2018

Effective Internet Marketing Strategies for Online Fashion Jewelry Businesses

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Zohreh Daemi

MBA, Texas Woman's University, 2014

BA, Payame-Noor University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2018

Abstract

Small business owners who fail to apply effective Internet marketing strategies could

negatively affect customers' purchasing decisions, and business profitability and

sustainability. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore effective Internet

marketing strategies online fashion jewelry business owners used to maintain or increase

profit levels. Competitive advantage theory was the conceptual framework for the study.

Data were collected via semistructured interviews with 3 online fashion jewelry business

owners located in the northeastern region of the United States who were in the same

business for more than 5 years and generated at least $100,000 in annual revenue.

Additionally, data were collected with a review of company documents pertaining to the

profit levels of the businesses. Data were analyzed using word frequency and coding to

determine themes. Six key themes emerged from the data: (a) Internet marketing

strategies, (b) social media marketing strategies, (c) market research and retargeting

strategies, (d) brand building strategies, (e) e-mail marketing strategies, and (f) marketing

strategies for customer relationship management. The implications of this study for

positive social change include the potential to create jobs and economic growth. The

findings of this study could increase the quality of life for stay-at-home parents or assist

disadvantaged individuals who host online businesses by offering proven Internet

marketing strategies to increase their business longevity, profitability, and potentially

lead to stronger and safer communities.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my husband Nima, my daughter Nadia, my parents, and my siblings. My husband Nima is my biggest supporter, and I would not be where I am today without his love and friendship. To my daughter Nadia, I want you to know that there are no limits to what you can achieve if you stay focused on doing your best. So, aim high and dream big dreams. To my mom Tooba, you were my first cheerleader. You always showed me the right path and gave me the words of wisdom to achieve my highest educational goal. I am sure that you are watching me from Heaven and sending me good vibes. I will truly miss you on my graduation day. To my father Mirza Ali, who worked hard and did everything he could to provide my siblings and me a comfortable life. To my sisters Masoumeh and Maryam, and to my brothers Morteza and Reza, who always showered me with their love and supported me in all aspects of my life. I love you all.

Table of Contents

ii

iii

List of Tables

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small business owners' implementation of effective Internet marketing strategies is critical to the success of any business, directly affecting customers' purchasing decisions, profitability, and sustainability (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). Perry (2014) stated there is a positive and meaningful relationship between companies' sales performance and the implementation of effective marketing strategies. Business owners use Internet marketing strategies to build strong relations with customers by using low-cost individualized online communication (Perry, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore effective Internet marketing strategies online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profit levels. Identifying effective Internet marketing strategies may contribute to economic growth and create more jobs. The findings from this study may be used to increase household income and tax revenue and to balance the state budget.

Background of the Problem

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA; 2016), almost 50% of small businesses do not survive beyond 5 years. Small marketing budget, lack of effective Internet marketing strategies, and lack of owners' marketing knowledge are the primary reasons for business failures. Internet, social media, and relationship marketing are critical to the success of any business (Perry, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to provide knowledge and insights for online fashion jewelry business owners. Insights included effective Internet marketing strategies that participants used to reach sustainability and profitability in the areas of marketing theories,

advertising strategies, Internet marketing, social media marketing, and customer relationship marketing.

Problem Statement

Implementing effective Internet marketing strategies is critical for small business owners' prosperity (Perry, 2014). Eighty-four percent of small business owners indicated that ineffective marketing strategies led to their business failures (Cant, Wiid, & Kallier, 2015). The general business problem was that some online fashion jewelry business owners fail to implement effective Internet marketing strategies to promote their products. The specific business problem was that some online fashion jewelry business owners lack effective Internet marketing strategies to maintain or increase profit levels.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective Internet marketing strategies online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profit levels. The sample included three online fashion jewelry business owners located in the northeastern region of the United States with successful experience in using effective Internet marketing strategies to maintain or increase profit levels. The implications for positive social change are an increase in sustainability and profitability, which may lead to stronger communities through job creation, economic growth, and a stable economy. The implementation of the study findings may lead to increase household incomes and tax revenues and to balanced state budgets.

Nature of the Study

Method

Research methodologies include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Holt & Goulding, 2014). With the quantitative method, researchers collect, analyze, and interpret data to test hypotheses about variables' relationships or differences (Murshed & Zhang, 2016). In the qualitative method, researchers try to explain *what, why,* or *how* a phenomenon occurred (Yin, 2018). The mixed method is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Holt & Goulding, 2014). Researchers use the quantitative method to test the level of evidence supporting hypotheses and theories regarding defined populations (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The quantitative and mixed-methods approaches were not suitable for this study because the focus of the quantitative method is analyzing numerical data. Researchers can ask open-ended questions and draw conclusions by implementing the qualitative research method (Yin, 2018). The qualitative research method was advantageous and appropriate for this study because achieving the research purpose requires collecting and analyzing specific insight into the thoughts, knowledge, and experiences of online fashion jewelry business owners.

Design

Several research study designs are available for the qualitative research method. Researchers use the phenomenological design to understand what people experience about a phenomenon and how they perceive and interpret those experiences (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). Ethnographers study people's experiences and social practices inside of organizations and groups (Aij, Visse, & Widdershoven, 2015). Narrative researchers

focus on the lives of individuals related through personal stories (Seal & Mattimoe, 2016). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because I was not exploring people's lived experiences about a phenomenon. This study is not about people's experiences inside groups and is not about personal stories regarding the lives of individuals. Therefore, ethnography and narrative design were not suitable for this study. Qualitative case study researchers ask open-ended questions to explore the patterns of complex behaviors and identify similarities and differences among cases (Yin, 2018). Multiple case study was an appropriate design for this study because I explored the strategies that online fashion jewelry business owners developed and implemented to maintain or increase profitability.

Research Question

What effective Internet marketing strategies do online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profitability?

Interview Questions

1. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to maintain or improve sustainability for your business?

2. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to maintain or improve profitability for your business?

3. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to attract new customers?

4. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to retain your customers?

5. What Internet marketing strategies have you applied to obtain a competitive advantage?

6. What additional information regarding Internet marketing strategies would you like to share?

Conceptual Framework

The theory used as the conceptual framework for this study was the competitive advantage theory. The competitive advantage theory contains three general strategies including focus strategy, differentiation strategy, and cost leadership (Porter, 1985). Porter (1985) stated that competitive advantage theory is the set of an organization's competitive abilities to create value for the customers at competitive production costs. Most companies' strategic planners have created various types of competitive advantage to remain successful for the long term (Corderio, 2013). Business owners create competitive advantages by implementing focus strategy, differentiation strategy, or cost leadership strategy to increase profitability (Tanwar, 2013).

Managers apply the focus strategy by selecting a distinctive target market, recognizing unique consumer needs, and providing services to the target market. The selected target customers are a small niche with unique unfilled needs who are willing to pay more money for products and services that are unavailable from other companies (Porter, 1985). A company can apply a differentiation strategy by offering better products or services compared to other companies. Companies that exercise the differentiation strategy can charge customers premium prices because they provide high quality in fast pace or unique products. Customer service, innovation, and quality of the products and services lead companies to achieve differentiation. Implementing the cost leadership strategy enables companies to constantly improve operational abilities by offering decent

value at a reasonable price (Tanwar, 2013). By using the competitive advantage theory, I explained how online fashion jewelry business owners implemented marketing strategies to raise the demand for their products, to increase market share, and to maintain or improve business profitability and sustainability.

Operational Definitions

This section contains frequently used terms in the area of marketing strategies in online fashion jewelry businesses. The definitions of the terms came from books, government websites, and peer-reviewed articles.

Consumer reviews: A form of customer feedback on e-commerce sites about a product or service based on personal experiences of purchasing and using products or services (Pousttchi & Hufenbach, 2014).

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM)*:* Informal online discussion among consumers about products and services (You, Vadakkepatt, & Joshi, 2015).

Internet marketing (IM): The implementation of the Internet and related technologies to create, communicate, and deliver value to customers. Websites, banner advertising, social media marketing, search engine marketing, e-mail marketing, and mobile marketing are examples of Internet marketing (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013).

Marketing strategy: A comprehensive set of marketing activities demonstrated in a business plan to achieve marketing goals and objectives (Xun, 2014).

Small business: An organization with fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2011). For the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study, a small business is an organization with fewer than 20 employees.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Researchers acknowledge assumed claims in the study to avoid misrepresentations (Pyrczak & Bruce, 2017). I made three assumptions in this study. First, all participants engaged in the interview truthfully. Second, all participants operate systematic marketing programs for their company and have adequate knowledge about the topic of this study. Third, all participants were enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge in this study.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses that affect a study's validity and transferability (Hesse-Biber, 2013; Johnson, 2014). Limitations are the research elements that affect the interpretation of the study, and the researcher has no control over them. First, this study was limited to online fashion jewelry business owners operating in the northeastern United States and did not include online fashion jewelry business owners in other parts of the United States, or those in other countries. Therefore, study participants were not representative of other parts of the United States. Second, some participants may not provide sufficient information or complete responses. Third, some participants may provide biased responses that could affect the study outcomes.

Delimitations

Delimitations are elements the researcher can control in the study (Hesse-Biber, 2013; Johnson, 2014). Delimitations minimize the scope and provide the boundaries for the study (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014). Geographical location was the first delimitation.

The geographical location for this study was the northeast region of the United States. Second, only three online fashion jewelry business owners from the northeast region of the United States who generate at least $100,000 in annual revenue and have operated in the fashion jewelry industry for at least 5 years participated. The limited sample size was a delimitation because the study findings might not apply to other lines of business.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Owning and managing a small business can be a challenging process because almost 50% of small businesses fail within 5 years of operation (SBA, 2016). Business owners have the opportunity to increase profitability and long-term sustainability by implementing effective marketing strategies (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). The results of this study may assist online fashion jewelry business owners in developing and implementing effective marketing strategies for deepening customer relationships, maintaining or increasing profitability, and achieving business sustainability. Organizations' marketing efforts and implementation of Internet marketing may increase the profitability and decrease the rate of business failures (Halabi & Lussier, 2014). The results of this study may provide online fashion jewelry business owners insight into effective Internet marketing strategies and tools to take advantage of resources and emerging opportunities and to respond effectively to challenges and barriers.

Implications for Social Change

Small business owners contribute to the U.S. economy by creating a notable portion of employment opportunities (Artinger & Powell, 2015; Small Business and

Entrepreneurial Council, 2016). The results of this study may offer important information for small business owners to operate profitable and sustainable businesses, which can result in job creation and economic growth. The implementation of effective Internet marketing strategies may stabilize local economies by increasing household incomes and tax revenues and balancing state budgets (Demyen & Ciurea, 2014). The findings of this study may improve the community by increasing the quality of families' lives through the identification of business resources for stay-at-home parents who operate an online business. The results of this study may lead to stronger and safer communities and neighborhoods by offering beneficial information to disadvantaged individuals who operate online businesses by aiding them in developing successful businesses.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to explore effective Internet marketing strategies online business owners implemented to increase profitability and sustainability. The literature review contained the majority of existing scholarly information about the research subject to improve my knowledge. The review included the most relevant marketing theories found in peer-reviewed articles, published books, and government websites. Existing research in Internet marketing as an academic field is limited and fragmented because of the emergent nature of this field. I intended to consolidate the fragmented literature of Internet marketing strategies to create a more coherent understanding of current scholarship.

This review included the most relevant marketing theories including a brief overview of competitive advantage theory, entrepreneurial marketing theory, and

dynamic capabilities theory. The study of social media as an effective Internet marketing tool provided valuable information for this review, and the evaluation of consumer behavior illustrated the most challenging situations that online fashion jewelry business owners are facing. Additional research on related areas including advertising strategies, trends and innovation, and data mining enriched the literature review. I organized the literature review into the following 15 topics: overview of marketing theories and strategies, competitive advantage theory, entrepreneurial marketing theory, dynamic capabilities theory, social commerce, advertising strategies, trends and innovation, internet marketing, social media marketing, consumer behavior, customer relationship marketing, brand management, customer loyalty programs, data mining, and marketing strategies and social change.

I used Walden University's online library and its databases, including Emerald Insight, ProQuest Central, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar to conduct this comprehensive literature review. *Internet marketing*, *e-commerce*, *advertising*, *brand management*, *social commerce*, *social media marketing*, *word-of-mouth*, *electronic word-of-mouth*, and *data mining* are some key terms used to write the literature review. The doctoral study contains 220 references, including 207 peer-reviewed articles, and 188 of those articles had publication dates within 5 years of the expected CAO approval year of 2018. The types and number of articles, dissertations, and books appear in Table 1.

Table 1

Types and Counts of References

	2014-2018	Before 2014	Total	% of total references
Books	7	1	8	3.50
Dissertations	2	0	2	0.90
Government websites	2	2	4	1.70
Peer-reviewed articles	196	19	215	93.90
Total	207	22	229	100.00

Overview of Competitive Advantage Theory

Small business owners implement marketing strategies to increase their knowledge about customers and competitors, achieve brand awareness, promote consumer trust, and discover potential risks. Managers identify customers' existing and potential needs by utilizing marketing strategies (Ritter, 2016). Implementation of marketing theories and strategies assists small business owners and managers in developing proper procedures for influencing consumers' purchasing behaviors by identifying and evaluating customer needs (Woo, Ahn, Lee, & Koo, 2015). However, small business owners often lack critical factors for business success, including strategic planning and marketing proficiency (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012).

Small business owners and marketers develop successful marketing strategies by analyzing consumer behavior and recognizing variables that impact consumer behavior through engaging with various types of customers (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015). Marketing strategies vary based on company limitations (Haniff & Halim, 2014). The implications

of these different marketing strategies and practices vary based on the nature of the business, company type and size, and decision-maker personalities (Liao, Hung, Kao, & Wu, 2014).

