

2021

Family-Owned Restaurant Owners' Strategies for Business Sustainability

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Vickie Matson

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Family-Owned Restaurant Owners' Strategies for Business Sustainability

by

Vickie Matson

MBA, Walden University, 2012

BS, Park University, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2021

Abstract

Restaurants are competitive, high-risk enterprises and have high failure rates. In this environment, family-owned restaurant business owners need operational strategies to sustain their businesses. Grounded in the balanced scorecard theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the operational strategies used by family-owned restaurant owners to sustain their businesses beyond five years. Five family-owned restaurant business owners from South Texas who successfully implemented sound operational strategies participated in the study. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and company documents, including training manuals, financial reports, business licenses, permits, press releases, and fictitious business name statements. Thematic analysis yielded four themes: maintaining customer focus and satisfaction, engaging in continuous learning and process development, practicing efficient operational strategies, and committing to innovation and change. A key recommendation is that family-owned restaurant business owners implement a customer-focused strategy that includes assessing customer satisfaction, increasing customer retention, and exceeding customer expectations. The implications for positive social change include the potential for sustainability of family-owned restaurant businesses, which would support local communities through continued job creation, human capital development, economic development, and job sustainability.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my children, Glenn, Johnathon, Nathaniel, and Victoria, who brought purpose to my life and made pursuing this dream my goal. I hope that I have modeled for you what you are capable of achieving through my accomplishment. To the love of my life, my husband, McKenley, who provided unwavering support and allowed me space so that I could accomplish this dream, you have challenged me to go higher, think bigger, and just go for it. I thank you for always being my greatest cheerleader. To my late mother, Marion Curtis, your selflessness and unconditional love modeled how we should all strive to live. There is no greater blessing than to have the love of a family. To my family, where my life begins and my love never ends.

I also dedicate this work to those who will come after me, pursuing the ultimate academic achievement. To my fellow doctoral colleagues who have encouraged me, offered words of wisdom, celebrated my successes, and blazed a trail to follow, I thank you. To those who think they cannot earn a doctorate, I remind them that all things are possible with God.

Acknowledgments

I give all praise to Almighty God, without whom I could not have completed this journey. To my siblings, Yolander, Viry, Raynetta, and Craig, I am reminded of our childhood experiences, our sibling bond, the memories we share, the adventures we have had, and the excitement of the future that awaits us. With all my heart, I thank my family and friends for supporting, encouraging, and laboring with me during the times that I thought I wanted to quit.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge three constant confidants who have been in my life for the duration of this journey. To Dr. Roland and Valerie Smith, thank you both for being family, friends, and mentors. Thank you for keeping me enthused, sharing your knowledge, and encouraging me to continue this educational process. To Jackie Curtis, thank you for being a sister, friend, and mentor. Thank you for encouraging me, keeping me grounded, pushing me to go to the next level, and joining me on this doctoral journey.

I thank the faculty and support teams of Walden University who have assisted me on my journey. I owe special acknowledgment to my doctoral chair, Dr. Erica Gamble, my chair, mentor, and cheerleader. You pushed me when I was ready, you believed in me, and you fought for me when I needed defending. You provided the unwavering guidance and support that got me to the finish. To Dr. Gwendolyn Dooley, my second committee member, you challenged me to dig deeper and narrow my focus. To Dr. Franz Gottlieb, my URR, your attention to detail and valuable feedback helped take my writing to the next level.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Restaurants account for many jobs in the United States, but most fail within the first few years of operation. The Small Business Administration (2016) reported that two out of every three jobs created in the United States are in the private sector by small business owners. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) reported that five of the 10 top occupations in 2014 were restaurant workers, food preparation employees, servers, waiters, and waitresses. Workers in these positions represented 21% of all employees in the United States that year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The sector has a high failure rate, however. An estimated 26% of small and medium restaurant businesses fail during their first year of business, and ultimately, 60% do not survive beyond 3 years (Mun & Jang, 2015). These high failure rates can be contributed to poor communication, location, lack of clear vision, and insufficient operational strategies (Nel, Williams, Steyn, & Hind, 2018). In this qualitative multiple-case study, I explored the operational strategies needed for family-owned restaurants to survive beyond 5 years.

Background of the Problem

Despite the money spent on restaurant dining and the economic impact that the restaurant industry has on the U.S. economy, the failure rate of family-owned restaurant businesses is more than 15%, and the revenue loss is more than \$2.1 billion annually (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2017). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015), there are approximately 600,000 food service and drinking establishments in the United States. The restaurant industry contributed approximately 4% to the U.S.'s gross domestic product (GDP) for 2016 (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2017). Family-owned

restaurant business owners might benefit from recommendations for strategies to improve restaurant success strategies for economic sustainability.

Problem Statement

Small businesses are the largest private-sector employer in the United States, with the restaurant industry constituting the second largest population within the sector (King, 2018). An estimated 26% of small and medium restaurant enterprises fail during their first year of business, and ultimately, 60% do not survive beyond 3 years (Mun & Jang, 2015). The general business problem is that many restaurant business owners fail to succeed in business during the first 5 years. The specific business problem is that some family-owned restaurant business owners lack operational strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the operational strategies that family-owned restaurant business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population included five restaurant business owners in Houston, Texas, who sustained their business beyond 5 years. The research may contribute to positive social change by providing strategies that restaurant owners can use to increasing employment opportunities for members of the business community. Reducing business failure rates can also increase revenues for local communities.

