses, with 156 valid responses, and found that small businesses used social media information to base sales, communication, and planning decisions which support that social media is an effective CRM tool. The specific areas studied were customer relationship orientation, customer communication, social media data and support all of which proved successful and beneficial to the participants in the study. Social media as a means of communication strategy builds a stronger connection for both the business and the customer through open dialogue.

The transformation in communication allows two-way dialogue that can now occur. Social media is not a one-way marketing platform, but rather allows the message receiver to comment back on the message and share with friends. Increased customer participation enhances the value customers perceive they have with small businesses. Value is the real motivator behind communication and loyalty. The stronger the value, the stronger the customer.

Social CRM Delivering Value

The key part of Greenberg's (2010) definition of social CRM is "value." Customers are not going to engage just in feeling connected; small businesses need to design social experiences that generate customer value in return for time, endorsement, information, and attention (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Customer value is the combination of both quality and satisfaction. Quality does not need experience because it deals directly with the product whereas satisfaction is derived by the customer post-consumption (Gallarza, Gil-Saura, & Holbrook, 2011). Effective social CRM strategies in delivering value to the customer view social media as more than a tool, but as an extension of the firm communication platform.

An effective strategy consists of altering the mindset of what value is to customers. In fact, small business owners need to know how to approach and engage with customers through social media while controlling the conversation (Marolt, Pucihar, & Zimmermann, 2015). Social media has created online communities which offer a good resource to connect and gather feedback from customers, but it also allows for two-way communication which can be difficult to control. Once a message is posted, it is open for

any possible response, and the business can quickly lose control of the intended message. To effectively control the conversation, small businesses should develop a strategy of talking points to engage with customers but also maintain control of the information posted as much as possible.

Another effective strategy for delivering value includes being in control of the social media conversation. Marolt et al. (2015) also presented the problem of measuring improved relationships and performance. With social CRM being a new topic, there are no definitive measurement practices across the industry to consistently gauge the success social CRM strategies are having on small businesses. While social media platforms allow businesses to analyze post success and traffic to the business page, businesses are left to a measurement device to determine overall success. The problem this creates is in not having a uniform measure to judge successful or unsuccessful social CRM initiatives. Numerous studies have been conducted on CRM frameworks, case studies, and implementation strategies, but there is a lack of attention on CRM measurement of performance (Kim & Kim, 2009). An aim of this research is to determine a good formula for a social CRM plan which includes measurable goals and objectives to realize achievements made.

An available option to measure social media traffic is Google Analytics, which will track how many people view a page, like specific posts, and timing when social media sites are most active. Social media platforms are making it easy for businesses to target the right customer base at the right time. As a "page administrator", one who controls page membership and adds, edits, or deletes content, for a social media channel,

one has access to various graphs and data on followers and others who view their social

media page. The data essentially tells the marketer who is looking at the posts, age

range, and the time of day most people view business' posts. This information can help a

small business to create targeted messages and schedule those posts for the specific times

when the most people are viewing the social media site. The data also tracks how well a

post is being viewed which helps the business to make the decision to remove the post or

boost the post. Boosting a post has a minimal cost of $5 but may have a large impact on

customers, as it will ensure that the post reaches a bigger audience. In addition to the

information provided to page administrators, there is a section of the report titled "Pages

to Watch". This section shows competitors and basic information such as total page

likes, a percentage increase of likes, total posts this week, and engagement this week.

This is a useful resource allowing a business to make sure that a business' marketing

tactics are on par with identified competitors. This information is free and can be utilized

to maximize the impact a business has on customers via social media. Having this

specific and accurate customer data available and understanding how it is reported will

aid small business owners and managers in developing effective social CRM strategies.

Strategies can only be deemed effective if clear measurements are stated and strived for

which provide a standard against which to measure the results to determine real impact.

Measuring Social CRM Value

Greenberg (2010) pointed out that quantitative measurements, which traditionally

measure success, do not effectively measure social CRM activities. Small business

owners and managers will need to look at the tone and flow of the online conversation to

measure the level of enhanced customer engagement that has occurred. The willingness of customers to participate in online communities goes beyond the number of posts or tweets through social media, but to the depth of the communication content. Engagement via social media goes beyond a "like" on Facebook or retweet on Twitter, but an effort to respond "in words" to a post. Many consumers browse social media and look at postings, but that is not a measure of how successful the message communication is. Measuring how many consumers click a link or respond to a post goes more in-depth and that is where a small business can begin communicating and engaging by adding value to the customer experience. Small businesses want to not only initiate a connection and response through a purchase of the good or service but to engage on a deeper level to begin a long-term relationship built on trust and customer satisfaction. The stronger the emotional connection with the small business, the higher the level of customer engagement which leads to a loyal and repeat customer that increases sales (Jongchul, Jieun, & Minsun, 2016).

Customer Engagement

Engagement with customers is the intent to create a personal connection (Luigi et al., 2011). A story needs to be told to derive deeper value by relating to customer emotions, empathy, and compassion (p. 40). Stories can spread virally and resonate with more customers. To improve the impact of customer engagement it is important for a small business to discover where customers are participating in online communities and where they are willing to communicate with businesses is necessary to understand in a social CRM strategy. Without understanding the motive behind the customer's

participation, businesses cannot tailor messages specifically to appeal to their customer

base. Tailoring messages to what customers may be looking for, or their purpose in

communicating can lead to a higher response ultimately leading to higher engagement

and business sales. Baird and Parasnis (2011) noted the larger impact virtual sites are

having on customers and the need to grab customer attention to engaging them outside of

touch points in brick and mortar locations or on a company website. Increasing touch

points allows businesses to get closer to customers resulting in cost reduction of

marketing efforts, increase revenues and efficiencies (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Social media have attained substantial interest from consumers, and thus,

businesses are feeling pressure to engage customers where the customers are actively

participating (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). The reason behind the pressure businesses are

experiencing is customers are feeling a gap between what they are seeking and what

businesses are offering through social media. Customers want tangible value, and that

needs to be accurately delivered by businesses (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Social media

provides a faster and cheaper cost alternative to direct mail or television advertisements

and allows for two-way communication. Direct mail and television advertisements only

allow one-way communication, not allowing direct feedback and response. Social media,

for small businesses, thus can prove to be the most effective method of engaging with

customers and immediately responding to a customer's questions or comments, making

the customer feel a part of something and that the stated opinion is valued. Social media

has also assisted businesses in recognizing virtual communication as a means for

developing relationships with customers (Trainor, 2012). As consumers, in general,

engage on social media for personal engagement and belonging, businesses can capitalize on this motivation and target their customers as well. A study conducted by Maecker, Barrot, and Becker (2016) surveyed 8,330 customers and how social media impacted their connection, or attachment, with a business. Of the 8,330 some had engaged with the business via social media and others did not, so the behavior was compared against the opposite group. The findings resulted in customers that had engaged with the business via social media had a larger rate of upselling and reduced risk of turnover for the business. The customers that chose to engage felt more connected with the business because of the presence and engagement through social media and thus had increased their number of service requests, thus generating additional profits and loyalty for the business in the study.

Virtual communication allows two-way communication between customers and businesses. Online communities and websites have redefined the customer role from spectator to active player in creating value experiences (Claffey & Brady, 2014). Engaging with customers online extends from merely transactional behavior. To develop value and engage with an online community small businesses need to convey high marketing efficiency, customer loyalty, and authentic products and values (Tajen & Toombs, 2014). The value created by the customer, which culminates with a transaction, is developed through non-transactional behavior such as recommendations, word-of-mouth, writing reviews and blogging (Claffey & Brady, 2014). Customers who perform these behaviors derive value from the social media experience. Customers who value the social media experience typically spend more money on new products or services,

provide positive word-of-mouth and give honest and constructive feedback (Orzan et al., 2016). It would be promising for small businesses to seek out customers and define who has a circle of influence. Targeting customers who have the power of influence could increase the business's efforts without doing more than necessary because the person of influence would do the posting and sharing for the company.

Influential customers can use word-of-mouth communication via social media posting to spread a business's message further than the business could through other marketing methods. Although, this can prove to be a positive thing for the business the challenge is determining the right balance between empowering customers to communicate about the business through social media and the business still having control over the marketing message (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). Maecker et al.'s (2016) research supported the fact that customers, after making a purchase, share their opinion and experience via social media which has a profound effect on other customers. This experience and posted information can be positive or negative. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a positive or negative comment or post made by a current, future, or past customer about a product/service or company via social media or online communities (Strauss, 2000). The same principles of word-of-mouth apply to eWOM with the main difference being the instant access and multitude of listeners on the web. Electronic word-of-mouth can spread at a much faster rate.

For word-of-mouth to spread, consumers have to be engaged with social media and the reason for communicating, which would be the small business in this research. Word-of-mouth can not only affect the sales of other customers but also references,

repeat customers, and upselling (Maecker et al., 2016). Wolny and Mueller (2013) identified four motivations for engaging with a business via social media: brand involvement, product involvement, self-involvement, and other involvement. Each of these allows a customer to engage based on their needs and desires. Wolny and Mueller studied the effect eWOM had on the fashion industry. The authors found the four motivations all led to why customers chose to engage and spread their opinion to their circle of influence, particularly brand involvement. This study relates to the purpose of this piece of research in that it substantiates the positive affect social CRM can have a business and customer loyalty. Brand involvement was a key indicator in those consumers who actively participated in an online community and commented about a business's posting regarding their products. The higher the involvement, the more the customer is committed to sharing their point of view which leads to a larger impact beyond what the business could do on their own. Alhidari, Iyer, and Paswan (2015) also found that consumer involvement in social media increases the number of purchases made with those stores and brands they communicate with and about. The more the consumers engaged on topics related to the business, the more they became personally engaged and purchased more products than consumers who were not engaging. Individuals involved with a particular communication method (i.e. social media) give more weight and buying power to the marketing messages communicated through that particular method (Yoo, Kim, & Sanders, 2015). Small businesses that establish a communication place via social media and begin engaging with customers with targeted

messages will see an increase in participation and sales as a result of reaching out to customers beyond a brick and mortar location.

Traditional CRM strategies acquire information from customers and are used to promote specific messages at the target market to generate continued interest in a company. Social CRM is different in that instead of developing messages "at" the preferred customer base or target market, small business owners and managers are directing messages "to" the customer base to begin a conversation. Social media has dramatically altered the way consumers communicate with others, gather product information, and make purchasing decisions (Chu & Choi, 2011). The advantage social media adds to CRM is that two-way communication can occur instantaneously. Immediate feedback can be gathered to answer any questions or concerns a consumer may have or to validate how well the business is doing in meeting the needs of the customers as previously discussed with eWOM. The goal of social CRM is to facilitate mutually beneficial and value-driven experiences between the company and the customer (Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

The implications of a mutually beneficial experience between the company and the customer are strong trust development. Chen, Yeh, and Yeh (2011) discussed how trust could lead to lower transaction costs and develop long-term relationships. Viewing the customer as an asset employs relationship marketing and puts the customer as the main priority for the purpose of a business and drives marketing communications. Understanding what customers value and tailoring a unique communication plan fit for their needs is the first step in developing a social CRM strategy (Baird & Parasnis, 2011),

which determines the level of engagement the customers will choose to have. A social

media message has to be appealing and targeted to be effective. Time and knowledge of

customers are needed before a communication plan can be implemented. Woodcock,

Green, and Starkey (2011) also agreed that social CRM applications allow for tailored

offerings to customers depending on the social media outlet being used. This customized

approach may result in higher customer engagement and sales. Rodriguez, Ajjan, and

Peterson (2014) stressed the value derived from social CRM activities are only as good as

how social media is used and applied in the correct context.