Competitive advantage theory was the conceptual framework for this research study. Competitive advantage theory includes focus strategy, differentiation strategy, and cost leadership (Porter, 1985). Managers develop strategies to achieve competitive advantages to stay ahead of their competitors and protect from threats such as (a) new entrants to the market, (b) competitions among existing companies in the market, and (c) substitute products and services (Azadi & Rahimzadeh, 2012). Company leaders are responsible for introducing new business strategies, products, and services to attract customers and create competitive advantages in the market (Yenipazarli, 2015). Managers implement effective tools and strategies to address possible imperfections and weaknesses of the business to maintain competitive advantages (Nadarajah & Latifah Syed, 2014). Managers must concentrate on creating a sustainable competitive advantage because without a competitive advantage, a business has very few economic reasons to survive in a competitive market.

Managers create strategies to illustrate plans for the organization to achieve success in its rival environment. To create an effective strategy, managers should identify the strategic challenges faced by the organization (Todericiu & Stanit, 2015). The essential starting point for the company to create an effective marketing strategy is generating a unique value for customers and not attempting to be the best company in the market. Managers clearly separate strategy from goals for any particular action (Nada &

Ali, 2015). The strategy is how managers position the company to achieve their goals. The strategy is the core understanding of the distinctive position of the company within the industry.

The strategy includes concrete and specific details about how the company differentiates itself in the industry and how it delivers unique value to customers. The first broad stage in strategic thinking is to determine the fundamental overarching route to competitive advantage (Khalique & Pablos, 2015). Industry structure and strategic positioning are two essential elements impacting the economic performance of companies. It is important for managers to recognize how industry structure, strategic positioning, or a combination of both can contribute to success (Cleary, 2015). Achieving competitive advantage assists managers to realize superior performance within an industry. Managers position their companies by pursuing either differentiation or cost strategy.

Managers apply a differentiation strategy by providing innovative and high-quality products (Tanwar, 2013). Copyright is an intellectual property law that protects original innovative works including computer software, musical products, and architecture. Managers who implement differentiation strategies can use copywriting to limit competitors' entrance to the market (Azadi & Rahimzadeh, 2012). The creative design and attractiveness of products are some of the most important factors to attract potential buyers (Abdullah, Hamali, & Abdullah, 2015). Differentiation occurs when a company commands a higher price because it provides a unique product or service that customers are willing to pay more money for it. Managers apply cost leadership strategies

to protect the company from competitors by providing low-cost products and services to customers in large quantities (Porter, 1985). Cost strategy refers to a company that can produce an equivalent product or service at a lower cost (Kaya, 2015). Therefore, selling the products or services at the same price or even at a reduced price will be comparatively more profitable for companies who adopted cost strategy. Managers apply focus as a strategy to dominate a niche by concentrating on a limited segment of the market. Companies that utilize focus strategy understand and recognize the dynamic and unique needs of their customers. As a result of serving niche products and services, a company can achieve higher market share than competitors (Aghadavood & Askari, 2014). The recognition and prediction of customers' needs enable managers to implement effective strategies, which lead to an increase in customer loyalty and business success.

Competitive advantage strategy is the process of positioning a company in its competitive environment. The positioning of a company includes positioning of products and services, distribution, and logistics (Khalique & Pablos, 2015). To develop a proper marketing strategy, managers are mindful of two essential factors including industry attractiveness and company position within the industry. It is vital for entrepreneurs to be familiar with the industry they enter. A high level of profitability makes the industry more attractive for competitors (Kaya, 2015). Some companies are more profitable than others in the same industry, regardless of overall market profitability levels.

It is crucial for managers to conduct an industry analysis to recognize what it takes to be a top performer rather than a below-average company in the market. Industry competition encompasses more than rivalry among competitors (Nada & Ali, 2015). The

threat of new entrants, bargaining power of suppliers, rivalry among existing competitors, bargaining power of buyers, and the threat of substitutes are five basic forces of competition (Evans, 2016). In some industries, the rivalry is genteel and polite. In other industries, the rivalry is serious, and competitors attack each other. A barrier to entry in a particular industry is a crucial dimension to determine the ease of entrance in that industry (Khalique & Pablos, 2015). The ease of entry in the market creates a fundamental attractiveness of the market and increases competition.

Industry growth, product differentiation, brand identity, barriers to exit, competitor diversity, and switching costs are essential elements that determine rivalry in an industry. It is vital for managers to be familiar with and pay attention to industry structure. Industry analysis is the starting point of creating any strategy (Kaya, 2015). Managers must recognize which competitive force is the most significant element to determine strategy (Todericiu & Stanit, 2015). Managers carefully and constantly examine the market to anticipate changes in the competitive environment. Managers have the power to actively influence the way the industry evolves based on the five competitive forces.

The value chain is the set of activities that include producing products, providing services, and marketing products and services to deliver value to customers. The value chain encompasses all competitive advantages and managers determine strategies by choosing and linking activities within the value chain (Nada & Ali, 2015). There are different ways of configuring the value chain in the same industry, including creating competitive advantages, offering a high price, and achieving lower cost. Strategic

positioning is about making choices to create a unique and superior value proposition by doing things differently to serve customers (Evans, 2016). Adapting a unique value proposition compared to other companies is necessary for a successful strategy (Kaya, 2015). Defining the value proposition enables managers to determine what set of customers receives products or services from the company, what customer needs the company's products and services meet, and how to set the price of products (premium, parity, or discounted).

Companies are constantly trying to invent and modify effective methods to increase customer engagement and market share to create competitive advantages. The emergence of the Internet, e-commerce, and technological advancement impacted consumer behavior significantly by raising customer engagement rate (Richard & Habibi, 2016). Small business owners improve business structure by implementing innovative technology to identify market changes and stay ahead of emerging and future trends (Obeidat, North, Richardson, Rattanak, & North, 2015). Emerging innovative technology enables managers to remain competitive and increase knowledge through marketing research. The implementation of innovative technology facilitates the identification of market changes and newcomers in a well-established market for small business owners and marketers (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). Applying small changes to existing products, offering new products to attract new customers, and providing new products for current customers are examples of innovative strategies to create competitive advantages for online fashion jewelry business owners to achieve higher profit levels.

Newby, Nguyen, and Waring (2014) asserted that the acquisition of technology improved the economic conditions of small and medium-sized businesses in the United States. Managers created competitive advantages through technology adoption and enhanced customer knowledge, customer relationship, and customer retention (Newby et al., 2014). To remain sustainable and profitable, small business owners and marketers must have a compatible technological system to educate customers about benefits of products and services they offer (Corsi & Di Minin, 2014). The invention of the Internet and social media changed the mode of communication between companies and customers about products and brands (Campbell, Cohen, & Ma, 2014). The adoption of technology assists online fashion jewelry business owners to remain competitive and achieve their business objectives. Technology competence managers create benefits through increasing sales efficiency and customer satisfaction, decreasing operation costs, and reaching online target markets by implementing the latest technologies.

Petkovska (2015) stated that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the principal drivers of economic growth and SMEs drive growth by creating new jobs, increasing the number of economic entities, and improving the standard of living (Petkovska, 2015). Small and medium enterprises are the center of actions where innovation and new adventures begin. SMEs can be more innovative than larger companies because they have shorter communication channels, more straightforward decision-making processes, and higher flexibility (Petkovska, 2015). Innovation is necessary to ensure competitiveness in the market, and SMEs should regularly review and modify their operations process by providing new innovative products and services.

Importance of Small Business Owners' Characteristics

Entrepreneurial marketing (EM) scholarship combines studies on entrepreneurship and marketing (Toombs & Harlow, 2014). Entrepreneurial researchers explore the relationship between small business owner characteristics and company success or failure. Small business owners' skills, experience, knowledge, and human capital directly influenced company profitability and success (Liao et al., 2014). Small business owners' innovativeness and ability to bring new ideas, processes, products, and services positively influences company sustainability and survival rate (Bello & Ivanov, 2014). Business owners' willingness to accept new technologies and the extent of their technology adoption rate are important indicators for improving operational management. Knowledge of small business owners is the most important factor in determining technology adoption and integration rates (Setiowati, Hartoyo, Daryanto, & Arifin, 2015).

In contrast to less successful competitors, successful small business owners determine, analyze, and evaluate marketing opportunities effectively (Elmahgop, Wahab, Elzein, & Edrees, 2015). The relationship-building abilities and the familiarity of small business owners with customers increase owner capabilities of understanding and recognizing customer needs (Petkovska, 2015). Izvercianu and Miclea (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of implementing a strategic marketing plan for small businesses, and stated that the effectiveness of company marketing plans relies on the aptitude of business owners and their ability to deal with opportunities and threats. To achieve success, small business owners' decision-making processes and operating management

system must align with companies' marketing strategies (Baker, Donthu, & Kumar, 2015). Managers should unfold the strategy creatively and systematically by generating comprehensive action plans, which aligned with the strategies.

Social Commerce

Development of social media platforms evolved e-commerce to social commerce, where user interaction encourages an accessible environment to buy and sell. Through emerging social commerce, purchasing power shifted from sellers to buyers (Huang & Benyoucef, 2015). Social commerce brought back the social aspect of shopping, the lack of which has been a primary barrier to e-commerce growth. A combination of social factors and social technology results in more authentic online relationships and purchasing behaviors (Lu, Fan, & Zhou, 2016).

Social presence, social trust, and the flow and quality of the purchasing experience are essential elements impacting customers' buying intentions (Zhang, Lu, Gupta, & Zhao, 2014). Launching and growing a profitable e-commerce business is substantial work that requires managers to take multiple proper steps and make various valid decisions at the right time. Emerging e-commerce provided the opportunity for small business owners to reach customers beyond the local market. The implementation of e-commerce allowed small business owners to access customers around the globe at low cost.

Leibtag (2014) stated success or failure of companies' communication on social media significantly depends on the quality of its content marketing. Leibtag analyzed social media followers of few companies and stated that creation of quality content led to

lasting relationships with customers. The current literature emphasizes the importance of effective social commerce, which can be useful for struggling online fashion jewelry business owners who want to implement social commerce as a marketing strategy.

Internet protocol (IP) to businesses. Honadle, Zapata, Auffrey, vom Hofe, and Looye (2014) revealed that it is vital for the constantly growing economy to have adaptive, creative, flexible, and nimble companies. The implementation of Internet-based strategies enables business owners to meet each of these requirements. Pettman (2016) said social commerce had grown 26% from 2013 to 2014. Facebook alone generated 64% of the entire social commerce revenue (Pettman, 2016). The amount of revenue generated through e-commerce has increased every year from $62 billion in 2013 to $105.7 billion in 2017 according to first quarter data retrieved from United States Department of Commerce (2017).

The global improvement in Internet access is offering new opportunities for online small business owners to increase their productivity and competitiveness. Ramayah, Ling, Taghizadeh, and Rahman (2016) asserted that business owners' creativity and IT aptitude, cost, and relative advantages determine the likeliness of continued website usage (Ramayah et al., 2016). The Internet is the most cost-effective sales and marketing tool, as it benefits companies at any geographical location, any size, and any business type (Akhtar, Azeem, & Mir, 2014).

Small business owners use the Internet more if they find it an enjoyable experience (Caniels, Lenaerts, & Gelderman, 2015). The perception of the Internet as an enjoyable tool for small business owners is even more important than ease of use.

Business owners take advantage of the Internet extensively and successfully globally only when they use the Internet correctly (Caniels et al., 2015). Developing an Internet platform enables online fashion jewelry business owners to connect with domestic and international customers and perform business transactions.

Building trust in social commerce platforms. Shi and Chow (2015) conducted a study on 375 website users of social commerce and found that trust-building activities of online businesses positively influenced social commerce and led to positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Trust-building activities increase customer purchase intentions for products and services (Shi & Chow, 2015). Social commerce will be an even more effective asset for both secure and struggling businesses when customers trust them within social platforms. Chen, Su, and Widjaja (2016) noted that even though trust is a critical aspect of social commerce, impulsiveness and the quality of social media content also affect customer purchase intentions (Chen et al., 2016). Wang, Yeh, and Yen (2015) evaluated customer's purchasing behaviors and indicated that the protection of customer identity by social commerce websites is an important element that affects customers' purchasing behavior. Many studies exist on the benefits of social commerce around the world, and small business owners should include trust-building and customer-identity-protection activities in their social commerce strategies to achieve sustainability and profitability.

Internet Marketing

In the current era of constantly developing technologies, Internet marketing tools including search engine optimization, e-mail marketing, social media platforms, mobile

marketing, viral marketing, and events-based marketing provide low-cost platforms for small business owners to interact with customers (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Dynamic capabilities theory is an entrepreneurial approach that highlights the significance of business process, critical resources, and effective strategies inside an organization and among external partners of a company. Dynamic capabilities theory is a recourse-based approach with a focus on transferring technology through numerous sections of a company (Teece, 2014). Atanassova and Clark (2015) used dynamic capabilities theory to explore how small business leaders used information, ideas, and knowledge acquired from social media platforms. Atanassova and Clark asserted social media are inexpensive and easy-to-operate tools to achieve growth in a company by providing a platform for companies to interact with customers constantly and by providing relationship-building opportunities. Managers implement a dynamic capabilities strategy to create, consolidate, and reconfigure capabilities to tackle constantly and rapidly changing environments.

The implementation of Internet-based strategies increases marketing and operational efficiency (Dlodlo & Mafini, 2014). The implementation of Internet marketing strategies enables marketers to advertise anytime and to reach larger audiences (Richard & Habibi, 2016). The online presences of small businesses owners enable them to be more noticeable to promote their products and services. Marketing managers and small business owners use Internet marketing to provide excellent visibility and to facilitate customer interactions with businesses. Implementing advanced networks that include both customers and suppliers, as well as the alignment of marketing elements, raises the level of value perceived by customers (Van Bockhaven, Matthyssens, &

Vandenbempt, 2015). Online fashion jewelry business owners build relationships with customers by creating constant low-cost personalized communications, responding to competitive mass-marketing activities, and overcoming barriers of distance by using Internet marketing.