Nature of the Study

The three most commonly used research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. The qualitative method was more appropriate for this study than the quantitative

method because it does not involve the use of numeric data derived from closed-ended questions. Qualitative methods are better suited to answer who, what, where, when, and how series of questions for exploring information that would present practical recommendations (Leung, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). As such, the qualitative method was the most suitable method to yield data to answer this study's research question. A quantitative researcher uses numerical data and hypotheses testing to examine relationships or differences among variables (Yin, 2018). A researcher using a quantitative method may not capture in-depth data to understand the participants' experiences with closed-ended questions clearly. Therefore, the quantitative method was inappropriate. A mixed-method researcher uses qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore phenomena and processes (Yin, 2018). A mixed method was not chosen because there were no quantitative elements included in the study.

The qualitative research method includes several designs, such as ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. I chose a case study design for this study. A researcher conducting a case study explores a single case or multiple cases to understand phenomena (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2017; Yin, 2018). Using an ethnographic design allows a researcher to describe cultures' characteristics within groups, communities, and organizations (Arino, LeBaron, & Milliken, 2016). The research population was not identified by culture, so the ethnography research design was not appropriate. The phenomenological design involves exploring the meanings of participants' lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Shtudiner, Klein, & Kantor, 2017). I did not choose the phenomenological design for this study because I did not intend to explore the

meanings of participants' lived experiences with the study phenomenon. I chose the case study design because it allowed me to collect data through interviews and documentation to address the research question.

Research Question

What are the operational strategies that some family-owned restaurant business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What operational strategies did you use to sustain your family-owned restaurant business beyond 5 years?
2. What operational strategies proved most useful in helping to sustain the growth of your restaurant?
3. What data sources did you use to develop the operational strategies used to sustain your restaurant?
4. What assessments did you use to confirm that the operational strategies used were successful in sustaining the business?
5. What were the key barriers to implementing your operational strategies for the continued success of your restaurant?
6. How did you address the key barriers to implementing your operational strategies for the continued success of your restaurant?
7. What else can you share about your organizations' operational strategies for sustaining the growth of your restaurant business?

Conceptual Framework

The balanced scorecard (BSC) theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Kaplan and Norton introduced the BSC in 1992 as a tool for balancing the financial and nonfinancial measures of a company's performance (Giannopoulos, Holt, Khansalar, & Cleanthous, 2013). The BSC theory is a strategic tool that some small business owners use to measure performance and strategy. The BSC might provide organizational leaders the ability to combine financial and nonfinancial measures by measuring both strategic and business performance through four interrelated perspectives: (a) financial, (b) customer, (c) internal business process, and (d) learning and growth (Giannopoulos et al., 2013). Using the perspectives offered by the BSC theory may have enabled the participants of this study to effectively develop and implement the success strategies that enabled them to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The BSC theory was an appropriate model for my research because it focuses on interrelated perspectives that drive the day-to-day functions of a restaurant; these perspectives include financial sustainability, sustained growth, customer value, and the organization's service quality. The BSC theory was useful because each interrelated perspective focuses on an aspect of the business that contributes to its overall success.

Operational Definitions

Balanced scorecard (BSC): A balanced scorecard is a tool that top management uses to communicate strategic goals to lower-level management, thereby linking the organization's goals to actionable performance targets (Johnson, Reckers, & Barlett, 2014).

Business survival: Business survival is a business that is currently, or was previously, approaching failure but continues to exist and does not meet the definition of a failed business or a successful business (Tundui & Tundui, 2012).

Entrepreneur: An entrepreneur is a founder, owner, and manager of a small firm (Stam, Arzlanian, & Elfring, 2014).

Entrepreneurship: The act of starting a new business venture or creating a new product or service. It encompasses the three aspects of production – land, labor, and capital (Parilla, 2013).

Independent restaurant: A restaurant that is a family-owned and operated restaurant that is not part of a national chain (Independent Restaurants of America, 2019).

Small business: A small business is a privately held, independent business that can vary in annual revenue or number of employees, usually 1500 or less, depending upon the industry (SBA, 2013).

Small and medium business enterprises (SMEs): Small and medium business enterprises are businesses with 500 or fewer employees, depending upon the industry (SBA, 2016).

Strategy: Strategy is an entrepreneurship policy in the company creation, competitive advantages, new opportunities, and significant changes (Berman, 2012), and strategy process and support that affect company products and enterprise capabilities and services (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Researchers acknowledge that in any study there are inherent obstacles to gathering and interpreting findings appropriately. Those obstacles include the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that might be imposed by the research. Assumptions are not verified and believed to be factual (O'Leary, 2018). Limitations are areas of restriction that (O'Leary, 2018). Delimitations are areas that a researcher excludes from a study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the following subsections, I outlined the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study.

Assumptions

Researchers have expectations about what a study might yield. Those expectations can be assumptions about ideas, theories, and beliefs about what the data will present. Assumptions are beliefs that are unproven or may not exist when a researcher initially identifies the goals of the study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I had several assumptions when conducting this study. This study's primary assumption was that the participants would have identified strategies to sustain a family-owned restaurant business beyond 5 years. A secondary assumption was that a multiple-case study was the most suitable method to explore restaurant business owners' strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Another assumption was that conducting the study in Houston would be sufficient to provide a sufficient sampling of restaurant owner participants to provide data for the study. I had this assumption because Houston has many ethnic restaurant establishments. Finally, there was an assumption that the potential ethnic diversity of restaurant business owners who might

participate in the study would offer more diverse perspectives regarding Houston's ethnic business population.

Limitations

A study's limitations refer to the constraints that might exist within the study's scope and are out of the researcher's control. Factors beyond the control of the researcher are classified as limitations (Yin, 2018). A study's limitations might alter the findings and compromise the study's validity (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; O'Leary, 2018).