Improving Customer Relationships through Social CRM Strategies

Small business owners and managers view social media as an extension of a

communication strategy instead of just technology will see more positive results (Bradley

& McDonald, 2011). Social media has created a channel of sharing information resulting

in the ability to better engage the customer, developing stronger and more impactful

relationships with potential and current customers (Rodriquez, Peterson, & Krishnan,

2012). Incorporating social media technology into CRM strategies is a relevant

combination of improving customer relationships through four channels: sharing,

conversations, relationships, and groups (Trainor et al., 2014). The four channels

represent the total social media experience that participants have as they engage in social

media websites. These four channels described by Trainor et al. correlate with the

findings of Wolny and Mueller (2013) in that consumers want to belong and have their

opinion validated. Sharing encompasses the interaction of customers via social media

with each other and businesses. As customers share experiences through digital postings

on Facebook, Instagram, or similar social websites, other current and potential customers can react to those digital postings and share in the conversation. Sharing in the conversation adds to the value a customer receives because it elongates a connection to the business and the feelings associated with the product or service.

Conversations, closely relate to sharing, in that the dialog that is initiated through the shared postings enlist a typed response and a conversation begins. Information shared through conversations can be analyzed and used by small businesses to capture true emotions from customers and observe reactions after using the product or service. Bertrand (2013) studied the social media accounts of two brands, British Gas and Marks & Spencer. The research established the level of trust consumers had for each brand. The findings resulted in a positive trust perception for M&S (net trust score: +43) and a negative trust perception for British Gas (net trust score: -25) (p. 334). Looking through social media posts, other than that of the companies themselves, the researchers looked for overall categories and specific words to denote a trusting relationship. Ultimately, Bertrand (2013) reported that social media complements traditional marketing strategies and provides truthful and unprompted statements by current and new customers. Customer statements are thus more authentic because they provide a personal opinion.

Social media conversations could be more organic and authentic because they are not being pressured or asked to respond to a predetermined question. Ramnarayan (2015) discussed that social media provides the community for consumers to openly share their opinion with complete strangers and that consumer reviews impact consumer behavior. Customers are choosing to engage on their own through word-of-mouth. Other

customers may view this as more reliable feedback because it is not published by the

company, so they believe it actually to be true. Customers perceive small businesses that

are active via social media as more approachable so they are interested in engaging online

with those businesses (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Social media feedback can be both

positive and negative for business, so careful monitoring and control of the conversation

must occur to maintain a positive image and conversation. Positive feedback from

customers contains words such as "great", "customer" "love", and "fun". While negative

feedback contains words such as "company", "very", and "not" (Ramnarayan, 2015).

Using the word "customer" is interpreted as positive because they are identifying with the

business. The word "company" implies perceived distance and choosing to allocate

blame or distaste. Carefully reading social media feedback can provide invaluable data

from customers to better market to specific targets.

Social media is a channel that can group people with similar interests and allow

businesses to reach their desired target market specifically. Trainor et al., (2014) defined

relationships as organizations having access to networks of customers. The common

interests create a bond between customers and as businesses can target and tailor

messages to these interests they can see an increase in sales and loyalty. Locating and

attracting interest networks through social media allow a small business to categorize a

market segment and obtain information quickly and with minimal effort. Customers,

within a group, are choosing to engage in one central location and have similar

preferences which are defined by the type of group that the customers are a part of and

have a developed relationship. Information gathered from these established relationships help a small business to garner a larger appeal in a controlled environment.

The last channel to develop through adding social media to CRM strategies is groups. As information is shared and conversations develop, relationships are established around a common feeling or cause and thus a group is developed. Groups are online communities specifically addressing a particular brand, topic, or product (Trainor et al., 2014). Similarly, to relationships, small businesses can use group data to reach the target market in a controlled setting to maximize their social CRM efforts and strategies. Small businesses that seek to group customer's interest may have a larger impact on social CRM strategies. By targeting messages at the group behavioral level, a larger appeal and connection can be made. This literature helped answer the research question of how small business owners and managers view social media's effect on customer relationships. Businesses that have a strategy for message communication can use the consumer desire to belong and share an opinion as a competitive advantage by knowing how consumers utilize social media outlets and what motivates them to engage beyond looking and participate and add to the conversation started by a business.

Social CRM Characteristics

Social CRM is a relatively new concept (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015). As social CRM is being developed, it is important to understand the contributing characteristics that help define such strategies which will define what skills and tools are required for effective implementation. Jacewicz and Cho (2015) identified three aspects of social CRM: relationship, technological, and augmentation. These three aspects are what separate

social CRM initiatives from social media use and traditional CRM strategies. The

Internet environment is infused into each of the three aspects and help unify the targeted

effort by being the medium through which communications are directed and received.

Relationship

The relationship aspect of social CRM refers to the level of intention toward

building long-term relationships with customers (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015). Effectively

managing customer relationships can result in an increased competitive advantage

(Garrido-Moreno et al., 2014). Stronger customer loyalty through effective customer

relationship management creates barriers for entry for business competitors which

provides time for the business to react to customer demands and feedback to show

innovation and constant improvement to benefit the customer (Orzan et al., 2016).

Srivastava, Shervani, and Fahey (1998) suggested that for a business to remain

competitive, it must put aside traditional marketing initiatives and embrace customer

oriented marketing. The Internet is replacing one-way communication messages and as

social media and internet use increases so does the consumer's desire to engage in two-

way communications and be heard.

Consumers add value to marketing efforts and should be engaged in building

relationships. Social CRM allows small businesses not to guess at what customers want,

but to engage with them to find out. Immediate feedback and reposting of a

communicated message prove what business messages are well received and which ones

are not. This can then help the business in its marketing decisions moving forward with

the goal of increased customer relationships and sales. Rodriguez, Ajjan, and Peterson

(2014) studied social CRM and found the relationships built and maintained through social media led to an increase in sales. Customers are engaging in relationships, both personal and professional, through multiple social media platforms (Quinton, 2013). Small businesses need to take advantage of this opportunity to remain competitive and strengthen existing relationships.

Technological

The technological aspect of social CRM refers to collaborative communication (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015). Social media is not a one-way communication channel, but rather a place for consumers to engage and share thoughts and feelings. Participants want feedback on their posts and to share their experiences. The Internet allows marketers to interact, provide information, have real-time communications and involve consumers in a movement (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015). Participating in a movement gives the customer a reason to share posts and to comment because customers want a voice and for that voice to be heard. Social media allows businesses to generate "buzz" and provide feedback directly to consumers who may have an issue with the company or product, which can enhance perceived quality for the consumer (Zhou et al., 2015).

Augmentation

Augmentation refers to the company's ability to adjust and effectively institute social CRM strategies (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015). Shifting from traditional CRM to social CRM requires a culture change towards a customer-focused mentality (Newby et al., 2015). If upper management supports social CRM implementation and sees the added value customers bring to the company, then lower-level managers will be more likely to

be non-resistant to change. Upper management is in the position to train lower-level

managers and employees on the social media strategy being employed and how the

organizational structure change will be implemented (Giamanco & Gregoire, 2012).

Innovation is a key factor for long-term success through a developed and enhanced

competitive advantage (Newby et al., 2015). Garrido-Moreno et al. (2014) also discussed

the importance of company culture to determine the appropriate resources for social

CRM implementation and required training for increased success. The social CRM

characteristics discussed can provide a competitive advantage for a small business if the

small business owners and managers know how to use social media to their advantage;

otherwise, they will continue to struggle against their competition.

Small Business Struggle

Almost 50% of small businesses close within the first five years due to poor

marketing strategies (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012). Developing a simple, yet effective

marketing strategy using social media is a good way to reduce this trend. An advantage

small businesses have is the capability to create and enhance close and personal

relationships with customers which can be a competitive advantage (Harrigan & Miles,

2014; Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Providing tailored products and services to spending

more time cultivating a personal relationship with the customer is what small business

service is about. Tailored products and services and a personal relationship can prove to

be a core competency which can yield a competitive advantage (Crisan-Mitra & Borza,

2014). A study conducted by Crisan-Mitra and Borza found small businesses have

problems making strategic decisions because of the lack of resources to maximize on

external opportunities and the informality of strategic management (p. 173). The study

focused on strategic entrepreneurship which is how the business reinvents itself and

evolves to establish a competitive advantage. Utilizing social media and online

communities to promote stronger relationships is something, given the appropriate

resources, a small business can do effectively to create a competitive advantage. The

results of social CRM strategies are a reflection of the resources employed by a business

and that business's ability to turn those resources into capabilities (Trainor et al., 2014).

 With small businesses having fewer employees thus less expertise in multiple

areas, these small businesses can lack the know-how of social CRM strategy

implementation. Sasinovskaya and Anderson (2011) noted that although social media

tools have become easier for users, small businesses, as a whole, lack resources needed to

maximize the use of the available tools. Further, the small businesses simply cannot

afford a traditional CRM service and lack awareness and competence to compile a

strategic social CRM plan. Taneja and Toombs (2014) pointed out that a challenge small

businesses have with social media is how to incorporate and reign in the mass

collaboration that social media can provide business. This is confirmed by Parry et al.

(2012) who studied small businesses and found a lack of resources and knowledge

prohibited successful marketing of products. Knowledge of a defined successful social

CRM strategy is needed for small business owners and managers to be effective in social

media marketing efforts. Social media is a viable channel for reaching customers with a

targeted message, but know-how knowledge and research must precede any action to

garner anticipated results and initiate a positive two-way communication opportunity with customers.

Harrigan and Miles (2014) stressed the point of a lack of resources among small businesses as large businesses use customer data to push information to the customers, small businesses can use gathered data to treat the customer with a personal touch and see them as a person and not a target market category. Necessary knowledge and expertise are required though for maximum impact (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). As large companies have resources and expertise, small businesses often have limited resources or have to engage customers with alternative methods (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). If a small business can establish a culture targeted towards customer orientation and communication, this will help develop a plan for an effective marketing strategy (Parry et al., 2012). Some consumers prefer to shop local and support small businesses because of the connection and personal attention a large business cannot afford not to give them. Personal attention and relationships are key to small business success and what these businesses are built and sustained upon. Knowing what resources the small business has within its employee backgrounds and abilities and what resources and knowledge are lacking, in the social media department, will allow the small business owner to seek proper training and assistance to develop a social CRM strategy. The social CRM strategy should appeal to the customer base and becomes an extension of their personal relationship and customer service.

Business Success and Failure

Being customer focused is a necessity for small businesses. Customer-focus

requires current knowledge of customer demands, and the ability to process that

knowledge into functional strategies (Bueren, Schierholz, Kolbe, & Brenner, 2004).

CRM strategies allow a small business to gather the necessary information to focus on the

customer base. Harrigan, Ramsey, and Ibbotson (2011) studied the effects CRM can

have on small businesses and held the position that small businesses are differentiated by

customer relationships and their ability to adapt helps them be successful. Coltman

(2007) mentioned that CRM capabilities require human, technical, and business

knowledge. These areas are difficult to manage and track because they are comprised of

a network of interdependent processes. Thus, requiring small business owners and

managers to have IT, human skills, and business knowledge to utilize traditional CRM

strategies to be customer-focused. CRM can be one of the most effective sources of

customer retention (Papadopoulos, Ojiako, Chipulu, & Lee, 2012).

Schlin (2014) conducted a study of CRM strategies to see how successful and

customer-focused they really were. Schlin studied four main objectives: existing mission

statement, objectives of current CRM strategy, techniques for collecting customer data,

IT, and CRM tools being used. The findings were that 62% engaged proactively with

customers to build value and 38% were reactive in engagement with customers. The

62% of companies that were proactive used both on-line and off-line measures. Social

media was one of the areas used to engage with customers besides loyalty programs and

personalized offers to attract new and current customers. By engaging with customers on

their level and where they choose to engage these businesses were able to see positive results.