Jones, Borgman, and Ulusoy (2015) studied five struggling small businesses in Maine and asserted that owning and managing a business website and social media to market the products and services positively affects the business success rate. The results of the study revealed that having a website and social media accounts assisted small business owners in increasing online traffic, raised awareness about their products and services, and led to increased revenue (Jones et al., 2015). Khan and Lee (2014) conducted a study of 103 small café owners in Hong Kong and noted that café owners felt Facebook was more credible and effective than a website. The café owners asserted the implementation of Facebook enabled them to reach a large audience and allowed them to interact directly with their customers via public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing. The café owners stated that a website was more cost-effective than Facebook, and they mentioned that establishing a free fan page on Facebook was one of Facebook's relative advantages (Khan & Lee, 2014). Owning and operating a Facebook business page assists online fashion jewelry business owners through increasing exposure to potential customers and collecting more leads to the business website. Online fashion jewelry business owners lower marketing costs by implementing Facebook business pages because starting a Facebook business page is free. Facebook ads are inexpensive and more targeted compared to traditional radio or television ads.

Lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity with social media is one of the main barriers for small business owners and marketers to implementing an Internet marketing strategy. The difficulty of measuring the rate of online marketing investment returns is another primary obstacle that deters the online presence of small business owners (Xia & Pedraza-Jimenez, 2015). Cronin-Gilmore (2012) evaluated marketing methods that small business owners implement and they found that small business owners are aware they lack marketing skills. Some small business owners do not have the requisite knowledge to implement new marketing tactics and they are afraid of trying new marketing methods and tactics without relevant experience (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012).

Social Media Marketing

In contrast to traditional marketing, social media offers innovative marketing tools that assist small business owners to reach business leads, to build traffic, and to increase brand awareness at a significantly lower cost (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Customers value social media as an effective tool to shape their purchase intentions (Bronner & de Hoog, 2014). Taneja and Toombs (2014) noted that the implementation of social media for businesses increased dramatically since 2008. Social media usage enables small business owners to build strong relationships with their current and potential customers. Social media marketing relates to the process of increasing website traffic or customers' attention through social media websites. Social media marketing programs usually have a focus on creating content that attracts customer attention and inspires readers to participate in company-related social network activities (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Social media programs are beneficial for online fashion jewelry business

owners in various ways, including building trust and credibility and increasing brand recognition and brand equity.

Ashley and Tuten (2014) explored creative strategies in social media marketing. An effective social media presence that includes creative, fresh, and frequent content updates is crucial to a successful business (Ashley & Tuten, 2014). Ashley and Tuten (2014) asserted that interactive social media content engaged customers to participate in social channels and constituted the most effective marketing tactic to increase the customer engagement rate. Another study also revealed that the quality of the company's website directly impacts customer e-satisfaction and, consequently, the higher level of e-satisfaction positively impacts customer willingness to purchase company products and services (Bukhari, Ghoneim, Dennis, & Jamjoom, 2013). Chen et al. (2016) surveyed 277 Facebook users who were members of social media shopping groups in Taiwan and noted that social media sites should contain current, relevant, complete, accurate, and well-formed information to impact customers' purchase intention positively. Hopp and Barker (2016) conducted a study of 288 e-commerce customers and asserted that satisfying content and random learning opportunities are two compelling aspects that social commerce users consider when choosing social commerce sites. Online fashion jewelry business owners should create quality contents to engage and interact with customers to influence their purchase decisions.

A corporate message is spreads organically over social media from users to other users. A corporate message resonates through social media because it looks like it comes from a dedicated third-party source and not just from the company itself. Social media

platforms are easily accessible for anyone with Internet access. Increased communication fosters brand awareness and improves customer service in organizations. Social media is a relatively inexpensive platform for implementing marketing strategies. The leaders of most brands fully recognize the power of social media. If Facebook users constituted a country, they would represent the third-highest population after China and India (Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014). The power of social media has risen tremendously over time, and company leaders slowly adapted to this change. The leaders of small and large companies learned that it is worth investing time and money in social media. Marketing strategists educate customers by using weblogs and engage their perspectives, their achievements, and even their everyday activities (Ellison et al., 2014). According to Ellison et al. (2014), marketers mostly use LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook as their social networks. Marketers believe that LinkedIn is the most effective social media platform to generate customer leads. Online fashion jewelry business owners should use the power of social media to inspire customers who purchased from the company to talk about the brand and the quality of products to others.

Nam and Kannan (2014) conducted a research in 44 companies located in 14 markets to analyze social tagging data. Nam and Kannan noted social tagging is a unique approach to sharing and classifying online information. Social media users use social tagging to communicate their thoughts, opinions, and beliefs about any subject. Social tagging content serves to connect content through user-generated keywords known as tags that allow the keywords to be easily searchable (Nam & Kannan, 2014). Marketers

obtain deep information by using social tagging, which allows them to understand brand-associative networks.

Consumer socialization theory predicts that communication among consumers affects their cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes. Vinerean, Cetina, Dumitrescu, and Tichindelean (2013) evaluated the impact of social media on consumer behavior by classifying online consumers in various groups consisting of engagers, expressers, informers, networkers, and observers. Small business owners and marketers use this classification of online consumers as a basis for psychographic segmentation to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of online marketing activities (Vinerean et al., 2013). Social media platforms offer immense possibilities for fostering relationships with consumers in an online environment. Small business owners and marketers should create a buyer persona and then should develop and continually adjust the online marketing strategy according to the interests of customers for long-term success. True customer engagement means commitment-focused and not transaction-focused engagement (Vinerean et al., 2013). Company leaders who master these aspects are truly successful, as they undergo continuous online marketing research and are sensitive to changes in consumer behavior patterns to identify new areas of consumer values and interest (Vinerean et al., 2013). Online fashion jewelry business owners should be aware of the importance of social media sites in influencing online shopping by identifying and targeting different types of customers and taking the initiative to recognize and highlight customer interests.

Social media and small business owners. Small business owners are primary decision makers for companies, and their marketing knowledge impacts companies' marketing strategies. Marketing planner, resource allocator, customer relationship manager, price and products manager, and data collector are just a few examples of small business owners' roles in their companies (O'Donnell, 2014). Small business owners ensure the alignment of business goals with company marketing strategies. It is critical for small business owners to measure the effectiveness of marketing strategies to increase marketing performances (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlstrom, & Freundt, 2014). Chen et al. (2016) noted more than 40 million small business owners actively implement Facebook as a marketing tool. In one study, small business owners engaged in marketing activities through the implementation of word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising, partnerships, and networking as their top marketing strategies (O'Donnell, 2014). The implementation of Facebook as an effective marketing tool is challenging for small business owners because they lack knowledge and time.

The popularity of social media, including Facebook, facilitated the process of attracting and keeping customers for businesses. Through social media, the methods of introducing brands and products to the customers are evolving (Kudeshia, Sikdar, & Mittal, 2016). Facebook is an inexpensive and beneficial form of social marketing, and it is crucial for company owners and managers to be knowledgeable about the efficient use of this marketing tool. Effective networking activities are significant marketing efforts for small business owners to attract new customers, increase market share, find cost-saving opportunities, and discover and develop ideas for new products (Achrol & Gundlach,

2014). Management skills, including technical and social media competencies and personal characteristics, may be useful for online fashion jewelry business owners in developing and enhancing their business social media page efficiently.

A research study of small businesses in Austria illustrated that small business owners increased their skills and knowledge, and effectively adopted Facebook, by having technology mentors (Woodley, Burgess, Paguio, & Bingley, 2014). Jambulingamis, Sumathi, and Rajagopal (2016) conducted a study of 134 small business owners in Malaysia and noted that the involvement rate of using Facebook as a marketing tool directly depends on entrepreneurs' education, knowledge, and attitudes toward technology. The results of the research emphasized the need for business owners to have technological knowledge to influence their businesses. Cesaroni and Consoli (2015) conducted a study of 48 companies in Italy to explore the relationship between business owners' personal characteristics and the extent of using new and innovative methods to run their businesses. Cesaroni and Consoli asserted that business owners who effectively applied social media also had knowledgeable and innovative owners and managers who were able to recognize and adopt new methods of running a business and were willing to take the risk of using new but unproven initiatives. Several researchers confirmed the positive relationship between small business owners and managers' knowledge and the adoption rate of technology. The majority of studies about the relationship between small business owners' social media skills and their implementation of Facebook as an effective marketing tool took place outside of the United States. More research is necessary inside the United States to analyze the relationship between the extent of small

business owners' technological knowledge and their intention to implement social media as a marketing tool.

Since 2008, the implementation of social media as an effective marketing tool for small businesses has doubled (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). The implementation of social media enables small business owners to increase sales and market share, to improve customer satisfaction, and to minimize marketing expenses (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Finding competent staff to manage and run advertising and social media is challenging for small business owners. Pakura and Pakura (2015) conducted a study of 1,971 new German companies and asserted that networking initiated in Facebook brought further benefits to companies with owners who were highly engaged on the company's Facebook page (Pakura & Pakura, 2015). Companies with owners and staff who are technologically competent take the most advantage of social media (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Humphreys and Wilken (2014) asserted that many small business owners who lack resources to hire capable personnel to run their business social media page fill the gap by looking for a young person. For instance, one of the small business owners asked his niece to establish a Facebook page for his business (Humphreys & Wilken, 2014). Another study of 48 small businesses illustrated business owners must be capable of accepting new ways to manage the business, and they must have direct involvement in Facebook usage to use this marketing tool effectively (Cesaroni & Consoli, 2015). Online fashion jewelry business owners should be flexible enough to accept new ways of managing their businesses and be technologically competent enough to get effectively

involved in their company's social media page to maximize the benefits of the business social media page.

Schaupp and Belanger (2014) noted developing effective marketing strategies and hiring technologically competent employees to implement marketing strategies are the most challenging barriers to social media adoption for small business owners. As some small business owners lack social media competence, they avoided using it until they received pressure from customers. Small business owners reported that revenue growth correlated with their social media use (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Ackaradejruangsri (2015) conducted a study of 243 Facebook users in Thailand to evaluate the most effective business Facebook pages and noted the most effective business Facebook pages contain the following characteristics: (a) convenient to use, (b) secure payment system, (c) quality products at reasonable price, and (d) high rate of customer engagement.

Hodis, Sriramachandramurthy, and Sashittal (2015) conducted a study of two groups of students in the United States to evaluate the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing tool. Hodis et al. noted that it is critical for business owners to know the personality of Facebook users, and they divided Facebook users into four groups: (a) attention seekers, (b) connection seekers, (c) devotees, and (d) entertainment chasers. Although accurate information empowers attention seekers and devotees, they enhance brand image by viral WOM. Attention seekers and devotees are great resources for a brand (Hodis et al., 2015). Marketers should offer monetary rewards to keep entertainment chasers as their customers. When connection seekers become regular customers, they consider the brand a trusted member of the Facebook community (Hodis

et al., 2015). Facebook as an effective marketing tool enables online fashion jewelry business owners to evaluate the behavior of Facebook users and allows them to align their marketing strategies based on their Facebook users' personalities.

Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Canabate, and Lebherz (2014) analyzed 164 Facebook posts of five travel agencies in Spain and found that Facebook business posts, including videos and images, were more noticeable than posts without visuals for current and potential customers. Mariani, Di Felice, and Mura (2016) conducted another study about posting visual content and noted that moderately long posts positively influenced consumer engagement on Facebook. However, early morning posts and posting with high frequency negatively impacted Facebook consumer engagement (Mariani et al., 2016). Posting visual content and providing in-depth information about products are two critical factors to influence customers' purchase decisions. Online fashion jewelry business owners should influence their customers' purchase decision by posting quality images and providing descriptive and concise information, including the dimensions and materials of each jewelry piece.

A Facebook user indicates a favorable opinion by clicking the like button on a business Facebook page. Chen et al. (2016) conducted a study in Taiwan and noted a high number of likes on a Facebook page had a positive impact on users and increased their willingness to purchase the products and services of a business. Kudeshia et al. (2016) conducted a study of 311 participants in India on five small businesses. The researchers noted liking the fan page of a brand resulted in a strong customer interest in that brand and positive WOM that ultimately increases purchasing intention. Admitting

Facebook as a beneficial marketing tool by online fashion jewelry business owners assists them to recognize customers' expectations and to ensure the business has all requirements to implement a Facebook-centric marketing strategy may benefit online fashion jewelry business owners.

The result of a study on 613 Taiwanese students illustrated that the number of Facebook likes was a great indicator for small business owners and marketers to understand their customers' needs and points of view (Chin, Lu, & Wu, 2015). Brison, Baker, and Byon (2015) conducted a study of 520 Facebook users and noted that Facebook likes are a new form of social endorsement for a product. The results of the study illustrated a positive relationship between consumers' purchasing intention and Facebook likes (Brison et al., 2015). Dehghani and Tumer (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of Facebook advertising and asserted that a high number of Facebook likes and shares positively influenced consumers' purchase behavior and made the brand more credible. Consistently posting proper content at the appropriate time and having strong and consistent themes on business social media pages assist online fashion jewelry business owners to increase customers' interaction and engagement rate.

Social media influencers. Social media influencers (SMIs) are online celebrities who exhibit their luxurious lives through social media (Chae, 2017). Social media influencers are people with a high potential to influence others because of their fame, attributes, and uniqueness. Social media influencers have a powerful social network with a mass audience of followers (Phillips, Miller, & McQuarrie, 2014). Company leaders attempt to leverage the online influence of SMIs by collaborating and partnering with

their brands to establish mass, powerful, and trustworthy communication (Brown-Peterson, 2017). Social media influencers charge for promoting products and for partnering with brands; their fee may vary from a few dollars to thousands of dollars. Many SMIs offer followers a promotional code that enables the SMIs to earn a commission from company sales. Some SMIs introduce and promote their own products to earn sales and revenue (Meyers, 2017).