Limitations can impact the internal and external validity, the research design's validity and integrity, and the external validity of the research results (Greener, 2018). This research study contains several limitations. The first limitation is the limited transferability of the findings, such as the inability to apply the findings to a franchise or chain-type restaurant business. Another limitation is the geographical focus of the research. Another limitation might be a participant's reluctance to fully disclose confidential documents. The final limitation is that of only studying businesses that have survived beyond 5 years.

Delimitations

The characteristics that set the boundaries and define the study's scope are the study's delimitations (O'Leary, 2018). Boundaries and/or restrictions that limit the scope of the study are delimitations (Pascucci, 2017). This research study contains few delimitations. The first delimitation is that the study participants were owners of family-owned restaurants. The second delimitation is the location of the restaurants in Houston, Texas, and surrounding areas. The third delimitation is that the restaurants in the study

are nonfranchised establishments. Lastly, the businesses had to have been operational for at least 5 years.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

With this study's findings, I hope to contribute to the literature on family-owned restaurant business owners' operational business strategies, both during the start-up phase of the business and well into the business's growth and ongoing success. The strategies gained from my research may provide restaurant owners with long-term operational strategies; sustainable marketing, growth, and competitive advantage strategies; and increased revenues and survival rates. Surpassing customer expectations in the restaurant dining industry is a primary responsibility that restaurateurs must meet to stay competitive in the industry (Cai & Chi, 2018). Obstacles such as increased competition, higher costs related to food and labor, and more demanding clientele are issues that restaurateurs face globally. Studying successfully operated restaurant businesses could provide other business owners with practices such as operational efficiency, cost reduction, productivity improvements, customer retention, and training and development that might solve the failure rates of small businesses (Schofield, 2015). Recommendations from this study, if followed, might lead to an improvement in the survival rates of family-owned restaurant businesses.

Implications for Social Change

The social change implications of this study might include business sustainability, leading to continued job creation, human capital development, economic development,

and job sustainability. Lower business failure rates could also lead to economic growth in local communities. The benefits to community members might include new employment opportunities, reduced unemployment rates, less government dependence, improved public services, and investments back into the local and national economy.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the operational strategies that family-owned restaurant business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. This literature review is a comprehensive and critical review of scholarly research related to the subject matter of my study. Conducting a literature review is a systematic way to research, identify, evaluate, and interpret other scholars' work and is a solid foundation for developing questions on the subject matter (Baker, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2017). In a literature review, a researcher synthesizes and summarizes literature through a critical analysis of the existing body of knowledge (O'Leary, 2018). The resulting literature review is a collection of scholarly research that supports the phenomenon relating to a research study (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). A literature review provides the reader with developments in the field, offers a foundation for understanding the subject, and aligns the study within past research. This review of the professional and academic literature not only provides an overview of the general business topic, but it supports the purpose of this research study. Specifically, this literature review provides a critical analysis and synthesis of the existing literature on small family-owned restaurant businesses and business strategies and seminal works on conceptual theories relating to business organizations.

The literature review begins with an introduction to the purpose of the study. I organized the literature review per themes relevant to the BSC theory conceptual framework. A detailed explanation and a critical analysis of the BSC theory and a comparison and contrast to other organizational success theories follow. Moreover, I address the concept of small business ownership, along with the roles and benefits associated with small businesses. I conclude the literature review with a discussion of the knowledge gained from small business training.

The literature review contains research that I extracted from peer-reviewed articles, books, and other resources, including government reports, industry reports, and doctoral studies. I developed a list of keywords to narrow the search and relate to small businesses. This list included the following combination of keywords associated with small business, restaurants, success, and strategies: *balanced scorecard theory, business strategies, business success strategies, entrepreneurship theory, job creation, minority small business owners, small business education, small business learning, small business ownership, small business strategies, and small business survival.*

I accessed the following databases using the Walden University electronic library system and Google Scholar: ABI/INFORM Collection, Business Source Complete, Emerald Management Journals, ProQuest, ProQuest Central, ProQuest Thesis and Dissertations, SAGE Premier, and government databases. After reviewing and analyzing numerous resources, I found that 235 were relevant to the study. Of the 235 selected sources, 96% were peer-reviewed articles, and the remaining 4% was a compilation of books, conference publications, dissertations, industry magazines, and government

websites. Of the 233 sources used, 188 were published within 5 years of my anticipated graduation date, equating to 81%.

Balanced Scorecard Theory

My objective in this literature review was to explore research on the operational strategies family-owned restaurant business owners use to sustain their businesses within the BSC theory framework. I chose Kaplan and Norton's (1992) BSC theory as the conceptual framework for the study because it integrates the four perspectives of a business model that restaurant business owners can use as a tool. This tool can help in understanding how the vision of the organization and the daily activities align to the strategic implementation of the goals of the business. The use of the BSC could provide researchers a tool to assess both financial and nonfinancial assets for an organization (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). Linking the business's vision, mission, and strategic goals is a primary function of the BSC (Quesado, Guzmán, & Rodrigues, 2018). As of 2014, more than 700 organizations were actively using the BSC, and it is one of the most widely used management systems across all types of businesses (Hoque, 2014). The BSC theory is useful in exploring how businesses successfully define goals, measures, targets, and initiatives within the four integral perspectives.