Schlin (2014) concluded his findings with developing five objectives for a CRM strategy: anticipate customer needs, understand customer motivation to fulfill those needs, use IT in marketing activities to reach customers where they are engaging online, provide superior sales and customer service, use online promotions to add touch-points with customers. These five objectives are customer-focused because each objective is centered on the customer and understanding their wants and needs and how to address them. If a small business follows these objectives, it can be proactive and competitively compete for customers with the competition. Similarly, Buttle (2001) suggested the CRM value chain comprises customer analysis, deep knowledge of the customer, a network of information, value offerings targeted to customers, and the ability to manage the relationship.

Winer (2001) also outlined that a successful CRM strategy consists of a customer database, analysis of that database, decisions, and tools to target customers, and measures against which to determine success or failure. All three authors have customer-focused objectives and require knowledge of the customer and targeted tools and strategies based on customer needs and wants. The process of implementing the strategies can look different for each business, but the key is to make decisions based on what the customers are asking for and how they will best respond. CRM objectives based on customers will lead to higher success.

CRM Success

With objectives being established for CRM strategies, the effective implementation must follow to be successful. Payne and Frow (2006) described three elements critical for successful CRM strategies: CRM readiness assessment, CRM change management, and CRM project management. CRM readiness assessment focuses on analyzing ones' competitors and how their CRM strategies align with their own. By analyzing competitor actions, a small business can determine whether they are proactive or reactive and how to best maintain or grow their market share. Through this study, top CEO's were interviewed, and their opinion was for CRM success to have the best change top management must back CRM implementation, create a vision, and establish cross-functional activities amongst organizational departments. Finally, CRM project management focuses on the 'hard' and 'soft' skills of gathering data and managing customer relationships (Payne & Frow, 2006, p. 155). Both are needed as the data gathered in the 'hard' approach provides feedback from customers and information of market segments. The 'soft' approach can be the tactic aspect of the strategy where the CRM strategy can be implemented through communication with the customers and develop new touchpoints to build stronger relationships.

The two approaches add value to the customer experience and help develop a complete social CRM strategy. All three areas are critical for appealing to customers and producing cohesive strategies that are customer focused. These areas must also engage employees since they are the ones communicating with the customers. Employees are the front-line for implementing good customer service, improving operation efficiencies, and nurturing customer loyalty.

CRM Failure

As employees can play to CRM success, they can also aid in CRM failure. Failure rates among CRM strategies can be attributed to insufficient attention by businesses to the role employees play in CRM implementation. Taneja and Toombs (2014) showed that 26% of small businesses effectively and efficiently utilize social media to generate new sales and customer relationships. A main factor for the small percentage is that there are limited resources devoted to specializing in social media marketing (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). Small businesses need to invest in their employees and align CRM strategies with the employee's purpose to generate buy-in. Being a customer focused business also requires employee focused strategies as well since employees are a critical component of the CRM process (Day, 2002; Reinartz et al., 2004; Srivastava et al., 1999).

Based on such information Plakoyiannaki, Tzokas, Dimitratos, and Saren (2008) conducted a case study and interviewed employees on their attitude toward the company. The purpose of these interviews was to determine if a direct connection existed between the attitudes of employees and the level of customer focus they provided during their work day. The results of the case study concluded that employee values directly related to the customer experience and the role the employee plays in value creation. Trusting the business was an overwhelming factor in the employee placing customer interest ahead of their how and delivering high-quality service.

Even if employees are being trained appropriately and deliver high-quality service, the customer has to choose to take part to realize CRM success. Papadopoulos et

al. (2012) suggested that CRM failure could be attributed to the unwillingness of customers to engage via social CRM initiatives and provide relevant or useful information. The study found that customers feel this way in part because measurable benefits are not relayed to the customer for them to realize the benefit of engaging with the small business via social media. Other factors that contributed to CRM failure are employee training, management support, strategic implementation, and results in feedback. Simply being present via social media is not enough for social CRM success. A small business has to nurture the relationship with their customers so they will want to engage with the business via social media. Depending on how the small business chooses to engage via social media, benefits and opportunities for the customer should be present to encourage them to provide useful information that can give the small business data to improve its target marketing and product offering.

Payne and Frow (2006) found that 75% of companies do not have a working definition of CRM and 61% do not have a working framework for CRM strategies. The absence of adequate social CRM framework, to measure success, is disappointing to results of CRM initiatives (Grabner-Kraeuter & Moedritscher, 2002). The lack of a clear definition and strategy to implement CRM strategies are lead contributors for CRM failure in small businesses. Knowledge and resources need to be available for small businesses to use for individual implementation according to each businesses unique needs and strategy for differentiation. Having an overall definition and strategy could reduce the number of CRM failures and contribute to a higher level of success.

Social CRM Formula

Social media can play a vital role in small business owners and managers'
understanding of their customer base which ultimately leads to strategic success or
failure. Consumers trust word-of-mouth communication and enjoy sharing content via
social media (Woodcock, Green, & Starkey, 2011). The content shared by the consumers
can be personal or professional in nature depending on the social media outlet and the
person communicating the information. Small businesses that monitor social media can
develop an increase in knowledge about a consumer base's behavior in the market
(Woodcock et al., 2011). Research discussed the issue of a lack of resources for small
businesses, focusing on the lack of data social media allows, contact with consumers, and
the opportunity to build a brand and influence consumer perception and attitude
(Bakeman & Hanson, 2010; Harrington & Miles, 2014; Woodcock et al., 2011). The
objective of social media for small businesses should be to talk "with" customers and not
"to" customers (Tajen & Toombs, 2014). Influencing consumers' mindsets takes careful
planning and targeted messages that reach consumers where they are communicating via
social media. Talking "to" customers coincides with engaging with them via social
media so they choose to provide feedback that is meaningful to the business which can
lead to social CRM success instead of failure.

Small businesses need a formulated plan and strategy that social media can
complement and add value to. Not having a communication plan can prove disastrous,
and this research study will focus on what constitutes, via literature, a plausible and
effective social CRM strategy. Harrigan and Miles (2014) studied how small businesses
are implementing social CRM strategies and the tools that are being initiated. One tool is

online communities. Small businesses are creating and managing online communities with the goal of engaging with customers about product offerings and marketing messages (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). Social media communication does not replace face-to-face contact because that is an advantage small businesses will continue to have. Rather, social media is an extension and another touch point to influence customers. The online communities are centered on the product or brand and allow for an open flow of communication with the interested parties. The communication shared in the online communities is informal and constant with the goal of generating value for both the customer and the business (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). Community-based involvement may assist in avoiding a failed product launch and provide critical innovation ideas (Sasinovskaya & Anderson, 2011). Small business owners and managers create online communities, via social media, control the content and can more easily manage the information distribution with available resources. Blogs provide the opportunity to begin a conversation and build a community around a common interest (Lahm Jr., 2011). Sasinovskaya and Anderson (2011) discussed "online stickiness", which refers to the customer's desire to engage via social media and visit the site more often and communicate. This "stickiness" is what small businesses can use to their competitive advantage. Finding a leader in one's customer community or sphere of influence will assist in making a larger impact. The idea of "stickiness" was supported through a study conducted by Sasinovskaya and Anderson (2011), where they analyzed a small bathroom design business and its online presence. The study found that although the small business had good customers and relations in the community, there was not a place for current and

potential customers to engage online about design ideas or common construction

questions. Through an interactive addition to its website and promoted through social

media, users were able to design a bathroom and become familiar with the brand and

products that are offered. By customers assimilating with the brand they became attached

and were more likely to engage with other customers and the business.

An option to best generate a community is where small businesses can solicit a

blogger who has a strong following to influence customer perceptions. By sending the

product, or compensation, for the blogger to use and then write about, the word-of-mouth

extension would be stronger coming from a trusted blogger than the company itself.

Bloggers are typically chosen based on target audience and blog type. Blogs have been

designed for the non-programmer for the purpose of communicating any message to a

worldwide audience, this makes blogs a plausible option for a small business (Lahm Jr.,

2011).

Through communication via online communities and studying comments and

posts on social media, small businesses are being proactive in collecting this information

and analyzing the content of useful data. Harrigan and Miles (2014) reaffirmed social

media's influence in CRM strategies due to the higher level of use by small businesses

and the intent to gather marketing data on their consumers. The information collected

can provide a full picture of the customer and allow for targeted communication

messages and product offerings thus increasing business sales. Carson, Cromie,

McGowan, and Hill (1995) pointed out that small businesses are not data mining and

going very deep into coding the information because of a smaller customer base and

responsibilities of daily tasks. Still, this information is proving useful for improving customer relationships. Examples of the data collected and used via social media include consumer preferences and satisfaction, which determines perceived value, and competitor trends and information (Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

Choosing the appropriate social media channel depends on the purpose of communication. Social media has been referred to as an extension of communication strategies. Choudhury and Harrigan (2014) discussed possible purposes for communication strategies: engaging top customers, measuring customer satisfaction, and increasing customer value and market trends. These purposes for communication will drive the type of message sent and the targeted market. Research does not say what strategy is traditionally favored because that would be due to each business situation itself. For this study, to address the research question of what a good formula for a social CRM plan is would be determined by the purpose of the message. Comparing various businesses and how they communicate similar messages to the customers would create a general plan to answer this question in practical situations.

As any social CRM strategy is developed, it is imperative to have achievable goals to ensure the best chance for success. Woodcock et al. (2011) proposed that small businesses should create actionable first steps using 100-day goals. Developing a plan is not going to happen immediately, and it takes the time to develop customer interest and communication. Setting a goal of creating and maintaining an online community with a desired number of followers, number dependent on the business product, is an achievable goal for 100-days. After the desired followers are aware of the online community and

communication has begun then strategy begins are targeted messages are sent based on feedback from the participants. Developing communication messages should wait for the second 100-day period because at that point the business would have general information on the community members and their thoughts and opinions. Using this information, targeted messages will be more effective, and a stronger customer relationship can be developed.

Conclusions

Social CRM is a newer trend in marketing and may provide small businesses with an effective marketing tool for building long-term relationships and trust with a customer base as well as a competitive advantage. Not all small businesses have the resources and opportunities to employ traditional CRM strategies that are expensive and can be difficult to sift through the gathered data. As social media tools have become easier for users, small businesses, as a whole, lack resources needed to capitalize on the advantages offered by available social media tools (Sasinovskaya & Anderson, 2011). Given the literature available, there are tools and measurements for which successful social CRM strategies can be measured. Small businesses have adopted social CRM strategies can be analyzed against this data to see if the literature is realistic in real-world situations and attainable for small business owners who lack knowledge and expertise in marketing and social media.

Social media provides small businesses with a plethora of data, and small businesses are using it. Small businesses are following customers and watching for customer satisfaction and new emerging trends in customer wants and needs. Although

social CRM data is not as in-depth or coded, it is providing useful information to small businesses who may implement a social media strategy to reach a customer base, or better, to increase the customer's loyalty to the business and brand.

Woodcock et al. (2011) suggested small steps are crucial for realized success. The authors suggested a 100-day goal. As small business owners and managers, they are still responsible for the day-to-day responsibilities of the firm. Setting an attainable goal in a decent timeframe will provide time to generate interest in developing and participating in an online community and then begin targeting messages to participating customers. Small business owners who rush into a plan without the desired outcome have no strategy and will not have a firm foundation to build upon, thus increasing their likeliness of failure. With limited resources, the best approach is to get the communication strategy right the first time and develop a cohesive plan that targets customers where they choose to engage to garner maximum results.