In some cases, SMIs' authenticity faces challenges because they partnered with a brand and showcased a product that they do not use in their real life (Khamis, Ang, & Welling, 2016). De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) conducted a study of 49 social media influencers who collaborated with nine brands to explore balancing strategies to keep the situations real under commercial pressure. De Veirman noted that SMIs should stay passionate while involved with brand collaboration, and they must be honest with their audience about partnering with companies to promote brands. Companies should allow SMIs to select the products that align with their personal style to maximize enthusiasm for the brand among SMIs' followers (De Veirman et al., 2017). Implementing SMIs' power and collaborating with SMIs might assist online fashion jewelry business owners and marketers to increase the size of their brand audience, sales, and profit.

Customer Relationship Management

Trust, understanding, commitment, and quality are foundations for creating strong relationship marketing. Jussila, Karkkainen, and Aramo-Immonen (2014) conducted a study of 306 participants and noted the quality of relationship with customers affects their

loyalty (Jussila et al., 2014). An effective and well-designed customer relationship system contains the following features: (a) customer oriented, (b) sales-force automated, (c) technology equipped, and (d) strong opportunity management (Clark, 2017). To achieve sustainability and profitability, managers establish successful business relationships with customers, as such relationships positively affect customer perceptions and increase sales performance (Bettencourt, Blocker, Houston, & Flint, 2015). Business owners and managers achieve long-term, sustainable success and brand loyalty by creating outstanding business-to-business (B2B) relationships. Moreover, establishing paramount relationships with customers creates a positive brand reputation and develops sales and profits (Dwesar & Rao, 2014). The first step for small business owners and marketers in creating a B2B relationship is to initiate relationships with customers. Customers recognize a business relationship as a personal connection with the company (Bettencourt et al., 2015). The implementation of strategies for customer relationship management may allow online fashion jewelry business owners to cultivate solid long-term relationship with customers by providing them direct information suited to their interests and needs.

Small business owners and marketers must allow consumers to have an active role to build a mutually beneficial relationship and to participate in the creation of marketing communication activities (Bacile, Swilley, & Ye, 2014). In 2015, online sales accounted for 7.4% of overall retail spending in the United States, which was the highest percentage since tracking began in 1999. Sales made through mobile devices have increased rapidly to reach 22% to 27% of all online sales. Company leaders should acknowledge the

importance of creating a digital relationship with customers to be successful (Kannan & Li, 2017). Tseng (2016) stated that company survival rate depends on the availability of knowledge resources to the company and the implementation of knowledge resources while company leaders enhance product and service quality. Tseng (2016) noted that knowledge management capability positively impacts customer relationship management and the quality of services offered (Tseng, 2016). Online fashion jewelry business owners should use marketing strategies for customer relationship management as a powerful tool to increase their knowledge about customers. Using knowledge management enables online fashion jewelry business owners to improve their relationship with customers, to create loyal customers, and to obtain competitive advantages.

Small business owners and marketers effectively use social media to observe, screen, and track consumer behavior to develop proper social media marketing strategies (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014). Customer retention and customer satisfaction are critical elements to operate a successful business. Business leaders should create a lasting relationship with their customers to gain customer loyalty (Wiid, Cant, & Roux, 2016). An increase in customer loyalty leads to profitability through repeat purchases. Loyal customers, in turn, promote the brand by recounting their pleasant purchase experiences to their friends and families (Aghadavood & Askari, 2014). Online fashion jewelry business owners should develop effective strategies for customer relationship management to ensure strong customer relationships and customer loyalty.

Consumers' reviews. Effective online networking activities, including customer comments and inquiries, positively impact the number of social followings on a

business's social media pages, as well as customers' purchase decisions and brand

loyalty, and increase the value and reputation of the business (Erragcha & Romdhane,

2014). Company leaders should use consumer reviews as an effective marketing tool to

communicate with current and potential customers to increase sales (Park & Nicolau,

2015). Goodrum (2015) asserted that the information from online sources, especially

when firsthand experience is limited, impacted the majority of consumers' purchase

decisions. Customers trust online reviews as if they are a personal recommendation

(Goodrum, 2015). Consumer review and marketing promotions are two important factors

influencing customer demands (Chong, Ch'ng, Liu, & Li, 2015). Small business owners

and marketers generate sales by using reviews to encourage purchases, to prevent

confusion, and to minimize choice overload (Baum & Spann, 2014). To destroy the

effects of the negative reviews, business owners should respond succinctly and

professionally to keep clients satisfied. Another method to minimize the effects of

negative reviews is generating positive reviews, which will push the negative reviews to

the bottom of the list (Goodrum, 2015). Online fashion jewelry business owners should

be aware of the power of customer reviews as a medium of communication for customers

to evaluate and express the effectiveness and competence of the products.

Electronic word of mouth. Word of mouth is the process of exchanging

information from one customer or a group of customers to another customer or group in a

method that can alter their preferences, their purchasing behavior, or the way they

interact with others in the future (Barnes & Jacobsen, 2014). Electronic word-of-mouth

(e-WOM) encompasses any positive or negative comment addressed through potential,

actual, or past customers about a product or organization that is accessible to some people and organizations through the Internet (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014). Electronic WOM can significantly influence consumer decision making and the success of any business (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, & Krush, 2016). It is critical for businesses to have an influential social presence to generate positive e-WOM and to develop brand management and marketing strategies.

Flanagin, Metzger, Pure, Markov, and Hartsell (2014) noted 49% of consumers trust online reviews more than other sources. Electronic WOM occurs in a complicated, technologically mediated context, whereas traditional WOM usually happens in a face-to-face or one-on-one manner. There is no difference in perceived reliability between e-WOM and traditional WOM. Unlike traditional WOM, e-WOM communications have unique scalability and speed of distribution (Fox & Longart, 2016). Electronic WOM has accelerated interactions and has greater reach in comparison to traditional word-of-mouth (Wang, Yeh, Chen, & Tsydypov, 2016). Expertise, experience, knowledge, and trustworthiness of a review source determine its credibility (Meuter, McCabe, & Curran, 2013). Lee, Lee, and Hansen (2016) evaluated the impact of a credible review in the decision-making process and confirmed that credible e-WOM positively impacted study participants. Negative reviews have a smaller impact when weighed against a large number of positive reviews (Ong, Mannino, & Gregg, 2014). It is critical for online fashion jewelry business owners to develop a proper reaction to minimize the impact of negative WOM.

Fox and Longart (2016) conducted a study in Ireland to explore effective styles and types of communication in social media. Fox and Longart noted e-WOM is more important than at any other time in history for marketers and customers. Electronic WOM influences the perceptions of customers about a company and the products that the company offers. Positive e-WOM referrals promote trust and increase customer purchases, which increases sales and profit levels (See-To & Ho, 2014). Monitoring customer interactions on social media and identifying daily and weekly peaks may assist online fashion jewelry business owners to maximize benefits from e-WOM.

Liu, Cheung, and Lee (2016) conducted a study of 1,177 social-commerce site customers over a 4-month period and found that social commerce site reputation and its aspiration to assist customers affected the customer information-sharing rate. The results of the study revealed that quality of posts, extensiveness of feedback, customer proficiency, and reciprocity enhance customers' information sharing on social commerce sites (Liu et al., 2016). Despite the increasing popularity of social commerce sites, users have the power to share and exchange information and experiences about the products. Online fashion jewelry business owners must mindfully create positive WOM as the most credible form of advertising to remain competitive in the market.

Customer loyalty programs. Loyalty rewards programs are incentives intended to build loyalty among clients with the idea that companies offer the best rewards to frequent clients. Loyal customers are less-price-sensitive customers. Managers usually have to adjust aspects of their rewards programs to ensure profitability and competitiveness (McCall & McMahon, 2016). A loyalty program is a customer-

relationship-management tool that rewards customers for their loyalty based on the past, current, and future value of the company. Rewards offered by a company marketing leaders will help to create perceived value and satisfaction. A client who commits to a loyalty program that requires cost and effort, including membership fees and provision of personal information to the company, compares these costs with the value of offered rewards. If the value of the rewards is greater than the costs, the customer decides to register for the loyalty program and switch or increase behavioral and attitudinal loyalty (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Consumer value perception is a basic condition for increasing brand loyalty using customer loyalty programs. Meyer-Waarden (2015) asserted that the rewards timing was the top decision criterion (36%), followed by rewards tangibility (35%) and compatibility (29%) for planning loyalty program preferences among study participants. Consumers prefer immediate rewards to delayed rewards, and tangible rather than intangible rewards (Meyer-Waarden, 2015). Online fashion jewelry business owners should implement customer loyalty programs as an effective marketing tool to increase customer retention, to create customer loyalty, and to improve brand reputation.

Customer loyalty programs membership reconciles the relationship between advertising effectiveness and attitudinal loyalty, and customer loyalty programs have a positive influence on customer choice, business values, opposition to counterarguments, and customer retention. Maity and Gupta (2016) noted that a rewards program can expedite customer purchases and can cause customers to receive more value and experience higher satisfaction. A customer loyalty program is a unified system of marketing actions that propose to reward and promote customer behavior and attitude

through rewards. Customer loyalty programs reward customers based on their purchase history and thus encourage loyal behavior by retaining existing customers and increasing business from them (Maity & Gupta, 2016). Customer loyalty programs raise the average purchase rate and reward customers for consolidating their purchases, which decreases purchases from competitors. Customer loyalty programs are a brand-building tool to raise the effectiveness of advertising.

Advertising Strategies

Advertising is a crucial, powerful, fascinating, and informative tool to promote new and existing products and services. Advertisements directly influence customers' attitudes and purchasing behaviors in the competitive marketing world (Terkan, 2014). Buil, de Chernatony, and Martinez (2013) conducted a study of 302 customers in the United Kingdom to explore the impact of advertising and sales promotions on brand equity and business sustainability. Buil et al. analyzed advertising budgets and customer attitudes toward the advertisements, and they found that company leaders generate brand awareness and positive brand perception by applying original, creative, and unique advertising strategies. Although price promotions are popular, repeated use of monetary promotions decreases brand equity (Buil et al., 2013). Small business owners optimize their advertising investments and maximize marketing effectiveness by using promotional campaigns as a form of communication (Ahmed, Ting, & Johl, 2015). Advertising is an essential marketing tool for companies that create brand equity, and allocating additional funds to advertising can create an increase in brand awareness for companies.

Brand Management

A variety of factors impact customers deeply, including customers' attitudes, confessed values, and the environments in which customers live. Mogos Descotes and Pauwels-Delassus (2015) conducted a study of 1,250 respondents during a 5-year period between 2009 and 2014 in the Slovak Republic to explore the impact of brands on the customer decision-making process. The researchers found that it is essential for small business owners and marketers to create a competitive brand by regularly evaluating customer needs and actively fulfilling customer requests. A brand is a valuable growing asset that builds consumer loyalty, drives future demand for company products, and ensures future cash flows. Law enforcement protects brands from duplication. Small business owners and marketers use branding as the most significant business-strategy tool to create customer value and to maintain competitive advantage (Mogos Descotes & Pauwels-Delassus, 2015). Strong brand management increases the perceived value of a brand, enables managers to protect product image, and raises company market share. A competent brand-management system and appropriate marketing activities result in loyal and satisfied customers.

Agostini, Filippini, and Nosella (2015) investigated the relationship among branding, marketing budget, and small- to medium-sized enterprise (SME) sales performance. They used a panel regression model on data collected from 2008 to 2012 in the fashion industry in Italy. Agostini et al. noted that branding is the process of selecting a general brand concept and then introducing, elaborating, and fortifying the concept over time. Agostini et al. indicated that corporate trademarks and marketing investments had a

positive relationship with SME sales performance. Marketing budget has the highest

direct influence on SME sales performance, and its impact increases as companies grow.

Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014) evaluated consumer brand engagement on social

media, and they noted that consumer brand involvement reflects consumer interest level

and personal relevance of a brand. The brand is the most important reputational asset for

companies, and strong brand management results in retaining customers because they

might easily remember both the company and its products. Scholarly literature on the

brand-creation process is lacking and this would be an interesting area of focus for future

research.

Cause-Related Marketing

Small business owners and managers implement corporate social responsibility to

influence the brand perceptions of consumers. Companies participate in charitable causes

and partner with nonprofit organizations to differentiate their brands from competitors, to

enhance their corporate image, and to generate sales (Alalwan, Rana, Algharabat, &

Tarhini, 2016). Cause-related marketing is one of the most recent developments in

corporate social responsibility. In cause-related marketing, a company donates to a

nonprofit cause whenever a customer makes a purchase or when customers donate to a

cause via that company (Hanks, Line, & Mattila, 2015). The implementation of a cause-

related marketing strategy by online fashion jewelry business owners elevate customers'

enthusiasm for the products and boosts sales and profit levels.

Al-Dmour, Al-Madani, Alansari, Tarhini, and Al-Dmour (2016) conducted a

study of 500 Jordanian consumers to explore factors impacting the success or failure of

cause-related marketing activities. Researchers asserted company brand credibility has a positive impact on the effectiveness of cause-related marketing activities. Al-Dmour et al. (2016) asserted the cause must fit with products and services that the company offers to maximize customer engagement. One retailer of children's clothes successfully engaged in cause-related marketing by aligning with a cause specifically designed to empower children (Al-Dmour et al., 2016). Online fashion jewelry business owners use cause-related marketing strategies to create stronger relationships with customers, to enhance business reputation, and to elevate brand image. Small business owners need to raise awareness about a cause-related marketing campaign and its benefits for the local community. Further research is necessary to explore the relationship between the numerous variables impacting the success of cause-related marketing.

Data Mining

Data mining refers to predictive and heterogeneous information extracted from large databases that researchers use to analyze customer perspectives. Data warehousing refers to a relational database that centralizes data extracted from multiple sources. Information obtained from data mining and data warehousing helps companies tap into the specific needs of consumers and creates competitive advantages (Tirunillai & Tellis, 2014). The implementation of data mining provides decision makers the opportunity to examine the customer base as a whole and allows managers to make informed decisions (Santos & Boticario, 2013). Small business owners listen to detailed market messages and influence consumer purchasing decisions by categorizing homogeneous potential customers by implementing data mining (Hand & Singh, 2014). As the Internet is

growing, data mining knowledge will continue to grow and marketing research will positively impact marketing implementation.