Researchers have not widely used the BSC theory to identify the best business practices in identifying strategic objectives. Its strategy mapping has made it an appropriate theory for understanding the components of business activities that prove beneficial to businesses' success in the restaurant industry. The authors of a study designed to explore the impact of using the BSC theory as an implementation tool to

measure restaurant performance concluded that the model could help target each perspective's indicators (Ida & Fitri, 2018). The BSC is a strategic planning and management system that businesses use (a) to communicate the goals of the business; (b) align daily activities to the implementation of the businesses' strategies, prioritize products, services, and projects; and (c) measure and monitor the progressions toward targeted long-term goals (Balanced Scorecard Institute, 2012). The BSC theory could be adopted, and its implementation explored, using qualitative exploratory methods such as single and multiple case studies (Yin, 2018).

As evidence of its effectiveness, the BSC theory has been a foundational theory for studying restaurant performance and strategic planning in research. For instance, Cooper, Ezzames, Qu (2017) explored the BSC in recent research regarding its development and marketability. The authors of another study used the BSC theory to investigate the effects of internal marketing and market orientation in Iran's restaurant industry (Salehzadeh, Pool, Tabaeian, Amani, & Mortazavi, 2017). In earlier research, Rieman (2003) used the BSC theory in conjunction with the Scale-DEA to evaluate the information gained from Scale-DEA and how it affects evaluators' consensus and consistency when using the BSC as a model to show fast-food restaurant chains' return on investment. Ida and Friti (2018) used the BSC theory to study restaurant management. All of the studies' results indicate that implementing the BSC theory by selecting each perspective's indicators could be used to measure restaurant performance.

The BSC theory encompasses a set of fully integrated and coordinated financial and nonfinancial indicators that connect to the organization's objectives and goals.

Researchers support the effectiveness of the relationship between financial and nonfinancial indicators and agree that collectively they make it possible to establish a measurable set of goals that can help move the business forward (Ndevu & Muller, 2018; Panggabean & Jermias, 2020; Quesado et al., 2018). Measurements in four areas (financial, customer, internal business process, and learning and growth perspectives) and the objectives support both the vision and the business strategy (Najmaei, Quazi, & Behnia, 2017). Incorporating all four perspectives into the vision and strategy is required. Business owners who neglect connecting the performance measures in cause-and-effect relationships are likely to be unsuccessful with the BSC theory (Najmaei et al., 2017; Panggabean & Jermias, 2020). The BSC theory evolved into a strategy mapping tool designed to measure four areas of the business. The business owner must examine each area of the BSC theory to ensure that it functions fully, both independently and as a member of the business's strategic map. In measuring a business's success, it is necessary to look at all business areas that play an active role in its daily survival.

Implementation of the BSC is critical to aligning the strategic initiatives to the organization's vision and mission. One of the best practices for aligning the organization to the strategy is using the BSC framework (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). Business owners who want to focus on critical issues such as measuring performance and implementing their business strategies use the BSC (Kunz, Siebert, & Mütterlein, 2016). Use of the BSC is critical to the business's long-term strategy because it helps translate the mission into specific actions and facilitates communication of the vision, the strategy, and the strategic objectives (Quesado et al., 2018). The BSC addresses the limitation of using

only financial measures to measure performance measurement for an organization (Chopra, Gupta, & Chhabra, 2017). A successful business strategy must have clear strategic goals that outline the desired financial, customer, internal process, and employee growth performance objectives (Panggabean, & Jermias, 2020). A balanced approach to connecting the business's vision and strategies to the BSC perspectives is depicted in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Balanced Scorecard approach to vision and strategy through the four interrelated perspectives.

Financial perspective. One of the main business goals is making money, so the financial perspective is used in the BSC theory. The financial perspective addresses how the business looks from the viewpoint of its shareholders. This perspective has three primary strategy themes: (a) revenue growth, (a) cost reduction, and (c) asset use (Utama, 2012). The business's financial goals are achieved by ensuring that revenue and profitability are increased through meeting the customer objectives, internal process objectives, and the growth and learning objectives (Kaplan, 1992). The financial

perspective provides a strategy for growth, comparability, and risk (Martello, Watson, & Fischer, 2016). The factors related to this perspective are revenue growth, cost reduction, and asset use (Abdillah, & Diana, 2018).

The business unit's long-term objectives can be used both as a guide and an indicator of financial performance (Kaplan & Norton, 1992, 1996). These objectives could also be related to productivity improvement, cost reduction, risk management, and asset use (Giannopoulos et al., 2013). Three strategic themes are revenue growth, cost reduction, and asset use (Ida & Friti, 2018). Favorable market share and financial performance in the restaurant industry indicate customer loyalty and satisfaction (Bihamta, Jayashree, Rezaei, Okumus, & Rahmi, 2017).

Examples of financial goals and objectives might be growth, profitability, or cost and expense objectives. Setting goals and objectives that can be measured and tied directly to the restaurant's vision and mission can help its overall financial health. Financial performance measurements are related to the development of new products and services (learning and growth perspective), adding operational capabilities (internal business perspective), and developing infrastructures that foster customer relationships (customer perspective) (Abdillah, & Diana, 2018). The long-term financial objectives affect the performance of the organization and must be measured to assess its effectiveness.

Customer perspective. Customer service in the restaurant industry is vital to the success of the business. The customer perspective is the strategy for creating value and differentiation (Martello et al., 2016). The customer goals and objectives relate to

anything having to do with customer interest, including the quality of the product, quality of the service, and costs, translating to revenue growth (Kaplan, 1992). Generic measures such as market and account share, customer retention, customer acquisition, and customer profitability focus on the customer segment (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Customer satisfaction and retention, along with market and account share, are not only valuable to profitability, but they should be a primary focus (Nguyen, 2017; Singh & Sethi, 2017). In the BSC theory's customer segment, managers focus on identifying their customers and markets and measuring their performance in these segments. Identifying a business's customers and the market is imperative in measuring how the business will perform in its industry. The focus needs to shift to achieving customer satisfaction once the customer and market are identified.