As a communication strategy is developed, social media should be integrated into the plan and not just be the plan itself. Viewing social media as an extension of a communication strategy will lead to positive results (Bradley & McDonald, 2011). Understanding how consumers engage on social media outlets is imperative for targeted marketing. Social media is not a communication strategy; the messages communicated by the business are the specific communication strategy that is being employed. The purpose the business wants the customers to understand is its new product ideas and customer satisfaction. Once a communication strategy is developed, the appropriate social media outlet can be selected and initiated.

Developing a strategy is one component, but it needs vision and a leader for proper implementation. Upper management support is crucial for CRM success. Leadership should encourage employee buy-in through the social CRM process in order to increase realized results. Agnihotri et al. (2012) found that a small business needs defined goals, information exchange, competitor analysis, and milestones to effectively engage with customers via social media. Without clear goals and milestones, the small business will not know what has improved and cannot know if it is making forward progress as effectively as should be against set goals. Through customer relationships and intentional marketing, information exchange can happen that will provide beneficial data for the small business to use to improve customer relationships and product offerings. While the focus for the small business should be on the customer there needs to be some attention paid to the competition. Selecting a competitor, or a small group of them will allow for milestones to be measured and to determine if the social CRM efforts are being a differentiator for the business.

As small businesses have been and will continue to engage on social media, having the right mindset of purpose will better enable customers to engage and see an increase in sales. Consumers participate via social media for a myriad of reasons including belonging, involvement, and decision making (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015). The higher the involvement, the more loyal a customer becomes and the higher purchase power they develop (Alhidari et al., 2015). The ultimate goal of social CRM is to manage customer relationships by collecting data to discover trends and customer attitudes and to develop a relationship that will create a bond of loyalty that will extend

over a long period and increase the customer's value to the small business. Word-of-mouth and e-WOM play a large role in the success and impact social media communications can have for the small business.

By improving customer relationships, additional value can be garnered and realized by the customer. Operating with a customer centered focus will also show the customer that the small business cares about tailoring products to meet wants and needs. This individualized attention is a differentiator that large businesses cannot provide. Developed relationships are a necessity for any small business to thrive, and social CRM provides an opportunity to maximize those relationships. Through stronger relationships, customers will be more willing to engage and provide useful information for the business to continue improving its product offering and business operations. Encouraging customer engagement does not occur rapidly, but rather through a strong sense of customer loyalty and relationship. Once a trust level has been established, the customer has buy-in and is more willing to promote and engage with the business and other customers.

Transition and Summary

The study of how small business owners and managers view social media is an integral part of success and engagement with customers. Literature indicates social CRM is a relatively new concept without a uniform measurement to determine success or standard application techniques (Jacewicz & Cho, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2009;Marolt et al., 2015). As each small business has its own customer base, social media participation can look different for each small business. This study aims to address this issue and find out

from small business owners and managers, who utilize social media, their input, and

perspective on the purpose of engaging with customers via social media and the value

received from that engagement. Studies have been conducted using quantitative

measurements on the effect of social CRM, but the qualitative aspect of the managers and

owners would lead to understanding the intent and marketing strategies behind their

social media involvement and how they choose to engage with customers.

This qualitative study will consist of one-on-one interviews with small business

owners in Springfield, Missouri who currently engage in social media practices. The

results of the interviews will provide insight into the motivations and perceptions of

social media engagement has on customer loyalty and repeat purchasing from small

businesses. This knowledge may allow small business owners and managers to better

understand how other small businesses utilize social media and ways to enhance social

CRM efforts.

Section 2: The Project

This section presents the research methodology for this study and will review the

purpose statement and discuss the qualitative research project in detail. The following

methodological issues are addressed: research design, sample, instrumentation, data

collection procedures, data analysis, reliability, and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the impact customer

engagement, through online communities, has on small businesses. Harrigan and Miles

(2014) conducted a quantitative study to determine the factors that influence social

customer relationship management activities in small businesses. The conclusion was

that social media interaction is key for enhancing customer engagement. The authors

suggested that a qualitative study should be conducted to investigate further the effect of

reaching customers through online communities and the impact that has on future

business (Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

Small businesses typically have an intuitive, rather than a formal, customer

relationship management program due to limited resources for a formal customer

relationship management program (Harrigan & Miles, 2014). Due to these limited

resources, small businesses typically cannot purchase a customer relationship

management software program that will gather customer data, and design communication

messages for them. Small businesses may then be inclined to communicate with customers via social media due to immediate availability and as an effective means of sharing information with customers. Social media is a good source of communication for small businesses because customers who are intentional about supporting local businesses want to be part of a community and vocal about their allegiance. Social media thrives on this activity and is an advantage for small businesses to engage with their customers rather than having a formal CRM program that is purchased.

With social media being a prime opportunity for engaging with customers, small business owners can lack suitable knowledge and strategy with their social media communication to build relationships with customers and engage them on a deeper level. Seventy-five percent of companies have not defined CRM for their business and sixty-one percent do not have a formalized strategy for CRM framework (Payne & Frow, 2006). This study explored the extent to which the business owners' knowledge of social media is used to engage customers through social media and online communities. The goal of social media engagement is to initiate and develop a relationship to ultimately build loyal and engaged customers for increased business success.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher assumed an active role in data collection. The researcher contacted small businesses in Springfield, Missouri to participate in the study. The sample of small businesses for this study was collected through the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. For this research, 99 or fewer employees qualified as a small business and are classified in the leisure and hospitality industry. The researcher conducted semi-

structured interviews with small business owners to promote confidentiality and transparency in data results. The researcher had no connection to a small business owner in Springfield, Missouri and relied on the Springfield Chamber of Commerce directory and the chamber president for contact information. The researcher did not profit from participating small businesses that would bias the results or reason to fabricate data analysis for this case study.

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews on the topic of social CRM which allowed the small business owner or manager to personalize a response. The researcher was careful to avoid the use of jargon in the questions to avoid leading any participant to answer in a certain way. Interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

Participants

Participants were identified through contacts from the Springfield Chamber of Commerce and the Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau. Dori Grinder, Manager of Member Development for the Springfield Chamber and Laura Whisler, Vice President of the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau provided a list of small businesses they work with that engage via social media. The researcher obtained the business owner or manager's name, email address, and phone number and then contacted the small businesses, using the above contacts as referrals, to elicit participation in the study. This research study did not ask personal or proprietary questions that could affect the ethicality of the study or the participants. This study directs towards behavior via social

media and the perceived results. There should be no ethical issues occur or presented

during this study.

Research Method and Design

This qualitative study explored the effects social media has on customer

engagement for small businesses and may enhance customer engagement and loyalty

with small businesses, thus increasing sales and profit. The purpose of this qualitative

case study was to determine how small businesses are utilizing social media. The actual

application data gathered from small business participants can then be compared to

literature to determine if social media is as effective as the published literature suggests.

This section is a discussion of the reasoning for conducting a qualitative study and the

methodology and design.

Method

The qualitative research method was chosen for the study to compare literature to

actual small business practices of integrating a social CRM and relating strategies.

Quantitative and mixed methods are other approaches that were considered but

determined to be inappropriate for this study.

Qualitative research is appropriate for this case study to determine if actual

business practices support claims made in the existing literature. Literature consistently

uses qualitative research while studying customer relationship management (Chickweche

& Fletcher, 2013; Elbeltagi, Kempen, & Garcia, 2014; Mende, Bolton, & Bitner, 2013;

Parsons, 2013; Stelzner, 2012;). Elbeltagi, Kempen, and Garcia (2014) chose qualitative

research because they sought to determine how CRM seeks to answer questions through a

social channel. The study addressed social media's effect on CRM and added-value which is supported by the qualitative research method.

A quantitative research method was used for discovering the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2014). Creswell explained that quantitative research is experimental in nature and is coded using numerical measurements. Quantitative research alone does not fit with the measurements of this particular study which is to obtain the opinion of small business owners and managers and how they feel customers are engaging with their business via social media. Quantitative measurements cannot evaluate the level of customer engagement as perceived by small business owners and managers as accurately as qualitative measurements.

A mixed method approach combines the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research. A main use of the mixed method is to expand on what one method found with another such as a quantitative method with an emerging concept or theory tested by a qualitative method (Creswell, 2014). Another example of the mix method approach is where the two methods are combined to provide a comprehensive analysis. The mixed method research does not fit the study because the study seeks to determine perceived value from small business owners and managers and that information is strictly qualitative. Numerical statistics would not add to the analysis of the research, so the mix method approach was not used.

Research Design

Qualitative research can be comprised of various types of research design including ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative, and case study. This

study used a case study research design. The case study research design consists of

descriptive questions aimed toward a deeper understanding of phenomena in a particular

situation (Creswell et al., 2007). This study explored how small businesses within the

leisure and hospitality industry, including retail locations in Springfield, Missouri define

social CRM and derive value from the customers. The qualitative research used one-on-

one interviews with small business owners/managers to describe their perspective of

social media's impact on their small business. With the sample coming from a single city

location and the specificity of the subject matter, the case study research design is the

most appropriate for this research study. Other qualitative research designs will be

discussed and reasons provided as to why they were not selected for the study.

Ethnography is a study of an entire culture. Whitehill (2007) suggested that

ethnography research can apply to not just a people group culture, but an organization

and how they interact with their established corporate culture. Using ethnographic

research as an observer as a participant is "where the researcher observes and asks

questions of the participant" (Whitehill, 2007, p. 688-689).   Ethnography research could

be appropriate for the study of small businesses and the value they have on customer

relationship management practices, but this is only one part of this study and does not

fully address the end goal that would not produce the best results. Based on this, an

ethnography research design was not used.

Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce (2011) discussed grounded theory as evolving from

data in hopes of developing further theory. The grounded theory does not fit the aim of

this research which is focused on the experiences a customer sees from engaging with companies whose plan is to develop long-term customer relationships.

A phenomenological research design asks essence questions aimed at discovering the essence people experience with particular phenomena (Creswell et al., 2007). This qualitative study is seeking to understand customer engagement which is felt internally and on a personal level which could be referred to as the essence of the experience, but on a smaller scale than what phenomenological research design is used. Reiter, Stewart, and Bruce (2011) discussed that phenomenology research examines the human experience, meaning, and reflection that people link to specific experiences. The phenomenological research design was not used.

Narrative research asks chronological or story based questions (Creswell et al., 2007). Creswell further explains that narrative research is information retold by the researcher (2014). The narrative research design seeks to determine life experiences over time. This study is not addressing life experiences of the small business owners or managers or their customers. The narrative research design was not used.

Case study research requires the observer to immerse himself in a situation to gather data. Creswell, Hanson, & Plano Clark (2007) described case study research design as in-depth, descriptive questions seeking an understanding of particular cases and the insight that can be derived from them. Discussing the implementation process of a social CRM program and its perceived value fits the case study research design as this research will address small businesses in specific industries and in Springfield, Missouri.

Direct communication through interviews will further allow for insight into customer engagement.