Li, Tao, Cheng, and Zhao (2015) studied effective data-mining techniques to improve customer relationship management and found that improvements in technology, including data warehousing, data mining, and campaign management, made relationship marketing more challenging. Li et al. asserted the implementation of data mining facilitated competitive advantages for the companies. Extracting hidden predictive information from large databases offered significant value for managers and they were able to predict customer behavior by making proactive and knowledge-driven decisions (Song et al., 2014). Implementation of data mining tools enables online fashion jewelry business owners to manage customer relationships proactively by moving beyond the simple analysis of past events.

Managers and marketers analyze patterns and behaviors to develop marketing strategies through implementing data mining (Chen et al., 2015). Marketers use data mining to evaluate consumer behavior to identify, develop, and implement effective marketing strategies (Chong et al., 2015). Small business owners use data mining to create and identify homogeneous groups of customers to reach precise and effective marketing communication. Online fashion jewelry business owners may use data mining as an effective tool to evaluate consumer behaviors and to adjust their marketing strategies.

Transition

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective Internet marketing strategies that online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profit levels. Section 1 contained the problem statement, purpose statement, research question, interview questions, conceptual framework, and other areas of importance. The objective of Section 2 is to describe the plan for conducting this study. The population for this study included three online fashion jewelry business owners located in the northeast region of the United States. In Section 2, I provide information about the participants, my role as a researcher, the research method and design, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis techniques, population and sampling methods, ethical considerations, and reliability and validity. Section 3 includes the problem statement, research question, and the presentation of findings. In Section 3, I discuss several components of the study, including the presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, reflections, and the conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

The Internet radically changed the way to establish and promote a business, and Internet marketing is vital to the success of any business (Cant et al., 2015). Online fashion jewelry business owners implement effective Internet marketing strategies to maintain or increase profit levels and to achieve sustainability. Section 2 includes the purpose statement, role of the researcher, a description of the proposed participants, the design and methodology of the research, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection techniques, data analysis strategies, and action plans to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective Internet marketing strategies online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profit levels. The sample included three online fashion jewelry business owners located in the northeastern region of the United States with successful experience in using effective Internet marketing strategies to maintain or increase profit levels. The implications for positive social change are an increase in sustainability and profitability, which may lead to stronger communities through job creation, economic growth, and a stable economy. The implementation of the study findings may lead to increase household incomes and tax revenues and to balance state budgets.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in a qualitative study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The role of a researcher is to collect data and monitor the

progress of research neutrally and fairly (Tella, 2015). Researchers must understand the research topic through immersion in the literature (Boddy, 2016). My affiliation with the research topic is 4 years of professional experience managing the online fashion jewelry business I started. Researchers use the Internet and social media to identify qualified participants (Brewis, 2014; Khan, 2014). I selected participants using the Chamber of Commerce website and Google search engine to locate online fashion jewelry business owners in the northeast region of the United States. I obtained approval to conduct this research from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB ensures the protection of human beings who participate in research studies (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Suri, 2011). After obtaining IRB approval, I contacted the participants by phone to describe the purpose of the study and to request permission to conduct a subsequent Skype interview.

As a researcher, I have ethical responsibilities toward the participants. According to the *Belmont Report* protocol, the ethical obligations of researchers include respecting the research participants, minimizing harm while expanding benefits, and treating the participants equally based on individual efforts, needs, and values (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015). I adhered to the ethical principles summarized in the *Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I respected the participants by protecting their rights, confidentiality, and privacy. Researcher bias will affect the process of research, including data collection, research design, and data analysis. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted researchers and participants have worldview biases. It is necessary to implement preventive techniques to minimize bias (Boddy,

2016). I wrote notes during data collection and during the data analysis process. I asked open-ended questions to encourage participants to talk about their experience. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) noted researchers should follow participants during interviews rather than lead them. To achieve the most beneficial information, I followed the participants rather than lead them through the interview process. To collect additional data, I reviewed companies' documents, including the marketing plan.

Researchers frequently conduct interviews to collect data in qualitative research studies (Harrison & Taylor, 2016; Zhang & Guttormsen, 2016). I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to explore effective Internet marketing strategies that online fashion jewelry business owners implemented to increase profit levels. Researchers can create well-defined semistructured interviews by directing the conversation to significant areas of the research topic and asking additional questions of the participants (Lord, Bolton, Fleming, & Anderson, 2016; Suri, 2011). I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) to provide an interview guideline and to confirm the reliability of the interview process. An interview protocol is a guideline that contains information to support the qualitative interview process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Member checking is an effective way to validate the accuracy of interview transcription and interpretation (Roth, Theriault, Clement, & Worthington, 2016). Harrison and Taylor (2016) noted researchers should ask every interview participant to evaluate the interpretation of his or her interview to confirm that the interpretation is accurate. After completing the interviews and interpreting the collected data, I conducted member checking interviews to ensure the accuracy of collected data.

Participants

This qualitative study involved conducting research on effective Internet marketing strategies that online fashion jewelry business owners implement to increase profit levels. Selecting experienced and knowledgeable individuals who meet a set of criteria is critical for the research process (Suri, 2011). The researcher is accountable for selecting qualified participants who meet the required criteria for a study (Englander, 2012; Murshed & Zhang, 2016). All participants of this study were online fashion jewelry business owners with a minimum of $100,000 in annual income and they had been in business for 5 years. Purposive sampling is a systematic method to ensure certain groups of cases represent the final sample of the project (Robinson, 2014). Researchers implement purposive sampling to identify the study participants who have particular insights and experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Sukcharoen & Leatham, 2016). I implemented a purposive sampling strategy to choose the participants who met the required qualifications.

One of the most important steps in conducting a case study is recruiting suitable candidates (Salvador, 2016; Seitz, 2016). Using the Internet and social media facilitates identifying potential participants (Brewis, 2014; Khan, 2014). I selected the participants through the Chamber of Commerce website and Google search engine. After obtaining IRB approval, I contacted the potential participants by phone to invite them for the Skype interview, and I sent a confirmation e-mail to follow up with them. Faden, Beauchamp, and Kass (2014) used the informed consent letter in research on leader strategies to reduce sales personnel attribution. Before conducting the interviews, I sent the

prospective participants an informed consent form via e-mail. The participants declared their agreement to participate in an interview by replying "I consent" to the e-mail that included the consent form.

Building professional and friendly working relationships with potential participants is imperative (Khan, 2014; Yin, 2018). Mutual expectation and a shared understanding of purpose are requirements for relationship development (Hoeber & Shaw, 2017; Salvador, 2016). Establishing an open communication environment serves to encourage the building of an in-depth relationship (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). I developed friendly working relationships with participants by introducing myself, explaining the purpose of the study, outlining the interview process, using open communication, and answering any questions asked by the prospective participants.

Selecting knowledgeable participants with special characteristics that align with the research question increases the strength of a study (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015; Zhang & Guttormsen, 2016). Individuals must have detailed information and experiences that align with research question to be eligible for a study (Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014; Leoni, 2015). To ensure the alignment of the research question with participants' characteristics, I selected three online fashion jewelry business owners who were 18 years old or older and from the northeast region of the United States who generated at least $100,000 in annual revenue and had successfully operated in the fashion jewelry industry for at least 5 years.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Research methodologies can be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. Researchers collect and interpret data to accept or reject hypotheses in a quantitative method (McCabe & Holmes, 2014; Murshed & Zhang, 2016). This study involved exploring effective Internet marketing strategies implemented by online fashion jewelry business owners to increase profit levels. Hypothesis testing is not an appropriate method to investigate people's experiences (Powell & Eddleston, 2013; Yin, 2018). In quantitative studies, researchers test hypotheses, evaluate variables, and compare the correlation or dependence (Lastad, Berntson, Naswall, & Sverke, 2014; Sukcharoen & Leatham, 2016). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because no hypothesis testing took place, no variable evaluation occurred, and no dependence or correlation comparison transpired. Mixed methods research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Holt & Goulding, 2014). The mixed research method is the most appropriate method for studies that require a combination of evidence drawn from qualitative and quantitative research methods (Guercini, 2014). The focus of quantitative research is on numerical data and distinctly measured statistics (Murshed & Zhang, 2016). Consequently, the quantitative and mixed methods approaches were not suitable for this study.

In qualitative method, researchers try to explain why or how a phenomenon occurred (Yin, 2018). Implementing a qualitative research method simplifies the evaluation of individual experiences and events that happened naturally (Guercini, 2014).

Using the qualitative research method facilitates the understanding of human behavior

patterns (Percy, Koster, & Kostere, 2015). Implementation of the qualitative method

expedites the process of exploring social problems by using information derived from

interviews and examination of documents (Berglund, 2015; Yin, 2018; Zhang &

Guttormsen, 2016). The most appropriate method for researchers to explore the real

world environment is the qualitative method (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The

qualitative method was thus most suitable for this study because the implementation of

the qualitative research method simplifies the exploration of effective Internet marketing

strategies that online fashion jewelry business owners implement to increase profit levels.

Applying the qualitative research method allows researchers to collect data in the context

of the real-world environment of actual business owners.

Research Design

Multiple choices are available to shape and design a qualitative research study

(Yin, 2018). Researchers use the qualitative phenomenology design to analyze the lived

experiences of individuals by exploring the reasons that led to these experiences

(VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). Individuals' lived experiences are valuable sources of data

that provide new perspectives and insights (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). The

phenomenology design was not appropriate for this study because the study did not

include individuals' lived experiences associated with a specific phenomenon.

Researchers implement the ethnography design to study social practices and

organizations (Aij et al., 2015). In ethnography design, researchers explore social

phenomena by evaluating unstructured data and explicitly interpreting data and

observations collected over time (McCabe & Holmes, 2014; Vannini, 2015). In narrative

design, researchers evaluate individuals' actions and experiences that determine and

classify individuals' experiences (Seal & Mattimoe, 2016). Ethnography and narrative

designs were not suitable for this study because I did not study cultures and communities.

By implementing case study design, researchers can conduct in-depth analysis of a small

sample or multiple cases, resulting in detailed and valuable information (Cronin, 2014).

Case study researchers explore the patterns of complicated behaviors and distinguish

differences and similarities among cases (Berglund, 2015; Yin, 2018). A case study

design contains multiple patterns, paradigms, and methods that offer flexibility to

researchers (Harland, 2014). When study circumstances are not clear, researchers use

case study design to understand real-world problems properly (Harland, 2014). Archival

records, direct observations, participants' observations, documents, interviews, and

physical artifacts are six data sources in case study design (Guercini, 2014; Yin, 2018). I

used a multiple case study design to explore effective Internet marketing strategies that

online fashion jewelry business owners use to increase profit levels.

In case study design, interviews are the main sources of information (Leoni,

2015). Yin (2018) noted interviews are interactive tools that researchers use to

communicate with study participants to collect detailed data relevant to the case. I

conducted three semistructured interviews with online fashion jewelry business owners in

the northeast region of the United States. Researchers reach data saturation when there is

no firsthand information or new ideas gleaned from additional interviews (Boddy, 2016).

The implementation of data saturation is critical for the content validity of qualitative

research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I achieved data saturation by interviewing participants until I did not receive new information.

Population and Sampling

Sampling

Researchers use purposive sampling to ensure participants share the same industry, economic environments, and business size (Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014; Iskandarsyah et al., 2014). In multiple case study research, implementing purposeful sampling provides an opportunity for researchers to collect accurate data about a phenomenon from the most knowledgeable participants (Duan, Bhaumik, Palinkas, & Hoagwood, 2014). To collect the most accurate information from the most knowledgeable participants, I used purposeful sampling for selecting participants.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The population for this qualitative multiple case study was three online fashion jewelry business owners who were responsible for Internet marketing strategies. Participants had to generate a minimum of $100,000 in revenue and had at least 5 years of experience in the same position. The participants were all 18 years old or older and were in the northeast region of the United States. The business owners personally monitored data about their competitors, customers, and marketing activities. The information power of participants directly affects the sample size of the study and the ability to achieve data saturation (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016; Marshal & Rossman, 2016). I targeted and contacted five potential participants. After conducting the

third interview, I achieved data saturation. Therefore, I did not interview the other two potential participants.

Interview Setting

The interview setting can have a strong effect on the quality of the interview process (Murshed & Zhang, 2016; Patton, 2015). Conducting the interviews included the following steps: (a) sending the invitation letters to potential participants, (b) e-mailing the interview protocol and consent form to potential participants who showed interest in taking part in an interview, (c) receiving responses from participants who replied with the phrase "I consent" to demonstrate their formal acknowledgment they were willing to participate, (d) scheduling 30 to 60 minutes initial interviews, (e) contacting participants by Skype to conduct interviews, (f) conducting interviews in my home behind closed doors, and (g) asking participants to stay in their offices behind closed doors or at a neutral place to ensure confidentiality.

Data Saturation

In a qualitative study, collecting rich and quality data is more valuable than the quantity of data gathered, and researchers who implement a multiple case study design and use multiple data collecting methods can reach data saturation with only a few participants (Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014). Researchers reach data saturation when they cannot find new information and when they identify the same patterns repeatedly (O'Donnell, 2014). Yin (2018) noted data saturation might happen in as few as two cases for simple multiple case studies. In case study design, researchers may reach data saturation by interviewing one or a few participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To ensure data saturation

and to ensure I collected accurate and valuable data, I used the multiple case study design and multiple data collecting methods, including conducting semistructured interviews and reviewing companies' documents. I reached data saturation when I saw no new data and no new themes and the answers to interview questions were repeating. Consequently, I did not interview additional participants after conducting the third interview.

Ethical Research

The personal interaction between researchers and participants in qualitative studies can present ethical challenges (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). Lester (2014) noted researchers must always use professional and ethical practices while conducting research with human subjects. I obtained permission from Walden University's IRB to start data collecting process. My IRB approval number is 06-07-18-0646993 and it expires on June 6, 2019. I adhered to all IRB policies and obligations to uphold ethical standards and to protect study participants from harm. I followed the ethical principles in the *Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) to protect participant privacy and confidentiality rights.