Attracting the customer is only one aspect of the customer perspective; keeping the customer coming back is another. Satisfied clients and excellent customer service are critical for small business success (Johnston & Marshall, 2016). Managers need to focus on the customer to ensure organizational success and promote a positive and supportive environment. Simultaneously, the service staff engages the customers by listening to their comments regarding the quality of the food, price of the restaurant's food, and atmosphere (Engen & Magnusson, 2015; Koys & DeCotiis, 2015). Customer performance measurements are related to customer care and value proposition. Within customer care, components such as market share, customer retention and acquisition, and customer satisfaction are reflected in the number and volume of sales (financial perspective), ability to attract and win new business (learning and growth perspective),

and customer profitability and value proposition (internal-business perspective) (Abdillah & Diana, 2018). One way to ensure that the business attracts and retains customers while securing a significant share of the restaurant industry is to have internal procedures and processes that will attract and retain customers possible.

Internal-business process perspective. Although internal and external factors influence a business's success, the business controls its value proposition's internal business functions. The internal-business perspective is the strategy for all business processes that create customer and shareholder value (Martello et al., 2016). Internal-business objectives include the processes and competencies that align with serving the customer's needs (Kaplan, 1992). The processes and competencies allow the business to develop products and services that create value for the customer and improve operational efficiency, which leads to revenue and margin growth (Kaplan, 1992). Managers focus on what the business does well, how it delivers on its value proposition, and whether it meets its shareholders' expectations (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Although Singh and Sethi (2017) suggested that the BSC theory's internal business process strategy is to execute effective business processes within the organization per its customer's requirements, Ooghe and Waeyaert (2004) had a different view. Identifying metrics such as economic, technological, political, and social performance changes, which includes both internal business processes and external outcomes that occur within the general environment, is a better process strategy (Chen et al., 2014; Ooghe & Waeyaert, 2004). The internal business process focuses on the value proposition, innovation, operations, and service while identifying what is needed to perform at maximum performance capability. Internal

business process goals and objectives in the restaurant sector might include cost-effective food production, process excellence, and service excellence. Internal-business process measurements are related to (a) operations management, (b) customer management, (c) innovation, and (d) regulatory and social processes (Abdillah & Diana, 2018). Customer management and innovation processes include getting, maintaining, and increasing value for customers (customer perspective), and operations management and regulatory and social processes are reflected in effectiveness and efficiency and positive community contributions (internal-business perspective) (Abdillah & Diana, 2018). When customers are satisfied with the services and products they receive, and the shareholder's expectations are satisfied, financial returns are inevitable (financial perspective) (Abdillah & Diana, 2018). The successful business strategies that each restaurant owner uses will represent their internal practices and business processes. Identifying internal practices and processes happens through the organization's learning and growth initiatives.

Learning and growth perspective. In the BSC theory's learning and growth segment, the focus is on identifying the infrastructure needed to sustain long-term growth and improvement. The learning and growth perspective is the strategy for creating an organization that supports change, learning, and innovation (Martello et al., 2016). The learning and growth perspective include employee training and employees' alignment with job skills (Ilyasin & Zamroni, 2017). Management depends on three principal sources for organizational learning and growth: people, systems, and procedures (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Business owners should involve all organization levels to attain

common goals, creating an environment of cooperation among the employees (Quesado et al., 2018). The BSC theory's learning and growth strategies provide training and instruction opportunities for employees to enhance their knowledge (Singh & Sethi, 2017). Metrics related to learning and growth address whether an organization can sustain innovation, change, and continuous improvement (Emami & Doolen, 2015).

Researchers use these metrics on four key areas: human capital, innovation, infrastructure and technology, and organizational capital. Dhamayantie (2018) found that applying the growth and learning outlook to understanding how to sustain change and improve through time was sufficient. However, the researcher's thoughts differed slightly from the metrics suggested by Emami and Doolen (2015), who noted that it encompasses employee competence, technology infrastructure, and cooperative culture. Learning and growth objectives might include hiring employees with foodservice experience, having a staff training plan that provides opportunities for ongoing training of chefs and entry-level cooks, planning menu development and pricing, and communication among employees. Learning and growth process measurements are reflected in the infrastructure needed for the financial perspective, the customer perspective, and the internal-business process perspective, all of which support long-term growth and improvement (Abdillah, & Diana, 2018). To only measure the financial, customer, and internal business processes would leave a gap in the systems and procedures performed by human capabilities (Abdillah, & Diana, 2018). The learning and growth position might provide strategies that will lead to continuous training and skills development improvements in human capital, innovation, infrastructure, and technology to enhance its performance.

Criticisms of the Balanced Scorecard Theory

Although the BSC theory has its advantages, the model lacks the necessary elements to measure a business's strategic goals. Researchers have used the BSC theory to address strategy implementation but have found it unhelpful to analyze strategic leadership (Kennerley & Neely, 2002). Although some researchers such as Najmaei et al., (2017) have stated that a balanced view of strategic leadership that combines the strategic leadership theory and the BSC theory creates a holistic approach, others have acknowledged that guidance and recommendations on what data to use in calculating the metrics and which metrics to use are lacking in the BSC theory (Najmaei et al., 2017; Wallace, 2016). Though the BSC theory addresses the limitations of the traditional measuring systems, newer measuring tools, such as the performance prism, address the BSC theory's limitations (Adams & Crowe, 2002; Kennerley & Neely, 2002). Although the BSC theory provides a business owner with the tools capable of measuring the firm's strategic goals, it is equally important to assess the leader's behavioral dynamics and provide guidance beyond traditional measurement systems to lead to strategic choices that affect the organization. The BSC theory is one model used to measure a business's strategic goals. It is also important to point out that other theories and models exist, which account for research in strategic management tools.