A case study research design will be conducted using interviews completed by small business owners that are semi-structured to allow for the participant to provide their own answer and apply the questions specifically to their business. An appropriate way to measure this impact is to gather information from small business owners who can see the direct impact on their business. Stake (2010) explained that qualitative research is useful when attempting to gather interpreted information by the participant through open-ended questions to determine the extent social media and online communities can have on their customer relationships.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study consisted of small businesses with fewer than 100 employees in Springfield, Missouri who are members of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. The justification for selecting the sample from businesses who are members of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce is the small business owners/managers are taking an active step to participate in the community. A membership with a chamber of commerce can assist with promotion to other chamber members and the public (Lacho & Brockmann, 2011). With networking opportunities and additional resources from other businesses, this population should be engaged via social media and utilizing marketing resources to reach their target market within their community. In case studies, concentrated populations are selected to be consistent with measuring a phenomena's impact. Ming-Hsien, Chang-Tang, Ya-Yun, and Chin-Chuan, (2014) utilized a case

study to explore the effects of social media and derived customer value in a small sample drawn from a single travel agency. Mishra, Mishra, and Rawat (2015) studied college students at one university to determine the effects of social media's impact and use. Using a concentrated sample is appropriate for a case study because the population needs to have a unified aspect to make a case in the study.

The small businesses were comprised of retail stores and those in the leisure and hospitality industry. The sample consisted of 5-20 participants. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) stated that qualitative research should have a maximum number of 20 respondents to allow for better researcher relationships and saturation of the research. Morse (1994) stated at least 6 respondents were needed. Boddy (2016) discussed saturation to the point of how new emerging information or themes in the data. Boddy further suggested that in a case study using a single market or homogeneous population data saturation could definitely be evident with 12 in-depth interviews. Having selected businesses that compete in the same market and are members of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce, the number of participants should represent saturation and an appropriate sample size for this study.

Interview participants were the owners or managers of the business, or an employee responsible for maintaining the small business' social media presence. The rationale for one interviewing the owner, manager, or targeted employee is the participant needs to have knowledge of social media marketing decisions, and not all employees will possess that knowledge.

The population for this study represented stratified sampling. Stratified sampling allows for simple random subsamples to be selected based on a common criterion (Creswell, 2014). A stratified sample ensures a more accurate data result based on the population reflecting the criteria for the study and is more efficient. Participants included small businesses with fewer than 100 employees in Springfield, Missouri. The North American research definition of small business constitutes 20-99 employees (Mittelstaedt, Harben, & Ward, 2003). The participants consisted of small businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry such as service restaurants and retail stores. The rationale for these specific types of businesses is that according to the Missouri Economic Report (Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, 2015) the leisure and hospitality industry has shown employment growth during 2014-2015. Small businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry are competitive for consumers to spend their discretionary income. Businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry can realize positive benefits from social media integration and should capitalize on this avenue of relationship marketing (Tsaur, Wu, Yen, & Wu, 2014).

The sample population consisted of small businesses that are members of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Lacho and Brockmann (2011) studied the effect membership with a Chamber of Commerce has on small businesses. A chamber can assist small businesses with promotion to other chamber members and the public (p 6). Small businesses have additional exposure through the chamber's website and area events to participate and reach their target market. Another aspect is networking to develop new customers, solve business problems, additional sources of information, and

referrals (p 5). The rationale for using small businesses who are members of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce is those businesses are more likely to be engaging with other businesses and obtaining resources for marketing their business and reaching their target market in the Springfield community.

Data Collection

The researcher contacted qualifying small businesses and began the data collection process for this study. The small businesses for the study originated from having membership in the Springfield Chamber of Commerce and through that association, the researcher made a connection with the small business owners and managers.

Instruments

The interview question set has been designed by the researcher and contains open-ended questions necessary for the qualitative study. The interview question set was developed from the results of a quantitative study addressing social CRM in small businesses. Harrigan and Miles (2014) conducted the study and discovered seven key factors for small business use of social media in marketing customers: online communities, social media support, information capture, information use, customer relationship orientation, social media data, and customer communication. These key factors are the underlying structure for this qualitative study and have been found relevant to small businesses in Harrigan and Miles previous study. Addressing these known factors in a qualitative manner will add to the depth and validity of previously

published research findings. Each question addresses an area of these key factors and allows the small business owner/manager to answer according to business practice.

The interview questions are semi-structured in that they guide the participant to consider specific questions relating to the use of social media but allow for an open response. Pandey and Chawla (2016) used a semi-structured approach in their qualitative research study of online effects for e-retailers and found it to be effective for gathering data from the e-retailers by allowing them to openly respond in their own words to gather qualitative data. Pandey and Chawla's study covered a similar topic and approach to this study and add validity to the open-ended question instrument. The interview question set includes 16 questions and should be conducted within 30-45 minute timeframe. The interview questions are phrased to be easily understood by the participants with clear question wording directed at aspects of social CRM for a small business. The interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed for further analysis.

The semi-structured interview, consisting of 16 open-ended questions will allow for individual responses based on the experience of each small business owner and manager. Perceptions of value and social CRM strategy could differ between respondents, so providing the participants the opportunity to use their own words will equate to qualitative data that is based on feelings and perceptions. Structuring the interview questions in this manner and addressing the seven key factors from Harrigan and Miles, the question set should reach saturation of the topic of social CRM practice in a small business. The questions asked the participant to define social CRM and how they utilize social media and for what purpose. Participants were asked what information do

they gather through online communities and how do they measure their social media impact.

Having a scale or close-ended questions would not allow for personalizing responses to fit the qualitative study. The questions built on each other to push the respondent to speak to their motive for engaging with customers through social media which will add to the validity of responses. Using the semi-structured approach through open-ended interview questions, small business owners and managers were able to speak to business decisions being made for their social media interaction.

Data Collection Technique

Data was collected using a semi-structured interview with the participant in a one-on-one setting. This allowed for qualitative information to be gathered by allowing participants to provide personal responses. The data was audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Each response was be assigned a letter (e.g. Small Business 1 = Business A) to be referred to for analyzing data results while providing confidentiality to specific business practices. A pilot study was conducted with a sample of small businesses prior to the study to ensure respondents are able to progress through the interview questions with ease. The interview questions are located in Appendix A.

Data Organization Techniques

Data is stored on the researcher's personal laptop that is password protected. The data is coded in a Word file which is also password protected throughout the research process and after the research is complete the data will be stored on a flash drive. Fatima (2011) stressed the fact that a two-factor authentication system should be employed to

protect information. The first can be the use of passwords and the second can be another set of passwords or another instrument (p 5). Saving the data on a password protected laptop and a password protected Word document adheres to the two-factor authentication process to protect confidentiality.

Data Analysis Technique

The interview data from the qualitative study was used to answer the research questions as discussed below. Analysis of the verbal data required the interviews to be transcribed. Once transcribed the data was analyzed and coded through a qualitative text analysis software tool, QDA Miner. As the transcripts were analyzed through QDA Miner, the researcher looked for main concepts and reasoning from the participant. As the main concepts from the given answer are determined they were identified and compared to other participants. Further analysis allowed for reasoning and linking decision making to determine an overall perception of the small business owner/manager and social CRM. The main concepts and supporting reasoning were compared between all participants to generalize the findings between small businesses as well as a particular industry to determine if there is a similar concept and structured plan behind having a social media presence and what strategies are resulting in the best yield and if they could be replicated. The data analysis was consistent with the research questions and underlying conceptual framework, and findings of the study.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are not defined the same for both qualitative and quantitative research. For qualitative research, reliability indicated the selected approach

is consistent with various researchers and projects while validity is when the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings (Gibbs, 2007).

Reliability

Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillon (2003) supported this view of reliability with their belief in reliability being the reassurance of the same study deriving the same results by a different researcher. Reliability in interview questions through qualitative data can be more difficult to prove reliable since researcher interpretation in higher than in quantitative research. Qualitative data, in the form of open-ended questions, can be a reliable source to explain and explore respondents' experiences over a given subject through brief, rich descriptions (Jackson & Trochim, 2002). Interviews allow for the understanding of the individual's thought process in making decisions, and the context in which the decision is made (Liedtka, 1992). Furthermore, interviews distinguish the participant's cognition and behavior (p. 162). Therefore, open-ended questions are to be a reliable measurement in comparing reviewed literature to actual business practices for this study.

For transcription analysis, the transcript of each interview in its entirety was reviewed to obtain a holistic picture as indicated by the participant. Through the use of analytical software, codes will be set and less prone to error in researcher analysis (Creswell, 2014). As each answer to a question is reviewed the researcher identified themes directly from the participant's response and look for supporting reasoning or relationships to further understand the participant's perspective. As information that is not common or determined relevant to the study was eliminated. To determine whether a

statement should be included or deleted it must pass two measures: if it reflects part of the experience or if it can be abstracted and labeled (Moustakas, 1994).

Another way to ensure reliability in this study is to check the transcripts through member checking. Offering the participants to read through the transcript of the interview allows the participant to verify the accuracy of their transcript. Allowing participants to review the data and interpretation, credibility and reliability of the findings are established (Creswell, 2014). Lietz, Langer, and Furman (2006) further agreed that allowing colleagues, the dissertation committee, to review the data collection and analysis adds another degree of credibility and reliability to the study.

Validity

Triangulation is important for qualitative research, and thus the justification for the major themes for which this study is based developed from a previous study conducted by Harrigan and Miles where an online survey to small businesses revealed seven key factors for small business use in social media. Those key factors were online communities, social media support, information capture, information use, customer relationship orientation, social media data, and customer communication. At the end of Harrigan and Miles study, it was suggested a qualitative study be conducted to further explore these factors in small business to provide more depth and understanding (p. 112).

The interview question set asks only asking questions necessary to assist in answering the overarching research questions this study is based on and is based on a previous study's findings of seven key factors of social media use in small business. These questions address these published findings and will provide deeper thought and

motivation behind the actions of engagement with social media. The semi-structured interview questions encourage each participant to analyze their decision process in relation to social CRM in their small business. Open-ended questions allow the respondents to give their own answer and do not put pressure on respondents to select among alternatives that they may or may not have thought of all the options, which unintentionally could guide participants to provide a false answer (Sparrow, 2011). The interview questions have been designed by the researcher to avoid jargon as to not lead participants to respond in a particular way but provide areas for them to think about the motivations and value they receive via social media.

Saturation occurs when no new data surfaced from additional interviews (Morse, 1995). Qualitative research does not consist of prescribed amounts of data for saturation and is thus signaled by the researcher and through the evaluation of data to show adequateness and comprehensiveness (p. 147). The richness of the data is more important for saturation than quantity. Researchers obtain saturation when enough data has been collected for a convincing theory (p. 148). Having a stratified sample should allow saturation to be reached with a smaller sample due to the unifying characteristic of being a small business and member of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce who utilizes social media to engage with their customers.

Transition and Summary

This section began by stating the purpose of this research study, which is to explore the impact customer engagement, through online communities, has on small businesses. The researcher played an active role in the data collection through engaging

with small businesses with fewer than 100 employees. The researcher had no bias

towards the outcome of the research and analyzed the results in a fair and consistent

manner. The participants were selected through stratified sampling due to their type of

business, small retailers and the leisure and hospitality industry, and from their

membership in the Springfield Chamber of Commerce.

The qualitative research had been designed for participants to provide answers to

open-ended interview questions. The interview took participants between 30-45 minutes

to complete. Participants answered questions related to small business practices and

allowed them a chance to analyze their social marketing decisions based on customer's

wants and needs.

These results were compared to the peer-reviewed literature to determine the

consistency of theory and application. As the results were analyzed through a qualitative

data analysis tool, main concepts emerged and their influence on social marketing

decisions. Through member checks, triangulation with a previous study, and the data

analysis tool, reliability and validity of the interview results was achieved with this study.

The next section will comprise of details relating to data analysis and application to the

research questions. The section will end with the study findings, their application to

small businesses, and areas for further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section three reviews the research of ten small businesses and how social media is utilized as a social CRM framework. This section consists of an overview of the study followed by the presentation of the findings. Applications to professional practice will be discussed along with recommendations for action and further study. Section three concludes with reflections from the researcher and overall summary and study conclusions.