Researchers provide a comprehensive informed consent form to participants to protect participants' confidentiality rights (Harland, 2014; Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). I offered the informed consent form to inform study participants regarding their privacy and confidentiality rights, the purpose of the research, participants' criteria, and the data collection process. Study participants can withdraw from a study any time and let the researcher know they are leaving, but it is not a requirement to provide the reason for withdrawing (Yin, 2018). I informed the participants that they could withdraw their

consent at any time during the research process by communicating with me through standard mail, e-mail, telephone, or face-to-face communication. Researchers have stated that voluntary participation is a crucial factor to ensure following ethical procedures (Guercini, 2014; Oye, Sorensen, & Glasdam, 2016). The study participants were not members of a protected class, and incentives and monetary rewards were not available for them.

Researchers minimize the exposure of sensitive information by maintaining participants' confidentiality (Harland, 2014; Johnson, 2014). For purposes of confidentiality, I did not reveal the name of participant organizations in this research. Johnson (2014) noted that confidentiality is crucial during the research process. Participant demographic information such as name, ethnicity, and education level are not relevant to this study. Therefore, I identified participants by using a code containing a number and a letter (P1 to P5). To protect participants' confidential data, researchers conserve and archive electronic data in a password-protected hard drive and keep it locked in a safe place (Harrison & Taylor, 2016; Tella, 2015). I stored all collected data in a hard copy format and electronically. I stored the electronic data in a password-protected hard drive, and I locked both the hard copies of the data and the hard drive in a cabinet in my home and I will keep them locked for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy the paper documents and delete the digital files.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data collection instrument in qualitative research is the researcher (Yin, 2018; Zhang & Guttormsen, 2016). As the researcher in this study, I was the

primary data collection instrument. Face-to-face, over the phone, video teleconference, and other types of digital media are some methods that researchers use to conduct interviews (Pandey & Chawla, 2016; Tella, 2015). I conducted the semistructured interviews by using Skype and asked open-ended questions to collect in-depth data from the participants. According to Yin (2018), archival records, direct observations, documentation, interviews, physical observation, and physical artifacts are six data collection resources, and researchers must use at least two of them. Researchers enhance the validity of the findings via methodological triangulation by interviewing participants, reviewing interview transcripts, and reviewing company documents (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). To increase the validity of research findings, I reviewed companies' documents, including the marketing plan. By reviewing companies' marketing plans, I gained valuable marketing information about companies' target market, positioning statements, pricing strategies, budgeting, goals, and values. The interview protocol contains a short introduction, the interview questions, a conclusion, and the time arrangement for both the follow-up interview and the member checking interview (Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014; Han, 2015). I provided an interview protocol (see Appendix) to institutionalize the data collection process. Researchers implement methodological triangulation to enhance the reliability and validity of the data-collection process (Fusch & Ness, 2015; O'Donnell, 2014). Methodological triangulation involves using multiple data collection methods to collect the most accurate data in a study (Cronin, 2014; Hoque, Covaleski, & Gooneratne, 2013). I used methodological triangulation in the data-collection process by conducting semistructured interviews and

reviewing companies' documents. Researchers use member checking to ensure the

reliability and the validity of the research (Johnson, 2014; Lester, 2014). Researchers

conduct member checking to ensure the data interpretation is accurate and representative

of participants' insights and experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Onwuegbuzie &

Byers, 2014). I conducted member checking interviews by scheduling and conducting

follow-up interviews. I asked participants to review, revise, and add more data to ensure

the alignment of my interpretation of their answers to interview questions with their

actual responses.

Data Collection Technique

The process of collecting data includes various data collection techniques. The

research question for this study was: What effective Internet marketing strategies fashion

jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profitability? To answer the research

question of this study, I provided all participants the interview protocol (see Appendix);

scheduled and conducted semistructured interviews; reviewed companies' documents,

including the marketing plan; and conducted member checking interviews. An interview

protocol is a guideline that includes adequate information about an interview process and

informs participants of interview details (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Tella, 2015). The

data collected from participants' interview responses were primary sources of data. A

case study protocol enables the researcher to concentrate on the research topic and to

ensure the reliability of collected data (Iskandarsyah et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). A case

study protocol contains four main sections, including the case study overview, the data

collection processes implemented in the research, the research question asked to collect

data, and a guide to report the findings of the case study (Pandey & Chawla, 2016; Yin, 2018). I provided an interview protocol (see Appendix) to each participant before scheduling interviews. Yin (2018) noted using semistructured interviews and asking open-ended questions provide participants freedom of expression and enable them to share their insights and experiences. Researchers collect valid data and find the most accurate answers for research questions by conducting interviews (Makani, 2015; Pandey & Chawla, 2016). Conducting semistructured interviews assists researchers in adjusting questions and in phrasing participants' answers for the purpose of transparency (Han, 2015; Yin, 2018). Semistructured interviews can be time-consuming and costly. The process of conducting semistructured interviews including scheduling, interviewing, transcribing, data analyzing, and reporting may take a considerable amount of time and it may require plenty of money (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I conducted semistructured interviews by using Skype voice call. According to Yin (2016), body language and facial expression are missing when researchers only implement audio recording during the interview process. Since I used Skype voice call, I may not have captured all relevant data. To avoid missing significant information, including body language and facial expression, I performed member checking interviews to ensure I collected all valuable data. The quality and accuracy of the audio recording in interviews depend on the audio-recording equipment, and researchers must have a backup plan if the equipment fails (Makani, 2015). I used Skype's recording service to the audio record the interviews and I had another type of audio recording software as a backup plan if the Skype recording service failed to function properly. Researchers validate the information collected from

interviews by using a second source of data (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). To ensure the

validity of the research, I reviewed companies' documents, including the marketing plan,

as a second source of data. Companies' documents are the reliable and cost-effective

source of data. However, in some cases, companies' documents may be incomplete or

inconsistent. Another disadvantage of reviewing companies' documents is that they may

not be available or easily accessible to the researcher (Tella, 2015).

Researchers use member checking to increase reliability and validity by ensuring

they accurately perceive the information collected from study participants during

interviews (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014; Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). A follow-up interview takes place with each participant to ensure the

researcher's data interpretation is representative of participants' insights and experiences

(Makani, 2015; Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). All the participants have the chance to

review, change, and add to the collected data to ensure alignment with their intention

(Harrison & Taylor, 2016; Tella, 2015). To ensure the reliability and validity of the study,

I scheduled and conducted member checking interviews by asking participants to review

my interpretation of their responses to the interview questions. I asked participants to

review their answers and add more data if needed to ensure the alignment of my

interpretations of their answers to the interview questions with their actual intentions.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers take advantage of various effective management techniques to extract

new data, reuse currently available data, and validate collected data (Leung, 2015;

Makani, 2015). The researcher notes, the interview audio recordings, the code list of

participants, and participants' consent forms are a few data organization tools available to the researchers to organize and manage collected data (Makani, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Researchers' notes from interviews include the researchers' documents, observations, and thoughts and study participants' inputs (Yin, 2018). I used NVivo software to organize and code the collected data and to develop themes and patterns for this study. I used Skype to conduct the interviews and the Dragon voice recognition software to transcribe the interview texts.

It is crucial for researchers to store the data collected for research in a safe and reliable place to protect study participants (Han, 2015; Whitmire, Boock, & Sutton, 2015). The researcher will conserve and archive electronic data in a password-protected hard drive and will keep it locked in a cabinet (Bunakov, Jones, Matthews, & Wilson, 2014; Tella, 2015). To protect the collected data and to prevent unintended loss of data because of unexpected incidents, I kept the data electronically and in hard copy. Organized and labeled data, including the password-protected hard drive and hard copies of collected data, will remain locked in a cabinet in my home for 5 years and will be only accessible to me. After 5 years, I will shred the paper documents and delete the digital file to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Data Analysis

In case study research, the data analysis process involves developing an exploratory research question, creating a set of semistructured interview questions, and analyzing the data by implementing the conceptual framework of the study (Andraski et al., 2014; Tella, 2015). Researchers can reach an in-depth understanding of contexts and

experiences related to the research problem by implementing triangulation (Reilly, Nyberg, Maltarich, & Weller, 2014; Shabani Varaki, Floden, & Javidi Kalatehjafarabadi, 2015). Triangulation of sources and theoretical, analytical, and methodological triangulation are four types of triangulation (Burau & Andersen, 2014). Methodological triangulation involves using multiple data collection methods to analyze different aspects of the research problem (Hoque et al., 2013; Leung, 2015). To collect data for this study, I conducted semistructured interviews and I reviewed companies' documents. I used methodological triangulation in the data collecting process by using more than one data collection method.

Popular strategies to evaluate the evidence of a case study include implementing theoretical propositions, describing a case, and developing rival explanations (Yin, 2018). Researchers use NVivo software to organize and classify collected data to answer research questions efficiently (Castleberry, 2014). I used NVivo software to store and classify data into themes and to formulate the conclusion. Synthesizing the results of the study is the most challenging part of case study research. Researchers synthesize the results of the study to interpret the findings effectively (Tella, 2015; Yin, 2018). Researchers synthesize the interpretive results of the study into themes derived from the literature and ensure coordination of the research question and final analyses of the data (Lakshmi & Moheedin, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Semistructured interviews were the primary data source for this study. In addition, I reviewed companies' documents including a marketing plan to collect the most accurate data. I focused on the key themes by implementing NVivo software to analyze the collected

data. I categorized and coded the collected data to generate themes. Researchers focus on classifying emerged themes from a study and ensure the correlation of key themes with the conceptual framework and the literature (Leung, 2015). To conduct a credible and reliable study, researchers ensure that themes derived from the study correlate with recently published studies, the literature, and the conceptual framework (Harrison & Taylor, 2016). The data analysis process for this study included a focus on addressing a correlation among generated themes with the literature review and the conceptual framework.

Reliability and Validity

This section includes detailed information on my plan to achieve reliability and validity. Researchers build confidence and trust by ensuring reliability and validity (Tella, 2015; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I used multiple tactics to address the quality of my study.

Reliability

Reliability is a practice that researchers use to ensure the consistency and transferability of the research. Ensuring reliability enables other researchers to achieve the same results by researching the same issue by implementing the same data (Han, 2015; Lakshmi & Moheedin, 2013). Reliability is vital for the research process. Ensuring reliability enables researchers to maintain a high standard of academic research and to demonstrate scientific accuracy (Leung, 2015; Mohamad, Sulaiman, Sern, & Salleh, 2015). To ensure reliability, I provided detailed information regarding the research process, and I used member checking. To improve reliability and dependability,

researchers should apply member checking to receive participants' feedback on interpreted data (Andraski et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). To ensure dependability, I asked participants to check the accuracy of my interpretations through member checking. To prevent bias, I conducted the interviews in a consistent manner by asking all participants the same questions.

Validity

Researchers ensure the validity of qualitative research by exercising credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To maintain the validity and credibility of research, researchers should acknowledge and recognize the qualitative research method (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). In qualitative research, researchers strive to ensure credibility (Klenke, Martin, & Wallace, 2016). The implementation of multiple data sources and different methods increases the credibility of research and leads to consistent results that correspond with reality (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & De Lacey, 2016; Leung, 2015). In this qualitative study, I achieved credibility through methodological triangulation and member checking. To improve credibility and confirmability of findings, researchers use triangulation, follow-up member checking interviews, and effective interview questions (Han, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). To ensure the confirmability of this study, I used multiple data sources such as research notes, companies' documents, and collected data from interviews.

Researchers achieve data saturation when they are not able to find new information or themes from conducting more interviews (Boddy, 2016; Lakshmi & Moheedin, 2013). I ensured data saturation by conducting semistructured interviews and

member checking until I did not see new information or new themes and until all new

results were repetitive. Researchers ensure the transferability of methods and research

findings by explaining the limitations of the study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Yin,

2018). To ensure transferability, I provided detailed information on study limitations.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 of this study included detailed information about research methods and

designs. In Section 2, I provided information to rationalize the implication of a qualitative

multiple case study. I also explained the role of the researcher and described the potential

participants, the purposeful sampling technique, and the data collection method. I

presented detailed information about ethical features of the study, along with the process

and methods that I used to ensure the reliability and validity of the study. Section 3

includes the presentation of findings, the significance of the study, and potential

implications for social change. Recommendation for actions, further study, and summary

of the study are the last three topics in Section 3.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective Internet marketing strategies online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profit levels. Small business owners differentiate their business from competitors by implementing effective marketing strategies (Anderson & Ulla, 2014). Small business owners and marketers improve the quality of marketing strategies to decrease companies' failure risk (Stelmokien & Endriulaitiene, 2015). I collected data by interviewing three successful online fashion jewelry business owners located in the northeast region of the United States and by reviewing companies' documents including the marketing plans.

All participants had successful experience using effective Internet marketing strategies to increase profit levels. All three participants had owned and operated an online fashion jewelry business for more than 5 years and generated at least $100,000 in annual revenue. I performed data analysis by evaluating interview transcripts, interview notes, and company documents, including the marketing plan. By analyzing data collected from interviews and review of companies' documentation, six themes emerged: (a) Internet marketing strategies, (b) social media marketing strategies, (c) market research and retargeting strategies, (d) brand building strategies, (e) e-mail marketing strategies, and (f) marketing strategies for customer relationship management.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was: What effective Internet marketing strategies fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase

profitability? I conducted interviews by Skype. The duration of initial interviews was less than 30 minutes, and the follow-up member checking interviews took no longer than 25 minutes. After conducting the third interview, I achieved data saturation because I did not receive any new information.