Alternate Theories

Researchers have used many theoretical and conceptual approaches in explaining the vast amounts of literature addressing both business successes and failures. The BSC theory is one of the most widely known business performance measurement tools along

with the sustainability BSC theory and the strategic measurement and reporting technique (SMART) performance pyramid (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Kalender & Vayvay, 2016; Sorooshian, Aziz, Ahmad, Jubidin, & Mustapha, 2016). Multidisciplinary researchers have conducted studies on the nature of business failures and identified two main issues within the research; the causes of business failure and the effects and potential consequences of the business failure to the entrepreneur (Khelil, 2016; Walsh & Cunningham, 2016). The theory of entrepreneurship created by Cantillon (2001) focused on entrepreneurship as being separated into three parts: wealth, exchange, and international trade. Schumpeter (1934) created an academic development theory to address how entrepreneurs' innovation improves economic systems and operational efficiency (Becker & Knudsen, 2017). Lastly, the resource-based view (RBV) theory created by Penrose (1959) helped researchers theorize how a firm's resources influence its growth. Notably, the theory of entrepreneurship, the theory of economic development, and the resource-based view are the three most common conceptual frameworks used by scholars to explore restaurant business owners' success strategies to sustain start-up businesses.

Theory of entrepreneurship. One theory that researchers use to explore small business owners and entrepreneurs' practices is entrepreneurship theory. The theory of entrepreneurship, created by Cantillon (2001), has helped researchers separate entrepreneurship concepts into three parts: wealth, exchange, and international trade. Cantillon further theorized that entrepreneurial choices influence the ability to earn and spend money. Likewise, Carlsson et al. (2013) acknowledged that Cantillon's work

contributed significantly to the concept of entrepreneurship. Still, Karimi and Hamedi (2016) suggested that entrepreneurs are pioneers who seek potentially profitable ventures, form hunches, and avoid risk. Although the concept of what an entrepreneur is and what they do differs among scholars, the theory of entrepreneurship provides a firm foundation for understanding business owners and entrepreneurs' practices. Within the scope of business owners and entrepreneurs' daily practices, specific skills seem to exist in those who pursue entrepreneurship as a career.

Scholars who have adopted the theory of entrepreneurship propose that prerequisite skills are necessary to run a business. Cantillon (2001) identified the management skills that entrepreneurs possess, such as planning, activating, controlling, directing, organizing, and marketing. Putta (2014) reported results compatible with Cantillon's findings, that for entrepreneurial success to occur, small business owners must demonstrate their ability to organize, plan, direct, control, and activate their skills. Likewise, Mehrabani and Mohamad (2015) acknowledged that small business owners possess specific management skills. They also noted that entrepreneurs acquired their management skills at different intervals throughout the business life, which differs slightly from Cantillon's approach. Mehrabani and Mohamad further asserted that the attainment of management skills and the existing human resources creates a competitive advantage for the business. Management skills are critical to the sustainability of any small business. These skills can be possessed or learned, but they are necessary to run a successful business and maintain a competitive advantage. Entrepreneurs must have the skills to manage a business and apply those skills to success factors.

The term entrepreneurship often relates to small business ownership. Cantillon (2001) viewed the small business owner as an agent willing to take the risk to equilibrate the markets and economy (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison- Laffitte, 2014). He further identified the entrepreneur as an agent who buys products at uncertain prices; makes new combinations of the products; and sells them at a higher price, thus taking a risk (Carlsson et al., 2013). Omer, Attali, and Yemini (2017) acknowledged that entrepreneurship involves exploring innovation, creating opportunities, and establishing financial gain organizations. Aliyu Rogoi and Mahmood (2015) similarly noted the dimensions of entrepreneurship to include risk and uncertainty as essential to small business profitability and sustainability. Frid (2015) suggested that the entrepreneur's characteristics, skills, and abilities ultimately affect the business's success. Nunes (2016) provided results consistent with Cantillon's findings that it set the stage for entrepreneurs as owners of small businesses within an economic framework. Martinez and Williams (2014) agreed that the theory of entrepreneurship established a relationship between business opportunities and the entrepreneur's desire to start a small business. Hefer, Cant, and Wiid (2015) agreed that individuals start small businesses to fulfill a desire, use a skill set, and to become business owners.

Theory of economic development. Lastly, researchers use economic development theory to explore strategies that business owners use to sustain their small businesses. Schumpeter (1934) defined the entrepreneur's role in his seminal piece, *The Theory of Economic Development*. He believed that the role of the entrepreneur was to establish a new combination or significant innovation. This new combination of

innovation covers the introduction of a new good or a new quality of a good, the introduction of a new method of production, the opening of a new market, the conquest of a new source of raw materials, or the creation of a new organization of an industry (Fritsch, 2017). Entrepreneurs achieve high profits by introducing some of these innovations (Nikoloski, 2016). Schumpeter (1934) appointed the central role in the dynamics of economic development to the entrepreneur. Accordingly, entrepreneurs are vital for creating new products, and they take on this risk without the guarantee of survival (Canter & Dopfer, 2015). According to Becker and Knudsen (2016), Schumpeter's philosophy best supports Bostahp (2013) excellent understanding of how economic systems and operational efficiency relate to innovation and business sustainability. To support the theory of economic development, Schumpeter created the theory of business cycles rooted in capitalism (Nikoloski, 2016). Schumpeter (1942) theorized that value creation, which provides new services and products, leads to economic development.