Overview of Study

A qualitative study was conducted to compare what literature states about social CRM and its use and effectiveness for small business against actual small business practices. Social media has created an opportunity for small businesses to have two-way engagement with customers and to tailor messaging as well. If used correctly, social media can assist in fostering a stronger customer relationship to increase brand loyalty. The general problem that was addressed by this research is that limited knowledge on social CRM practices may cause small businesses to not realize the full impact customer engagement may exert on sales potential.

This research study attempted to address four overarching research questions: How do small businesses utilize social media in their customer relationship management strategies? How do small business owners and managers view social media and online communities' effect on their relationships with customers? What skills and tools are

required for a useable social CRM plan for a small business? What is a good formula for a social CRM plan for small businesses to implement? These four questions were addressed through one-on-one interviews with small business owners, managers, or employees responsible for social media content.

The one-on-one interviews were with small businesses that are members of the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. Dori Grinder, Manager of Member Development for the Springfield Chamber, and Laura Whisler, Vice President of the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau, provided a list of small businesses they work with that engage via social media. From the provided lists, the researcher contacted small businesses about participating in this research project. Sixteen semi-structured interviews questions were asked to allow participants to tailor given answers specifically to personal experience. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed for analysis. For the transcripts, each business was assigned a letter (e.g. Small Business 1 = Business A) and were labeled Business A-J. The transcribed interviews were analyzed using QDA Miner and coded using major themes found in the reviewed literature: engagement, loyalty, value-business, value-customer, marketing plan, measurable impact, social CRM definition, outside assistance, social CRM plan, customer preference/familiarity. These major themes were central to addressing the four major research questions to compare reviewed literature to actual small business practice.

The findings were consistent with reviewed literature and the results that can be realized through social CRM. Customer engagement and loyalty can be developed and strengthened through relevant and personal social media posts (Agnihorti et al., 2012;

Harrigan & Miles, 2014). Engaging with customers where they choose to engage on

social media is important for social CRM success (Tajen & Toombs, 2014). Value is

experienced by the customer and the business through personalized message content and

adaptability based on customer response. Immediate feedback and two-way

communication enhances the contact and depth of information through social media

(Baird & Parasnis, 2011). This information can be used to develop better products or

enhanced customer experiences for increased sales.

Presentation of the Findings

This research studied ten small businesses in Springfield, Missouri. These

businesses had fewer than 100 employees and are in the leisure and hospitality industry

such as service restaurants and retail stores. Each business also belongs to the

Springfield Chamber of Commerce. The North American research definition of small

business constitutes 20-99 employees (Mittelstaedt, Harben, & Ward, 2003). Lacho and

Brockmann (2011) discussed the value of belonging to a Chamber of Commerce and that

those businesses have access to additional resources and are typically more engaged in

the community. The rationale for these specific types of businesses is that according to

the Missouri Economic Report (Missouri Economic Research and Information Center,

2015) the leisure and hospitality industry has shown employment growth during 2014-

2015. Businesses in the leisure and hospitality industry can realize positive benefits from

social media integration and should capitalize on this avenue of relationship marketing

(Tsaur, Wu, Yen, & Wu, 2014). The small businesses participant participated in a 16

question, one-on-one interview with the researcher to gauge how social media is used in

the business as well as how customers engage online with the brand. The following

paragraphs will present the gathered and analyzed data in relation to this research.

The first research question is how do small businesses utilize social media in

customer relationship management strategies? The participating businesses are in the

leisure and hospitality industry. More specifically, three identified themselves as

restaurant, three identified themselves as retail stores, and four identified themselves as

travel/tourism. The main social media channels pursued in all ten businesses are

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Pinterest, GooglePlus, and Snapchat are used by one

or two of the businesses but not the majority. The resulting data provided by the

businesses focused on data gathered from Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The small

businesses have a social media account for each of the three channels listed to

communicate with the customer demographic for the specific business.

Depending on the customer base for the small business Facebook is more heavily

used because it allows for more information and attracts a wider range of customers

based on the age demographic. Instagram is targeted for millennials and contains

pictures and stories to appeal to customers. Twitter is used for disseminating a short

amount of information and then redirects readers to the business' website or Facebook

page for more detailed information. The identification of the strengths for each social

media channel is a reflection of the resource-based view of the firm theory where limited

resources allow the business to focus efforts where customers are choosing to engage.

Tuleu (2015) discussed the importance of communicating with customers in real time

through online methods, which is evident in the identification and use of each social

media channel by the participating small businesses. Targeting customers through different social media channels with specific messaging consistent with the social media format maximizes the reach and effect of each post. Using multiple channels provides an opportunity for additional touch points for a small business and engage with social customers who use social media to influence purchase decisions (Greenberg, 2010).

The small businesses use social media as a strategy for open communication with customers and as a way to build a brand. Woodcock et al. (2011) suggested that social media allows customer contact and the opportunity to build a brand and influence customer perception, which is consistent with the findings. Seven of the ten businesses have a formal marketing plan that includes social media, whereas three do not. Of the three businesses without a formal marketing plan, one focuses on organic posts, and the other two use social media strictly to communicate information. Having a formalized plan leads to a more structured presentation of information that is consistent across multiple social media channels. Existing peer-reviewed literature reported most small businesses do not have a formalized marketing plan including social media (Payne & Frow, 2006). The sample for this research contradicted existing literature, but it is a small sample of the total population. Businesses D, G, and I are the three businesses that do not have a formalized marketing plan. Business D is basically run by two owners and they figure things out as the go. Business G uses social media to communicate stories about the hall of fame inductees and promoting events, while Business I follow perceived customer trends. For these three small businesses, a formal marketing plan is not perceived as being necessary to the use of social media for the business. Marshall et al.

(2012) suggested social media should be part of a formalized marketing plan and included with sales processes, human resources capabilities, and have strong management support. A formal marketing plan will aid in assuring a cohesive strategy is developed.

Social media is being used to strategically engage with customers which offer benefits for both the business and customers. Nine of the ten businesses stated engaging on social media has increased customer loyalty. Business E, F, and I determined loyalty by the amount of comments customers leave on social media. Repeat commenters are then determined loyal by the small business. Business A, G, and H described loyalty as open communication and personal interaction. The more the customers know there is a real person who cares on the other side of the social media channels builds a deeper connection, thus increasing loyalty. The increase in loyalty is due to the ability of two-way communication and the perceived ability of the customer to sense a real connection and that there is a person on the other side that is the face of the brand. Most customers who engage regularly via social media also frequent the store in-person which aids in the loyalty to the brand. This loyalty is due in part to the message content and being relatable. Parsons (2013) suggested social media should not share information found on a website but should target open communication. The findings of businesses using social media to generate a two-way communication channel is a perceived value consistent with reviewed literature. Tan and Lee (2015) used customer loyalty and the agency theory to determine what customers determined as loyalty to a business.

The small business participants measured engagement by the reactions customers have to social media posts. Business C looks at how many likes a comment gets or

responses to messages sent via social media. Business E addresses questions about the business or product via social media which are interpreted as customers engaging with the brand. Business J looks at how many tags or shares the business' posts get and determines what her customers want based on their engagement with each post. Measuring engagement through online posts is consistent with reviewed literature by providing customers an active role in creating value experiences for themselves (Claffey & Brady, 2014). The findings found personal interaction and the amount of customer participation aid in determining customer loyalty.

The second research question is how do small business owners and managers view social media and online communities' effect on their relationships with customers? Small business participants felt social media has a positive effect on customer relationships. Although a return on investment may not be easily indicated, a stronger sense of brand identity is created through social media engagement. This is consistent with reviewed literature stating social media can strengthen customer loyalty through brand image (Orzan et al., 2016).

On Facebook, the effect of customer relationships is measured by how many likes, posts, comments, and shares a post has. Business J indicated they post a picture of an employee modeling the outfit and will look to see how customers react (like, comment, or share) to that particular outfit and if it was successful or not. Customers are then able to ask questions about the fabric or fit as well as size and price before going to the store to make a purchase. This type of engagement is what the business is looking for. It provides value to the customer because questions can be answered, in some

instances, immediately and help to determine what clothing products are purchased.

Another retail business posted a picture of three styles of boots the business was

considering buying from a manufacturer. After posting the picture there was one style

that stood out based on comments from the post via social media thus the retail business

purchased that boot to carry in its store. The comments via Facebook were made while

the buyer was at a tradeshow and enabled the business to make a purchase decision based

on customer preferences, which will add revenue for the business once the boots are sold.

Marolt et al. (2015) stressed the importance of small business owners knowing how to

approach and engage with customers while maintaining control of the conversation. The

data supported this statement by generating posts targeting specific items or events and

then monitoring the feedback provided. Maintaining a professional and consistent tone

was indicated by multiple businesses for both their own posts and customer posts.

Business C indicated customer comments not held to their standards are removed to

ensure consistency of their message. The customers' comments referred to were not

negative reviews but the presence of vulgar language or degrading comments that are not

beneficial for constructive criticism.

Value is seen for the business in that direct communication with customers is now

possible. A larger, and less expensive, form of advertising can reach a broader, mobile

customer base. Participants indicated direct communication is the most important form

of value received from social media. Being a real face to the customer adds a deeper

dimension to the transaction and cultivates a following for the brand. Businesses are also

able to determine which posts resonate with customers the best to direct future posts

tailored to customer interest to foster further engagement and a change in the marketing mix. This finding is consistent with reviewed literature on the topic of customer engagement. Mende et al., (2013) discussed the frequency of interaction from the customer and the closeness customers feel. Social media is a communication channel that allows for frequent two-way interaction between the customer and the business. Through frequent communication trust and loyalty can be a realized result of social media interaction (Gecti & Zengin, 2013). Luigi et al. (2011) pointed out that when a customer wants a personal connection is when customer engagement will occur. The participants in this study want to show the personal side of their business, indicating how they will succeed and continue to operate. Thus, tailoring messages based on customer behavior and preference fosters an opportunity for deeper customer engagement.

Through stronger customer engagement, an increase in word-of-mouth was experienced. Business D has operated on word-of-mouth since the business began, and it has been in operation for 43 years. Social media has increased by word-of-mouth because friends tag friends and the exposure is exponential. Through word-of-mouth, a brand is built and communicated. Nielsen (2012) reported ninety-two percent of customers said they trust word-of-mouth over other forms of advertising. Schmitt, Skiera, and Van den Blute, (2011) found the value of a customer referral is worth more than a non-referred customer. Social customers provide positive word-of-mouth and give honest feedback via social media channels (Orzan et al., 2016).

The third research question is what skills and tools are required for a useable social CRM plan for a small business? Reviewed literature suggested three tools for a

successful social CRM plan: relationship, technological, and augmentation (Jacewicz &

Cho, 2015). The first tool is the customer business relationship being long-termed focus.

The second tool is technology being a two-way communication bridge. The third tool is

augmentation which refers to the willingness and ability to adjust and implement social

CRM strategies. To assist in determining what skills and tools actual small business

participants thought were necessary for a social CRM plan, participants were asked if

they had sought outside assistance to maximize their social media presence other than

their own knowledge. The reason for this question is to see if the small business

participants were utilizing resources other than their own inclinations or if there were

verified tools or skills acquired that have enhanced their social media presence. Five of

the ten small businesses have sought outside assistance to maximize their social media

impact. The other small businesses have used their own knowledge and that of their

employees. For those that have used outside assistance, it has been through conferences

or small businesses that specialize in social media assistance. Analyzing competitors was

mentioned as well to determine how the participants viewed their direct competition.