Theme 1: Internet Marketing Strategies

Small business owners and marketers apply Internet marketing strategies to achieve strong visibility and to facilitate interactions with their customers (Bettencourt et al., 2015). P1 stated, "the emergence of the Internet caused a major evolution in my company's marketing strategies during 18 years of operation in fashion jewelry business." The implementation of Internet marketing strategies enhanced the effectiveness of marketing and operational activities (Dlodlo & Mafini, 2014). Small business owners and marketers are able to advertise continually to reach larger audiences by using Internet marketing strategies (Richard & Habibi, 2016). All participants indicated that Internet marketing expenses are very high. P3 mentioned that Internet marketing can be very expensive because business owners must invest a large amount of money in Internet marketing to direct customers to the website and to convert the visits into purchases of their products.

The barriers of entry and marketing expenses are very high in the online fashion jewelry market (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). P1 was a fashion jewelry business owner with over $20 million in sales. P1 noted that entrepreneurs would be able to overcome barriers by selling on Amazon. P1 noted,

Anyone can build an e-commerce website but nobody will visit the website unless the founder spends a large amount of money on marketing. It is not reasonable for young entrepreneurs and stay-at-home parents who need to make money from the beginning to invest lots of money on Internet marketing of their individual website at the start and find out later that they cannot compete with larger e-commerce websites.

P1 noted it is not realistic for small business owners to build their own e-commerce website and try to compete by driving traffic to their small satellite business. P1 mentioned, "the majority of my business comes from selling products on Amazon, despite having a fashion jewelry e-commerce website." P1 highly recommended that entrepreneurs launch their business first on Amazon for a variety of reasons. P1 also mentioned, "Amazon is the most economical e-commerce website for gaining the maximum responses from customers right away if the seller offers viable products." P1 noted 80% of all online search results for buying anything start on Amazon. P1 added, "by selling on Amazon, barriers to entry will be minimal, and entrepreneurs will spend a minimum amount of money for selling their products online. Amazon sellers have control over products and price." P1 stated that advertising and marketing costs are low for Amazon sellers because the Amazon e-commerce website contains structured advertising and has marketing systems in place.

P1 mentioned Amazon sellers can also direct traffic directly from their Facebook and Instagram accounts by conducting more targeted campaigns to drive traffic to their Amazon stores. Amazon's third-party sellers run their own businesses and sell products

in the United States and internationally by using Amazon's strong platform. To launch a sustainable online fashion jewelry business, P1 highly recommended taking seller courses on Amazon Seller University; starting a seller account on Amazon; setting few fashion jewelry products for sale; and advertising those products on Amazon's website to get traffic, views, sales, and reviews. After completing these steps, P1 mentioned that business owners can determine, based on cost, whether they want to continue advertising on fashion jewelry products websites. P1 recommended to entrepreneurs to use a variety of marketing tools to direct traffic to their website and Amazon store. P1 stated,

> Boosting social media posts, directing traffic to the website, and directing traffic to the Amazon seller account are some strategies I used to attract new customers. To attract new customers to an Amazon store, I use Amazon's ad campaign by setting the budget, creating the settings, and using Amazon's marketing tools.

> P1 recommended entrepreneurs and stay-at-home parents, usually with limited

resources to start their businesses, sell on Amazon and drive traffic to that Amazon store. After carefully reviewing companies' marketing plans, I concluded that setting a marketing budget is one of the most crucial steps in writing a marketing plan, and online fashion jewelry business owners determine their marketing strategies and tools based on their marketing budget. Analyzing companies' marketing plan revealed that all participants planned to use the Amazon e-commerce platform to increase sales and to decrease marketing expenses.

Small business owners implement the competitive advantage theory to create a superior position over competitors (Farrell, 2015). Online fashion jewelry business

owners create a competitive advantage by choosing the most effective Internet marketing strategies to achieve sustainability and profitability. According to study findings, Internet marketing strategies align with the competitive advantage theory. Online fashion jewelry business owners create competitive advantage by selling on the Amazon platform or on other huge e-commerce platforms as an effective Internet marketing strategy. To launch an effective marketing plan, online business owners choose the most suitable types of strategies based on the needs and the market position of the business (Taneja & Toombs, 2014). Online fashion jewelry business owners recognize and apply Internet marketing strategies as a competitive advantage to increased sales, customer acquisitions, and long-term growth.

Theme 2: Social Media Marketing Strategies

Small business owners use social media strategies and innovative social media tools to generate leads, build website traffic, and enhance brand awareness at a lower cost (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). P3 stated that social media is the most effective marketing tool to attract new customers. P1 and P3 stated that an increase in the number of followers in social media accounts leads to an increase in company sales and profit. All participants stated they constantly posted engaging content on social media accounts. P1 recommended online fashion jewelry business owners to develop their social media presence by using Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Google plus, and Snapchat. It is vital for small business owners to have an effective social media presence and to post innovative, new, and frequent content updates (Ashley & Tuten, 2014). P1 mentioned, "I

implement social media tools as the most important strategy to achieve sustainability and profitability, to attract new customers, and to retain existing customers."

It is critical to increase the number of followers on social media by constantly posting attractive and engaging content (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Marketers use social media to introduce new brands and new products to customers (Kudeshia et al., 2016). P3 explained online business owners achieve sustainability by presenting and describing products and ensuring customers recognize the value of products by posting images to engage customers and providing attractive content on social media accounts. The literature supported the social media strategy theme and highlighted the effectiveness of the social media strategy in increasing the sustainability and profitability of online fashion jewelry business owners.

Two essential elements that affect customers' purchase decisions are posting visual content and providing in-depth information about products (Mariani et al., 2016). P2 noted,

> As an online fashion jewelry business owner, I achieve profitability by constantly posting creative, innovative, and customized products on the company's social media accounts, which leads to sales. In social media marketing, photos and videos are the only tools available to represent the jewelry. Paying attention to details assists me to attract website visitors and to convert visits to purchases.

Online fashion jewelry business owners engage customers and keep them connected by using paid promotions and constantly posting high-quality pictures of attractive and unique products in their social media accounts. Social media is a powerful

marketing tool for bringing customers and businesses together (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). The analysis of companies' documents, including the marketing plan, revealed that the purpose of creating a marketing plan is aligning marketing goals with companies' objectives. After reviewing companies' marketing plans, I concluded that the marketing plans for relatively new companies include social media marketing strategies that result in increasing the numbers of customers.

Small business owners implement the cost leadership strategy by establishing a competitive advantage by achieving the lowest operational cost in the industry (Farrell, 2015). According to Porter (1985), the implementation of the cost leadership strategy enables small business owners to sell more products at a lower price to increase profits and expand their market share. Online fashion jewelry business owners minimize marketing costs and create a competitive advantage by using social media (Sargunani & Bruce, 2015). Implementing social media as a low-cost marketing tool enables online fashion jewelry business owners to provide real-time responses to customers and achieve a competitive advantage over competitors not communicating as quickly. Online fashion jewelry business owners use social media to reach a competitive advantage by collecting information from competitors about pricing, product trends, and customer preferences to modify pricing strategies and to customize the products accordingly. Online fashion jewelry business owners use social media as an effective and low-cost marketing strategy to promote content, connect with customers and industry leaders, and generate targeted traffic. Online fashion jewelry business owners use social media as a powerful tool to understand customers' needs and to build a relationship with audiences. Online fashion

jewelry business owners use social media strategies as a competitive advantage to increase sales and to build brand awareness and brand loyalty by maintaining a strong social media presence.

Theme 3: Market Research and Retargeting Strategies

Online business owners achieve a competitive advantage and higher profits by effectively using market research to monitor market trends and to recognize customers' needs (Gundala & Khawaja, 2014). P2 stated,

Constantly monitoring customers' needs and wants by conducting Internet marketing research is an effective strategy to increase sales and profit levels. Designing products and offering unique and innovative jewelry pieces based on the marketing research results, enable me to enhance the sustainability of the business. Online business owners create a road map for potential customers to follow and to purchase products by implementing market research.

Business owners lacking effective Internet marketing strategies, such as market research, do not perform as well as leaders constantly improving their strategies to meet customers' needs (Tarka, 2017). P1 stated that monitoring fashion jewelry trends allows online fashion jewelry business owners to provide the most stylish fashion jewelry on the market. All participants mentioned they use Google AdWord as an effective tool for market research. P2 stated, "targeting potential customers based on their age and special events, such as weddings or sweet 16 parties, is an effective strategy to reach more traffic in the website." P2 noted that carefully targeting customers, customizing products based

on marketing research, and using Google AdWord are some effective Internet marketing strategies to attract new customers.

Small business owners should effectively implement market research and retarget tools to identify and reach the target market, which leads to increased sales (Rad et al., 2015). P1 recommended using retargeting strategies to increase sales and profitability. Retargeting is an essential marketing tool to reengage with website visitors. P1 added, "implementing retargeting strategies helps business owners to reach customers who previously visited the website to remind them to visit the website again." P1 mentioned that implementing retargeting strategies is expensive and business owners should allocate a large budget to that tool. Online fashion jewelry business owners implement market research and retargeting strategies to increase their efficiency by focusing their marketing efforts on products that generate the most return on investment. The evaluation of companies' documents including the marketing plan as the second source of data for this study revealed that determining the target market and analyzing competitors are two essential elements of any marketing plan. All marketing plan I reviewed included a section to identify companies' target market and a section to analyze companies' competitors and their competitive environments.

The implementation of competitive advantage theory enables small business owners to generate a superior position over competitors (Farrell, 2015). Business owners create a competitive advantage by conducting comprehensive market research (Tarka, 2017). Online fashion jewelry business owners can use market research to analyze customers' demographic information and evaluate sales data to respond to customers'

needs effectively. Business owners use market research to compare their company to their competitors by determining their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Gundala & Khawaja, 2014). Online fashion jewelry business owners also use market research to gain a competitive advantage by analyzing the market and taking action to reach sustainability and profitability. The implementation of market research and retargeting strategies allows small business owners to compete and function in a competitive environment. Information derived from customers' behavior is one of the most important factors assisting small business owners to make decisions in the area of jewelry trends and the target market. Online fashion jewelry business owners create competitive advantage by determining the strengths and weaknesses of the business and making optimum decisions by using market research.

Theme 4: Brand Building Strategies

Brand management is the process of developing brand perception in the market. Brand managers must build positive relationships with the target market (Agostini et al., 2015). Small business owners and marketers use brand management techniques as an effective marketing tool to boost product value (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Brand value is an important element to influence customers' purchase decisions. Brand managers develop a strategic plan to achieve brand value, brand awareness, and brand equity. To build a powerful brand, marketers must be aware of the company's vision (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

A brand is a valuable asset that enables business owners to build consumer loyalty, drives future demand for the company products, and safeguards future cash flows (Mogos Descotes & Pauwels-Delassus, 2015). P1 shared,

> Brand reputation is one of the most important factors for creating a competitive advantage for a business. My customers demonstrate brand loyalty by purchasing the products from my website rather than other companies because customers recognize the brand and already had a good experience through purchasing my products.

To generate customer value and to maintain a competitive advantage, small business owners and marketers implement a branding strategy as the most important marketing tool (Mogos Descotes & Pauwels-Delassus, 2015). Effective brand management activities lead to strong brand awareness and a positive image for companies. Effective brand management activities result in increasing the price of the products and building loyal customers (Agostini et al., 2015). P2 stated the real customer is the one who recognizes the brand and repeats the purchase. P2 added, "I work hard to enhance brand reputation and the business cannot survive with only one-time buyers." P3 noted that online fashion jewelry business owners achieve sustainability by building a trustworthy brand and by increasing the brand reputation by implementing Internet marketing strategies. My review of company documents, including marketing plans, revealed a positive relationship between brand management activities and profitability. All marketing plans included a brand positioning section to generate a unique impression in customers' minds about companies and their products. The brand positioning section

of the marketing plans included information about companies' target customers, products' attributes, companies' goals, companies' competitors, the definition of their brand's persona, and key messaging development steps. The literature supported the brand-building strategy theme as an effective Internet marketing tool to increase the sustainability and profitability of businesses.

Business leaders achieve a sustainable competitive advantage by implementing differentiation strategy (Porter, 1985). Business owners and marketing managers establish a successful product differentiation strategy to achieve brand loyalty among customers (Agostini et al., 2015). Small business owners and marketers refer to the brand as the most important reputational asset for any organization (Schaupp & Belanger, 2014). Online fashion jewelry business owners create a competitive advantage through positive customer reviews and by developing a positive brand reputation. Online fashion jewelry business owners can implement brand management strategies to create a powerful brand as a competitive advantage to achieving sustainability and profitability. Online fashion jewelry business owners use branding as the most important source of competitive advantage by offering unique products and occupying a distinctive and desirable place in customers' minds compared to other online fashion jewelry businesses.

Theme 5: E-Mail Marketing Strategies

Online business owners and marketers use e-mail marketing as a highly effective Internet marketing tool (Wu, Li, & Liu, 2018). Online business owners send commercial e-mails to potential and existing customers to convert potential customers into buyers and to turn one-time customers into loyal customers (Sahni, Wheeler, & Chintagunta, 2018).

Small business owners and marketers use e-mail marketing for direct sales, customer acquisition, customer retention, customer engagement, and branding (Pettman, 2016). All three participants stated they used e-mail marketing and believed that the implementation of e-mail marketing helped them to enhance sales.

Small business owners and marketers use marketing promotions as a significant element to influence customers' demands (Chong et al., 2015). Marketers use promotional e-mails for generating sales, transactional e-mails for providing customer service, and relational e-mails for engaging subscribers and nurturing the relationship with them (Wu et al., 2018). Promotional content, new-gated content, a sales announcement, a new product release, a webinar announcement, an event announcement, and trial and upgrade offers are different types of promotional e-mails (Van Bokhaven et al., 2015). Order confirmation, purchase receipts, shipping notices, account creation, and return confirmation are some types of transactional e-mails. Relational e-mails include new subscriber welcome messages, gated content delivery, newsletters, event confirmations, and surveys (Wu et al., 2018). P1 recommended the implementation of e-mail marketing to offer promotions and coupons as one of the most important strategies to retain customers.