Resource-based view (RBV) theory. Another theory identified for exploring the strategies of small business owners is the RBV. The resource-based view originated in the 1950s by Penrose, was founded on the concept that business leaders could create competitive advantages using internal tangible and intangible resources (Lockett & Wild, 2014). Penrose's (1959) writings argued that an organization's growth could be attributed to adequately organizing "a bunch of productive resources." Its impetus grew out of the author's displeasure using the neoclassical economic methodology to measure business growth. The RBV, the most widely accepted theory of strategic management, is also

considered a far-reaching management theory (Kellermanns, Walter, Crook, Kemmerer, & Narayanan, 2016; Wernerfelt, 2016). Small business owners have access to many resources that support both their management style and business objectives, which supports the basis of the RBV.

The RBV provides four categories for researchers to examine (a) financing resources, (b) human resources, (c) organizational resources, and (d) physical resources. The RBV theory provides business owners the ability to connect their sustained competitive advantage to their resources (Campbell & Park, 2017; Kellermanns et al., 2016). Business owners who can sustain a constant flow of resources and engage in sustainable practices remain successful and can operate their businesses more efficiently through the strategic use of their resources (Alonso-Almeida, Bagur-Femenias, Llach, & Perramon, 2018; Hitt, Xu, & Carnes, 2016). Small business sustainability often depends on adequate financial capital being available at the start-up of the business. Financial resources are most vital to small business owners. A business is much less susceptible to failure if it has ample financial resources and access to funding options instead of having limited resources (Allen-Barnes, 2020). Although the restaurant industry usually lacks the nuances of rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable products and services, it is incumbent upon these small business owners to adequately manage the organization's resources to maintain their advantages over the competition (Lockett & Wild, 2014).

Small Business Ownership

Owning a small business is a big part of the American dream. Small business ownership is the engine of the U.S. economy, and many aspire to be among the ranks of

those who pursue it. Small business ownership is vital to our economic foundation (Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, 2018). Social, emotional, and psychological rewards accompany small business ownership (Revilla, Pérez-Luño, & Nieto (2016). Small business ownership has reached 99.9% of all U.S. small businesses and greater than 95% in most other countries, with family-owned businesses accounting for over 90% of those small businesses in the United States (Hilbrecht, 2016; Turner & Endres, 2017). Research supports the assertion that small business is the key to establishing and maintaining a growth economy through its ownership desires, employment opportunities, and family wealth creation.

When choosing the business's ownership style, the owner must decide what type of ownership works best for their business. Family-owned small businesses are less likely to fail due to family pride and a long-term orientation, which gave them persistence in the wake of others' failures and allowed more stable income from earnings (Amankwah-Amoah, 2016; Fitzgerald & Muske, 2016). Others felt that family involvement was beneficial only up to a certain point in small businesses (Gonzalez-Cruz & Cruz-Ros, 2016). The ownership style of the business can directly affect the sustainability of the business.

The business owner's income and growth potential are unlimited, whether the business has five or 500 employees or if the business is 5 or 10 years old. Fitzgerald and Muske (2016) reported that family-owned business owners reported higher and more stable income, even during economic hard times. New small business owners are often skilled in product and service knowledge and focus on enhancing services and products

that are familiar and can sustain a profit to maintain existence while focusing on customer relationships to increase their customer base (McDowell, Harris, & Geho, 2016; Nunes, 2016)). If a small business owner can identify business opportunities that can support a viable business, they can generate revenue and achieve profitability while saving time and money on researching opportunities (Davidson, 2016; Glaeser, Wellton, Jonsson, Walter, & Svingstedt, 2016). Small business owners also create economic value through patent creation (Akcegit & Kerr, 2018). Not only are business owners creating economic value, but they are also contributing to economies of both national and international scale (Akcegit & Kerr, 2018; Hovhannisyan & Keller 2015).

Specific attributes are present in the characteristics of successful business owners. Some of those characteristics are competitive, knowledgeable, ambitious, self-confident, independent, committed, and persistent. It is essential to understand that for business owners. Their strengths give them a competitive advantage over their competitors, whereas their weaknesses can be harmful and used by their competitors against them (Aithal, 2016). The business owner's character and personality traits differ from one to the other but can greatly influence their strategic decisions (Becker & Knudsen, 2016; Francioni, Musso, & Cioppi, 2015). Successful small business owners have characteristics that can contribute to the success of the business.

Small business owners attribute a host of factors to the success of their businesses. These factors include identifying the right business opportunities and acknowledging risk-taking activities in the business (Panggabean & Jermias, 2020). Even in the absence of certain knowledge and financial resources, business owners can still possess the

potential to provide continued economic growth and job creation (Robinson, 2017).

There is a consensus that small business ownership for both men and women stem from factors such as a desire to own a business, the pursuit of personal talents, and frustration with traditional employment (Gorgievski, Ascalon, & Stephan, 2011; Millsted, Redmond, & Walker, 2016). Starting a new business comes with some risk level, but the owners' individual goals, focus, and personal traits determine the venture's success (Staniewski, Szopinski, & Awruk, 2016).

While there are many rewards and benefits to small business ownership, there are inherent risks and challenges. Small business owners face challenges that can prevent growth and sustainability, so they must be prepared to deal with future problems in advance and not wait for them to happen (Bush, 2016; Frese, Hass, & Friedrich, 2016). They further suggested that overcoming barriers and challenges are necessary for reaching goals. Few small business owners have access to financial and nonfinancial resources; consequently, they cannot keep their businesses from failing (Falkner & Hiebl, 2015). The niche customer base that small businesses depend on comes with limited market share and demand fluctuations (Tameja, Pryor & Hayek, 2016). Launching and running a business is a monumental undertaking, but the benefits far outweigh the challenges associated with it.