The skills and tools the small businesses use is only as good as the

implementation into a social CRM plan. All participants were asked to define social

CRM for their business. Each business had a different response, but three themes or

skills were evident from the responses. The data found being visible, interactive, and

relational were three skills needed for a social CRM plan. Small businesses need to be

visible where customers are choosing to engage while providing customers a two-way

communication opportunity and being personable in responses to the two-way

communication. Business H stressed the strength of sentiment in social media. Providing realistic and immediate responses shows concern for the customer and true thought. Business H believes there is a difference between canned responses and true responses so the business personally responds to customers with humor and immediate feedback to build their brand and loyalty to represent the community well.

Business B discussed interactive posts where customers post and tag pictures of the retail store's clothing. Business B indicated through posts and tags via social media, customers feel a part of the brand through their identity. This shows other customers a visible representation of the clothing items and is evidence of an established relationship. Business G believes social CRM has the opportunity to connect directly with customers and is a key marketing and listening tool. Business E defined social CRM as the ability to connect and stay engaged with customers to create a community. Creating community centers around the concept of being interactive and going beyond simply posting information to encouraging feedback and participation.

Business E has customers that stop by on their way through town just to meet the employees because of the relational aspect of their social media. Business E's social media posts are dedicated to creating community rather than advertising. There is some new product information and sales, but the goal is to generate a brand community that assists customers in expressing themselves. Being able to see the core of what the business is and the established culture causes customers to be loyal to the store and brand. Both business B and E have exemplified the agency theory. The agency theory explains the need for businesses to act in the best interest of the shareholders. By building brand

communities all shareholders' interest are being pursued through two-way communication and engagement with customers, leading to strong brand identity and loyalty. Business B and E are also expressing the resource-based view theory because they have stated their competitive advantage through online communities and built a loyal following. Being visible, interactive, and relational are key determinants for a usable social CRM plan. The details beyond that are unique to each business in order to reach the customer base to develop loyal connections.

The fourth research question is what is a good formula for a social CRM plan for small businesses to implement? All participants were asked to state, in their opinion, what was necessary to effectively implement a social CRM plan for a small business. The data provided five main aspects for a good formula for a social CRM plan. Those five aspects are customer focus, showing the customer the company value and culture, listening to feedback, consistent content and tone, and objectives of engagement, retention, loyalty, and brand building.

Being customer focused drove the participating small businesses social media choice and the content of their messaging. Business A, D, H, and J all mentioned being conversational, relatable, or humorous in their interviews. This attitude drives the content of their messaging and what social media outlets are being targeted. Six of the ten businesses chose the social media outlets based on customer preference. Two chose based on their familiarity and two said it was a combination of both individual preference and the customer base. Regardless of the method of choosing social media outlets, each business recognized how they engage today is based off how customers have engaged

with their posts. Customer preference has shaped the way participating businesses choose to communicate and the content that is most relevant to the customer base.

Showing the business the company value and culture is one way Business A focuses on what the business can offer the customer, and not on itself. Customers can find information about the business on a website. Showing the company culture, how customers can use the product, and interaction with employees provides the customer with interesting information they can identify with to increase brand loyalty.

Listening to customer feedback is crucial. Business J wants their business to be in the top three places when a woman thinks of boutiques in the Springfield, Missouri area. To do this, adjusting to customer feedback is vital. Business J does a lot of sharing via social media to let customers know about new arrivals, current specials, and fashion shows. Adjusting the plan based on customer feedback is necessary to maintain relevance. Sometimes customer's want giveaways or are talking about the next fashion trend, so watching for topics customers are engaging in and then matching those topics to social media posts drives enhanced engagement.

A consistent tone and message were evident in all participants. Business B strives for consistency in messaging across all social media channels. This aids them in knowing what content to post and how customers will react. Business C uses a consistent, professional tone without memes or acronyms to reduce confusion while viewers are interpreting the message. Business D posts sporadically, but with a consistent message so it is not overwhelming and where customers choose to disengage because of the frequency of posts. Having a consistent tone and message helps build a

brand. Measuring the tone of the customers' responses is a way to determine the level of customer engagement (Greenberg, 2010).

Focusing on engagement to attract new customers while building loyalty to retain current customers is necessary for building a brand. Business E believes realistic goals are necessary for a successful CRM plan. Without realistic expectations, small business owners could get disappointed with the outcomes and give up. Comparing a business with its competitors will aid in establishing realistic expectations driving clear objectives. These objectives dictate the content of social media messages from the business and generate new customers, reinforce current customer's loyalty and further build an established brand. Being flexible with the marketing mix to adjust to customers is critical for continued customer interest and engagement.

Applications to Professional Practice

Harrigan and Miles (2014) discussed the effect social media has on small business customer relationship management and the disturbance it can cause on traditional forms of marketing and customer relationships. Although social media can be troublesome for small businesses without the necessary knowledge and skills to fully implement a social media marketing plan, it can be a successful and worthwhile avenue for small businesses to adopt into their marketing strategies. Social media is constantly changing and adapting to its users' preferences, thus mastering the use of social media would be hard to do, especially as a small business with or without a social media manager or employee dedicated to its efforts.

This research has found that social media, as a customer relationship management system, can be advantageous for a small business. The uses and value social media can offer are only limited by the amount of time and effort spent in reaching customers through its interactive setup. Peltier et al. (2009) pointed out that small businesses not using traditional CRM methods are often left on their own methods to track customer data and manage those relationships. Reviewed literature suggested that most small businesses do not have a formalized marketing plan (Payne & Frow, 2006), yet this research showed 70% of small businesses interviewed have a marketing plan that includes social media. This is a promising statistic indicating small businesses are taking social media seriously and the ability to generate loyal customers through two-way communication. Social CRM makes effective use of limited resources by reaching customers through social media in real-time and interactively (Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

As social CRM presents value to small businesses three key themes were present in the findings for practical business application. Those themes were engagement, loyalty, and value. Reviewed literature states that engagement, loyalty, and value can be realized (Dahlgren, 2011; Gecti & Zengin, 2013; Orzan et al., 2016). Comparing reviewed literature to actual business practice and seeing the validated outcomes is an achievement for business practices. Through customer identification and relevant message content, social media is being used to engage with customers on an interactive platform. Findings supported brand identity and the ability to disseminate brand information in a relatable context to enhance customer engagement. Posting business information should be left for the website. Social media content should be targeted to

reach customers and encourage a reaction and participation. Participating businesses post questions, pictures of products, and upcoming events to generate buzz about the brand and to keep the name of the business in the customer base's mind. Engaging the customer shows a shift toward being customer-oriented and is a practical way for a small business to directly engage the customer.

Businesses that create customer-oriented social media content can establish a connection with the customer base. Through this connection, value can be seen by both the customer and the business. Through customer engagement, customer's feel they have a voice and their opinion is being heard and businesses can adapt their product offering directly based on feedback. The ability to quickly adapt and make purchase decisions as Business E mentioned through the purchase of boots, allows for improved decision making that is beneficial for sales and the customer as they obtain products that the customer base can identify with.

Businesses exist to serve their community, and without community or customer support the business cannot survive (Van Duzer, 2010). Advertising to increase sales is critical to generate interest and word-of-mouth. The participating businesses showed that although advertising is a component of social media posts, it is more about developing a relationship with the customer than just sales. The time spent on generating content and responding to customers may or may not yield a considerable amount of sales initially, but the lifetime customer value will be increased through a more loyal and engaged customer.

When a small business decides to engage on social media, consistency, and interactivity is key for success. Although different social media channels are used for different purposes and target different demographics, it is vital that a consistent message and tone be used to establish and maintain the brand's presence. Participating where the customer base chooses to engage is critical to reach the desired target market, and tailor content specific to the social media outlet whether that is information, pictures, or a short hashtag. Stay customer-focused in the content to spark engagement and respond to all manners of feedback. Properly handling negative feedback shows other customers the business cares and praising positive feedback will encourage repeat business.

Being customer-oriented in content is a way to maximize the resources and abilities the business has. Social media reaches customers where they choose to engage and a small business should use this channel as a means to engage customers to encourage participation and perceived value. The Bible offers some guidance on how to achieve this. Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others" (ESV). Being customer-oriented removes the focus from the business and puts it solely on the customer. Posting relevant content and information that is product based that benefits the customer should encourage engagement in products and features customers are looking for. Romans 12:10 states "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor" (ESV). This verse takes customer-orientation a step further by using the word honor. The NLV translation uses the word respect instead of honor. Not only should small

businesses post relevant content, but respecting and honoring the customer base through purposeful messaging that properly represents the brand and product being offered. Showing honor and respect specifically targets the content of the messaging and that it speaks directly to the customer and not wasting their time with flashy slogans or advertisements, but accurately reflects the business' mission. Another Bible verse that adds to Romans 12:10 is Ephesians 4:29 "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (ESV). As customers are drawn to engage via social media channels and experience consistency in service and quality. Loyalty can be developed and a brand is built on solid footings.

Recommendations for Action

Based on the findings, customer demographics should be identified prior to determining which social media channels will be pursued. After the customer base is identified, consideration of their online and purchase behavior should be discussed to create consistent target messages relevant to the customer base. This will allow for maximum reach and impact to encourage customer engagement. Participating small businesses identified uses for each social media channel and how it appropriately related to the customer base.

Social media messaging should be conversational and relational in tone. The findings support targeted messaging that encourages two-way interaction. By using a conversational tone, customer engagement will translate into sharing and commenting on the post. To implement this recommendation, a small business should not post solely

informational content on social media channels, but rather list that on the business'
website. Social media posts should be based on customer interest and engagement with
the product or stories. Posts with this focus encourage participation and personalization
which drives value for both customers and the business because customers get to share
their stories while the business learns first-hand how customers view the product. This
information can be used to tailor specific messaging in the future as well.

Small businesses can use the popularity of social media posts to measure
customer impact. Based on how customers respond to a post can aid in determining the
relevancy of the content. For a retail store that posts a picture of a new clothing item, if
the post receives posts, likes, or customers sharing or commenting on the post, the
business could interpret that as a good style for the business. If not many customers
posted or commented, the business could interpret that article of clothing as not a good fit
for its customers. Through tracking social media responses, a small business can begin to
determine what interests its customers and how they like to engage. Measurement was
not a focus of this research, but a further study could study ways of measuring customer
engagement through social media and then analyze business' social media pages for said
engagement to determine the level of customer engagement that is occurring.

Selecting the appropriate social media channel and being relatable in social media
posts, the small business is remaining customer focused and is listening to feedback.
Social media customers are willing to provide honest feedback. When a small business
chooses to listen to given input and adapt to customer needs and wants, it shows value to
the customer and validates feedback. Small businesses should be willing to listen to the

good and the bad to improve product offerings and the customer experience. Businesses

exist to serve the customer, resulting in the necessity for feedback to remain relevant to

the customer. Responding to negative feedback in a timely and professional manner is

key. Negative comments are going to happen, but it is how the company deals with that

customer that tests the customer-orientation of the business. Handling the negative

comment with appropriate action and a positive tone speaks volumes to all who see the

interaction via social media.

Recommendations for Further Study

Two areas for further study have been identified from this research. One area of

further research is to dig deeper into social CRM plans and necessary components. The

businesses in this research had various skills deemed necessary to implement a social

CRM plan in a small business. Researching actual requirements for a successful plan and

then interviewing small businesses more specifically could assist in developing a uniform

plan that could be implemented.