Marketers create more targeted contact lists by segmenting contacts according to the content they click (Pettman, 2016). Creating more targeted contact lists leads marketers to send more relevant e-mails and to achieve better results from their e-mail marketing activities (Mackintosh et al., 2017). P2 shared,

It is not easy for online fashion jewelry business owners to retain online fashion jewelry customers because a large number of options are available to them. To retain customers, online fashion jewelry business owners introduce new arrivals and offer marketing promotions and coupons by using e-mail marketing and social media accounts.

Business owners send personalized e-mails including welcome, birthday, and anniversary, and other milestone messages to build a stronger relationship with customers and to increase sales (Wu et al., 2018). P3 suggested the implantation of e-mail marketing to inform customers about new arrivals and to create demand among customers. P3 added that sending marketing promotions and coupons via e-mail encourages customers to purchase new products. By reviewing companies marketing plan, I found that online fashion jewelry business owners and marketers write a marketing plan to show how their products are better than or different from the competitors' products. All marketing plan I reviewed included e-mail marketing strategies to generate leads and to increase sales at low cost.

Business owners and marketers understand, admit, and implement Porter's competitive advantage to adjust their strategies to suit their competitive environment (Chong et al., 2015). Small business owners use e-mail marketing strategies to differentiate their market position among their competitors (Pettman, 2016). The implementation of e-mail marketing strategy enables online fashion jewelry business owners to create competitive advantage by reducing the marketing budget, increasing brand recognition, connecting with the target market, attracting new customers, and

generating a new stream of income. Online fashion jewelry business owners use e-mail marketing strategies as a competitive advantage to enhance business relationships with current and former customers to encourage repeat business and customer loyalty. Online fashion jewelry business owners gain a competitive advantage by using e-mail marketing and offering a greater value than competitors.

Theme 6: Marketing Strategies for Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management refers to special guidelines, principles, and practices that organizational leaders follow to interact with customers and to enhance customers' positive experiences (Erragcha & Romdhane, 2014). Company websites, social media accounts, e-mails, phone calls, and mass mailings are elements of customer relationship management. Understanding and recognizing customers' needs by business owners and marketers is the most important tenet of customer relationship management (Park & Nicolau, 2015). P2 noted,

> To achieve profitability and sustainability, online fashion jewelry business owners should focus on customers' persona rather than only focusing on products. After reading and analyzing customers' reviews and feedback, I add new and customized products to respond to customers' needs and wants.

Business leaders implement customer relationship management to increase sales and profits significantly (Van Bokhaven et al., 2015). Business owners and marketers use consumer reviews to monitor customers' feedback and to communicate with current and potential customers (Elena, 2016). P2 stated online business owners apply the customer relationship marketing strategy by monitoring customers' feedback to ensure they had a

pleasant experience when purchasing products. P2 mentioned, "by reading customers'
reviews, I concluded the majority of my products met and exceeded customers'
expectations."

Small business owners and marketers prioritize customer retention and they
believe that returning customers are more valuable than first-time buyers because, on
average, returning customers purchase double the number of products compared to new
customers (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014). P1 noted, "to keep customers happy and to
retain customers, I have a full team of customer service representatives answering e-
mails, phone calls, and questions about products." P3 recommended online fashion
jewelry business owners to implement the customer relationship management strategy by
offering great customer service and free and easy returns to create competitive
advantages.

The focus of customer relationship management is to put customers as the first
priority of any business (Jussila et al., 2014). Through the marketing strategies for
customer relationship management, company leaders frequently change their business
structures based on customers' wants rather than on what their companies offer (Dessart,
Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015). Customer relationship management strategists
recommend small business owners and marketers collect all customers' data to determine
suitable customer relationship activities based on collected data (Jussila et al., 2014).
Customer relationship managers educate employees about customer relationship
management and the company's vision for customer relationship (Fang, Xiaoling, Minue,
& Palmatier, 2015). Small business owners and marketers ensure they collect adequate

resources, including time, money, and employees, for customer relationship activities to achieve customer relationship management objectives. The review of companies' marketing plan as the second source of data for this study revealed that all companies included marketing strategies for customer relationship management in their marketing plans to enhance better customer service and to increase customer loyalty.

Leaders and business owners implementing Porter's (1985) competitive advantage strategy can minimize costs and generate profit for their business (Farrell, 2015). Online fashion jewelry business owners create a competitive advantage by using customer relationship strategies to create strong relationships with customers at low cost. Marketing strategies for customer relationship management, as a competitive advantage, enable business owners to improve customer acquisition and customer retention (Bettencourt et al., 2015). The literature supported the marketing strategies for customer relationship management theme and indicated the effectiveness of this marketing tool to achieve sustainability and profitability.

Applications to Professional Practice

The study findings can help small business owners and marketers to develop a greater understanding of effective Internet marketing strategies to increase profitability and sustainability. I interpreted and analyzed the participants' interview responses and analyzed the company documents to determine six themes: (a) Internet marketing strategies, (b) social media marketing strategies, (c) market research and retargeting strategies, (d) brand building strategies, (e) e-mail marketing strategies, and (f) marketing strategies for customer relationship management. The effective Internet marketing

strategies found in this research study are applicable and important for small business owners and marketers to generate sales.

The six themes generated from this research study contribute to a greater understanding of effective Internet marketing strategies. Jablonski (2016) noted business owners rely on marketing capabilities and skills to generate sales to achieve sustainability and profitability. The marketing process evolved and became a strategic activity through building long-term relationships between buyers and sellers (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014). Sellers are no longer the order takers, and their role changed to being relationship managers (Beck, Chapman, & Palmatier, 2015). The implication of effective Internet marketing strategies as innovative and low-cost tools enables business owners and marketers to enhance communication with customers, attract new customers, retain existing customers, and manage customer relationships (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). The results of this research revealed that small business managers implement marketing strategies for customer relationship management to build and maintain long-term relationships with customers.

All participants emphasized the power of social media, Internet marketing, and research strategy as effective and relatively low-cost marketing strategies. In this study, I found the importance of brand building strategies to enhance brand awareness and brand loyalty that lead to sustainability and profitability. Study findings align with the competitive advantage theory because implementing effective Internet marketing strategies as a competitive advantage enables online fashion jewelry business owners to build a strong brand and increase sales, which leads to sustainability and profitability.

Implications for Social Change

The alignment of the competitive advantage theory and the reflection of the research study findings may help online fashion jewelry business owners to remain competitive by recognizing and understanding effective Internet marketing strategies. Using effective Internet marketing strategies helps small business owners to increase profit levels and to decrease the risk of failure (Stelmokien & Endriulaitiene, 2015). The implication of effective Internet marketing strategies could result in positive social change, including job creation and economic growth. The findings may contribute to improving the standard of living for the community by increasing disposable income and homeownership.

By developing effective Internet marketing strategies, online fashion jewelry business owners have the opportunity to improve the local community and make it a better place to live by creating more jobs and stabilizing the social economy. The results of this research study may contribute to positive social change by increasing tax revenue and the state budget. An increase in state budget may enable government leaders to approve new schools, libraries, and other public services. The findings of this study may increase the quality of life for stay-at-home parents running online businesses by offering significant Internet marketing knowledge to increase business longevity and profitability. The results of this study may provide valuable knowledge to disadvantaged individuals so they can operate successful online businesses, which may lead to stronger and safer communities.

Recommendations for Action

In this qualitative multiple case study research, I explored the effective Internet marketing strategies that successful online fashion jewelry business owners have implemented to increase sustainability and profitability. Small business owners and marketers modify their marketing plan to overcome the marketing challenges they face over time (Kachaner, King, & Stewart, 2016). Based on my professional experience of having an online fashion jewelry business a few years ago, I learned that the profit margin for fashion jewelry products is at least 50%. The high profit margin of fashion jewelry products creates an attractive market for entrepreneurs. The implementation of recommendations from this research study may assist online fashion jewelry business owners, entrepreneurs, and stay-at-home parents desiring to have their own business to apply effective Internet marketing strategies to create a competitive advantage and a sustainable and profitable business.

After conducting this research study, four recommended steps emerged: (a) develop a marketing plan (b) sell on Amazon, (c) implement a market research strategy, and (d) implement social media and e-mail marketing. The first recommendation is to develop a marketing plan by determining specific goals, setting a budget for marketing activities, selecting the most effective and tractable Intent marketing tools, measuring the results of marketing activities, and modifying the marketing plan based on the results. Online fashion jewelry business owners should follow the marketing plan by working hard to achieve sustainability and profitability. The second recommendation for entrepreneurs and stay-at-home parents with limited resources is to use the Amazon

platform to sell their products. After starting an Amazon seller account, online fashion jewelry business owners should use all available Internet marketing tools to attract customers and promote their products on their Amazon store. The third recommendation is to increase sustainability and profitability by implementing market research strategies and retargeting companies to target potential customers carefully. Online fashion jewelry business owners should use the market research strategy to monitor market trends, explore interest in the target market, and adjust products to respond to customers' needs.

The fourth recommendation for online fashion jewelry business owners is to use social media as a powerful Internet marketing tool to build strong relationships with customers, create brand awareness, and enhance the effectiveness of customer relationship and brand-building strategies. Online fashion jewelry business owners should use e-mail marketing to introduce new arrivals, send coupons and promotional offers, and raise sales and profit levels. All research participants indicated they offer premium quality products at a reasonable price, provide superior customer service for customer acquisition and customer retention, and use customer relationship and brand-building strategies as the most influential elements to achieve a competitive advantage. The recommendations for action include the information required to develop effective Internet marketing strategies for online fashion jewelry business owners. As opportunities arise, I plan to publish this study in a peer-reviewed business journal. I will also share the results of this research study with individuals attending business and marketing forums, training seminars, and events.

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative research study involved exploring the effective Internet marketing strategies that online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profit levels. The study participants included three online fashion jewelry business owners located in the northeast region of the United States. Other researchers may conduct a quantitative study to expand the findings of this study by determining which Internet marketing strategies are the most effective for company owners to increase profit levels and longevity of their businesses. Researchers may also conduct further research by expanding the location to a more diverse geographic region to enhance the results of this study.

Another recommendation for further research to enhance the findings of this study could be to conduct a study to explore effective Internet marketing strategies to increase profit levels in other industries and other lines of business. The results of this study revealed effective Internet marketing strategies that online fashion jewelry business owners used to increase profit including: (a) Internet marketing strategies, (b) social media marketing strategies, (c) market research and retargeting strategies, (d) brand building strategies, (e) e-mail marketing strategies, and (f) marketing strategies for customer relationship management. The findings of this research study contribute to the existing foundation of scholarly knowledge.

Researchers should identify other important factors affecting the sustainability and profitability of online fashion jewelry businesses. Researchers may explore additional knowledge, insights, and strategies that may be valuable to online fashion

jewelry business owners by conducting more research in these areas. Conducting further research to explore effective Internet marketing strategies implemented by online fashion jewelry business owners could provide further insights into the existing literature.

Reflections

By writing this research study and completing the Walden University's Doctor of Business Administration program, I have achieved my lifelong education goal and aspiration. Valuable resources including faculty, online forums, and classmates at Walden University provided me vital support to complete the program. I used to own an online fashion jewelry business and my passion to develop and implement effective Internet marketing strategies was the reason I started the doctoral program. However, I eliminated my personal bias from my personal experience to increase the reliability of study findings. The biggest challenge I faced when conducting this research study was locating participants meeting the eligibility criteria.

My knowledge and perspective about marketing theories and strategies significantly expanded after conducting this research study and reviewing the existing literature. The findings of the study affected my professional perspective by confirming the power of marketing efforts, including the continuous learning, developing, and implementing effective Internet marketing strategies to achieve the sustainability and profitability of online fashion jewelry businesses. I hope entrepreneurs and online fashion jewelry business owners will use these study findings to maintain sustainability and profitability.

Conclusion

The findings of this multiple case study research revealed that online fashion jewelry business owners can successfully implement effective Internet marketing strategies to achieve sustainability and profitability through maintaining strong customer relationships with customers and building a powerful brand. All participants emphasized direct relationships between using effective Internet marketing strategies and achieving success. The implementation of competitive advantage theory as the conceptual framework for this study provided a greater understanding of effective Internet marketing strategies for online fashion jewelry business owners to increase sales, attract new customers, retain existing customers, and stay ahead of their competitors.

The successful online fashion jewelry business owners participating in this study focused on six principal areas regarding effective Internet marketing strategies: (a) Internet marketing strategies, (b) social media marketing strategies, (c) market research and retargeting strategies, (d) brand building strategies, (e) e-mail marketing strategies, and (f) marketing strategies for customer relationship management. I recommend online fashion jewelry business owners, entrepreneurs, stay-at-home parents, and academic scholars aim to achieve a greater understanding of effective Internet marketing strategies by using the findings and recommendations contained in this research study.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

What I will do	What I will Say-Script
Explaining the purpose of the study and content.	The purpose of this study is to explore what effective Internet marketing strategies online fashion jewelry business owners use to maintain or increase profit levels. I would like to receive a formal acknowledgment of the volunteers willing to participate, please reply to this e-mail and include phrase "I consent" before starting the interview. You may withdraw from the study at any time and that all data will remain confidential.
• Asking interview questions. • Looking for non-verbal queues. • Paraphrasing as required. • Asking follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth data.	1. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to maintain or improve sustainability for your business? 2. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to maintain or improve profitability for your business? 3. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to attract new customers? 4. What Internet marketing strategies do you use to retain your customers? 5. What Internet marketing strategies have you applied to obtain a competitive advantage? 6. What additional information regarding Internet marketing strategies would you like to share?
Scheduling follow up member checking interviews.	I will contact each participant to schedule a follow up interview to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation of participant' answers during the first interview.
Thanking the participants.	I wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you for participating in my research study on effective Internet marketing

strategies for online fashion jewelry businesses. I understand that you are very busy and sincerely appreciate your time and effort. I am currently looking for themes by assembling and exploring the collected data. I will provide you with a summary of the results of my findings after completing the research and achieving final approval of the study. Thank you again for sharing your knowledge, experiences, and insights!