At this point, small businesses are left to determine the effectiveness of social

CRM based on individually chosen outcomes. Having a uniform way to measure social

CRM success would be beneficial to all small businesses to compare themselves to

competitors. The findings of this research found the number of likes or shares on social

media is the main method of measuring success with one business measuring the amount

of comments versus the increase in sales of that particular item. Whether it is the depth

of the comments made or the number and reach of the initial post there needs to be a

consistent way to measure social CRM effectiveness that can be applied to multiple businesses and customer bases.

Another area for future research is rather than observing an industry with various types of businesses, as this study did with retail, travel/tourism and restaurant, study just small retail businesses or tourism small businesses to compare and contrast methods used for social media and identify specific methods of social media use and message content. Each type of business has a customer base that behaves differently with the brand than another industry. A small retail business will post different content than a business focused on travel/tourism and thus customers engage with different content. This research has shown that engagement and loyalty can be developed via social media, but going deeper into the particular types of posts and pictures or wording would be valuable to the corresponding industry to maximize the social media impact on customer engagement.

Traditional CRM practices focus on using customer data to determine customer behavior. An opportunity for further research could be to determine what specific information small businesses gather on their customers. Do small business owners/managers determine demographic, income, and other information that traditional CRM practices do? This research would assist in determining how formalized a small business' social CRM plan is and the extent to which time and effort is invested. This could increase customer engagement beyond messaging that is appealing and made available in convenient social media channels, but add depth and personalization beyond social media.

Reflections

Prior to beginning this research, the researcher thought more of the small business participants would not have as developed a social media strategy as was found during data collection. Eight of the ten participating businesses have an employee dedicated to social media or it is a main focus of the owner/manager. The literature review discussed how small businesses have limited skills and resources. The researcher found this to be consistent, but that adaption to customer demand was evident and was making up for the limited skills and resources for the particular business.

The researcher limited interaction with the participants during the audio-recorded interviews to reduce interview bias or lead answers by the participants. Participating businesses were interested in the research topic and also on the results of the overall research to see how other businesses are handling social media and the resulting outcomes. The researcher was impressed with how developed some of the businesses were and see the businesses from a different perspective through the personal interaction from the interviews.

The main goal of participating business' social media interaction is to develop a relationship with the customer base. All ten businesses discussed the need for customer-orientation to some degree and social media content being tailored based on customer preference. The attention to customers can be viewed as focusing on value and being intentional with the limited resources available.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Social CRM adds value to a small business through increased customer engagement, building brand loyalty, and increasing customer lifetime value. Ten small businesses in Springfield, MO were interviewed for this research to determine how small businesses use social media to engage with customers. The general problem addressed by this research is that limited knowledge on social CRM practices may cause small businesses to not realize the full impact customer engagement, through online communities, may exert on sales potential. This was found to be true. Not all participating businesses are utilizing social media to the full extent in terms of all available channels and building a community. Each type of business relates to the customer base differently and thus will behave differently through social media. Each business did discuss the importance the customer plays in determining measured value from social media interaction.

The purpose of this research was to explore the impact customer engagement, through online communities, has on small businesses. This research found loyalty and brand identification were two outcomes from customer engagement, which is consistent with reviewed literature. To increase customer engagement relevant, truthful, and personal message content is needed on social media. Demonstrating a personal touch to the customer is critical for two-way communication to occur. Participating businesses indicated the more personal social media posts are the more traction the posts generate maximizing the impact.

Identifying where customers are engaging and how they are engaging is necessary to generate a co-created value which could result in an increase in sales and brand loyalty. One way social media is used is for self-expression. When customers are able to engage with selected brands via social media it represents an extension of themselves and brand identity occurs. For small businesses, the appropriate skills and knowledge are needed to generate appropriate content to realize this outcome.

The following skills were identified as necessary for a social CRM plan, customer focus, personable, consistent tone and language, and the objectives of engagement, retention, loyalty, and brand building. If the social media messages are customer focused, personable, and have a consistent tone and language, the listed objectives should be met through enhanced customer engagement. Creating an atmosphere that encourages participation is key through attractive and relevant content that is important to the customer. Focusing on content that engages the customer and not about the business is key for engagement to occur.

Small businesses are participating and engaging with customers via social media well. Adaptability is key to a continued social media campaign that is run well. This research reaffirms the literature's stance on the value of social CRM in small businesses. The gap in measurement has been better defined through this research by identifying what small businesses measure in terms of successful social media posts. Small businesses are using the resources available to reach the customer base, and through social media, loyalty is being developed and brand identification is occurring to develop stronger customer relationships.

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Appendix A: Consent Form and Interview Questions

CONSENT FORM
Social CRM in Small Business
Levi Bridge
Liberty University
School of Business

You are invited to be in a research study examining the use of social customer relationship management (social CRM) in small business. You were selected as a possible participant because you own or manage a small business in Springfield, Mo. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Levi Bridge, a doctoral candidate in the school of business at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is explore the effect customer engagement, through social media and online communities, has on small businesses.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in a semi-structured interview which should take between 30-45 minutes to complete. Your answers will be kept confidential and the findings will not disclose your identity.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, no more than you would encounter in everyday life.

There are benefits to participating in this study. Your answers will provide valuable information as this study is designed to compare actual business practice to reviewed literature. As a participant, you will have access to generalized results for a period of 30 days after the research study is completed. The study results will be generalized to protect your confidentiality, but would still offer your business feedback that could enhance your social CRM plan.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report the researcher might publish, the researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Collected data may be shared or may be used in future research studies or with other researchers; if the data that we collect about you is shared, any information that could identify you will be removed before it is shared.

- Each participant will receive an assigned letter they will be referred to as in the study findings. This will ensure confidentiality of the participating small business owner or manager.
- The transcribed data will be kept on a personal password protected document on the researcher's flash drive and personal laptop for three years upon completion of the study per federal regulations.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:
If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Levi Bridge. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 417-328-8340 or lwbridge@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. David Calland at dcalland@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL
INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS
DOCUMENT.)

_____

_____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

1) What type of business does yours most closely relate?

   Restaurant

   Travel and Tourism

   Accommodation

   Retail

   Other: _____

2) How would you define social customer relationship management (social CRM) for your business?

3) Does your business have a formalized marketing plan that includes social media? If so, what role does social media have in your formalized marketing plan?

4) How do your customer's engage on social media?

5) List all social media accounts for your small business.

6) Why did you choose those specific media avenues?

7) How do your business' communication messages differ on each social media avenue?

8) Were your social media avenue choices based on your familiarity or customers' preference?

9) Does social media activity play a role in customer loyalty? Can you provide an example specific to your business?

10) What information do you gather from reviewing social media posts/comments from your customers?

11) How do you use this information to better target your customers?

12) As a small business owner or manager, what value do you see in using social media to communicate with your customers?

13) Have your experienced a measurable impact from your social media engagement?

14) Have you sought assistance in learning how to maximize your social media presence from a source other than your own knowledge?

Yes

No

15) If you answered yes to question 14, what source have you sought assistance? If you answered no, please skip to question 15.

16) What is necessary, in your opinion, to effectively implement a social CRM plan for a small business?

Appendix B: Significant Statements

Business	Engagement:
A	Like to know where we get our stuff from
A	Conversation, we know how they feel about what we do
A	Accessible, relatable and fun
B	Likes
C	Commenting
C	Inbox us
C	See how much interest we get on every post
D	Doesn't really look at it as advertising as much as just information dissemination
D	Can be bombarded with too much and you just get tired of seeing it
D	We are not trying to make ourselves look better or promote ourselves
E	Reviews, good or bad
E	Questions
E	Product questions
F	Share articles they feel strongly about
F	Brand extension
H	Customer is a visitor
H	Product is a reputation of the brand
I	Positive followship
J	A lot of sharing
J	Good way for me to let them know what's going on with my brand
J	Tagging us
Business	Loyalty:
A	People know we are here to talk to them
A	We'll always try our hardest to do what we can for them
B	No connection, people follow but not necessarily customers
D	Just keeping the idea in their head
E	Re-targeting things that we do
E	See it and kind of feel it
F	Majority of readers are probably following on social media as well
F	Loyal readers are always commenting on Facebook
G	Personal interaction
H	People want to know there is a face on the other side
H	Loyalty will increase when you get someone that will joke with you versus an

	automated response
I	Most active on social media are actual customers that come in regularly
J	Constant way for me to brand myself
Business	**Value – Business:**
A	Keep things organized
A	Know products they respond to the most and posts they enjoy
A	Conversation – we know how they feel
B	If people are relating to the posts
B	Directly messaging us and instantly answer
C	Change our marketing mix
C	Get personal feedback
C	Personal and customer-oriented
D	Rotate flavors between locations
D	Can get too carried away and place too much value on social media
E	Opportunity to improve
E	Look weekly and every day to make comparisons of content
E	Targeting and segmentation
F	Track through social media analytics
F	Avenue to get the word out
F	Accessible to gain loyalty
F	Extension of the brand
G	Promotes events better and to more audiences
H	Sentiment
H	Get to talk to them directly
H	Nothing more powerful than direct connection with them
I	Best times to post
I	Most valuable other than day-to-day operations
I	Interactions are going to build your brand in the long-run
J	Lets me know what things are working
J	How many people clicked on this, where they were after that
J	Branding their brain
Business	**Value – Customer:**
A	Love live videos and videos in general
A	Good way for community to see us
A	Know the business will always work hard to do what they can for them

A	Accessible and hopefully relatable and fun just being closer to them
B	Society of instant gratification, instant answers, and everyone wants everything
C	Personal and customer-oriented
E	Trend or merchandising tool
E	Make them part of the family
H	Want to know there is a face on the other side
H	Retargeting
H	Get to talk to them directly
H	Instant feedback
J	Focus on the things that are working, feed off their interaction
J	Pictures
J	Crucial
Business	**Measurable Impact:**
A	Getting more followers, more comments, more engagement
B	Measure when its posted, when it sold, and know if that worked out
C	Track impressions
C	Facebook business manager
C	Wouldn't have the traffic we do
D	Less word-of-mouth
E	Building brand – not ROI
F	Small, just a piece of the puzzle
G	Efficient and well targeted
H	Positive comments
J	Word-of-mouth – spreads quickly
Business	**Social CRM definition:**
A	Want to see themselves into it, want to be looking through your own eyes
B	Interactive, being as personal as possible, how business is shown as if it were a person rather than an organization
B	Personal as possible, get a quick response rate
D	Communicate to people where they are through as many avenues without getting carried away
E	Opportunity to stay connected relationally with customers and stay engaged, create community
F	Manage customer relationships, community resource
G	Connect directly with the customer, key marketing tool and listening tool

I	Manage quickly, positively and politely
J	Crucial to be on what they are looking at all the time
Business	**Social CRM Plan:**
A	Not focusing on yourself or what you can offer
A	Showing them why else they should want it, your culture and interactions with employees
B	Consistency
B	Humor, being light and having fun
C	Organization
D	Consistent tone
D	Good content
E	Set expectation that is realistic of what you want to achieve
E	Direct objective
E	Objectives: engagement, retention, loyalty, brand building
E	Marketing message mix
F	Interact daily
G	Connect with anybody who comments
H	Willingness to talk with your customer directly
H	Small feeling conversations
I	Understanding which outlets are important for the type of business you are
I	Collaborative and brainstorming
J	Repetitive
J	Gather feedback
J	Adjusting your plan
Business	**Customer Preference/Familiarity:**
B	Higher volume is where the focus is
C	Stay on what's new and what's upcoming
D	Biggest bang for your buck
F	Knowing our demographic
F	Maintain consistent tone
F	Familiarity
F	Allocate resources to the platforms that do show the biggest reach
G	Can be cumbersome at times
H	Educated choice at first
I	Realm of the type of business we are