Independent Restaurant Ownership

Independent restaurants are generally family-owned and operated restaurants that are not part of a national chain. There are approximately 600,000 food service and drinking establishments in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The

Bureau of Labor Statistics defines a restaurant as food services and drinking places (DeSoucey & Demetry, 2016). The average consumer spends about half of their disposable income dining out in restaurants (Martin, 2018). Due to restaurants' structure and organizational culture, family-owned restaurants stand out as unique small businesses (Koutroumanis, Alexakis, & Dastoor, 2015).

Restaurant ownership is a high-risk business, but knowing and understanding the challenges can be the key to overcoming them. Restaurants are highly competitive, high-risk, and have high rates of failure. Small mom and pop restaurants are more exposed to higher risk levels, but identifying the factors contributing to the failure can be hard to do (Hua, Dalbor, Lee, & Guchait, 2016; Wellton, Jonsson, Walter, & Svingstedt, 2016). Entry into and exit from the restaurant industry has shallow barriers (Lee, Hallak, & Sardeshmukh, 2016). Expansion in the restaurant industry is difficult due to fragmentation and maturity within the industry, and the restaurant sector saturation has led to this maturity (Jogaratnam, 2017). The profitability of the restaurant is often dependent upon keeping the customer satisfied enough to want to return.

Independent restaurateurs have many financing options available to them. Bootstrapping sources such as asset-based lending, leaseback options, cash advances, nonbank loans, and peer loans are common for the restaurant industry (Zwane & Nyide, 2016). Small business owners relied more upon credit cards as a secondary source of funding for their businesses. More than half of all financing for small restaurant businesses came from the owner's funds (Cole & Sokolyk, 2016; Hyz & Gikas, 2016). Access to working capital is critical, and management of that capital significantly affects

a restaurants' profitability (Mun & Jang, 2015). Having access to working capital through the many financing options significantly increases the business's potential for success.

Basic Restaurant Business Strategies

Restaurant leaders use strategies that focus on marketing, growth, management, finances, and operations for restaurant business success. Restaurant leaders and owners use strategies that focus on marketing, growth, management, finances, and operations for restaurant business success, implement and sustain the business. The research was conducted on restaurant business success strategies such as service and food quality, cost management, restaurant setting, and brand loyalty were identified (Barnes, Meyer, & Kinard, 2016; Bihamta et al., 2017).

Marketing strategies focus on identifying and fulfilling market needs and increasing market share. Marketing strategies such as viral marketing, advertising, flyers, brochures, and outreach are mediums that restaurant owners can use to attract new customers and contribute to their success (Lee, Hallak, & Sardeshmukh, 2016; Zheng, 2017). A positive correlation exists between the planned social media activity of a restaurant and the restaurant's perceived value and suggests using social media marketing strategies by small business owners wanting to communicate effectively to consumers (Hubbard, 2018; Lidstone, 2017; Zheng, 2017). Social media marketing is affordable because some social media sites are free to join and use. It allows the user to access non-traditional marketing methods through creativity, community, and relationships to achieve traditional marketing goals (Herman, 2015; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016).

Growth strategies refer to those strategies that have to do with market penetration and expansion, product expansion, diversification, and acquisition. Investing in capital equipment to increase efficiency, developing acquisition strategies, new product development, and marketing strategies targeting customers' insights and needs are examples of growth strategies (Kumar, 2015). To ensure growth, small restaurant owners must develop strategies conducive to supporting annual strategic initiatives and assisting in exploiting business opportunities (King, 2018). Once restaurant business owners understand how to achieve profitability and growth, it lowers their business failure risk (Hua et al., 2016). Ensuring a business's growth requires identifying those strategies that fit the business's needs.

Management strategies refer to techniques used to guide an organization in achieving its goals, such as action items, best practices, benchmarking, cost management, delegation, facilitation, goal setting and process improvement, leadership development, and relationship management. Adaptable and well-developed leadership skills are critical in any business environment (White, 2015). Restaurant managers can manage relationships by promoting a positive and supportive workforce environment, providing clear direction to employees, coaching employees, recognizing employee achievements, displaying a caring attitude, and showing loyalty and support (Koys & DeCotiis, 2015). In small family-owned businesses, leadership is generally a function of the business owner. They spend long hours daily with their employees, affecting management relationships with employees (Koys & DeCotiis, 2015; Ward, 2016). Effective leadership

and business management help shape the business's culture and help the business owner accomplish their goals.

Financial strategies refer to actions aimed at financing the operations of the business. For small business owners, human capital and business sustainability should be a primary focus in financial strategies (Miller, Xu, & Mehrotra, 2015). Having qualified personnel, efficient operations and production, information management and administration, and sales and marketing are critical factors in focusing on financial strategies (McDonald, 2016). While focusing on human capital, business sustainability, efficient operation, and production and sales are vital to the business. Others suggest that setting the right prices was the right approach to sustaining restaurants' profitability and long-term success (McDonald, 2016; Miller et al., 2015). Financial strategies that are well-thought-out and well-executed can support and sustain a restaurant business.

Operational strategies are strategies that the business uses to reach its objectives, such as mission statements, day-to-day operations, product and service plans, customer relationship management, and culture building. For example, in high-end restaurants, those with menu selections that offered price variations as a strategy were more appealing to customers (Pinger, Ruhmer-Krell, & Schumacher, 2016). In one restaurant, diners who were tightly seated close to other guests and were near areas with server traffic spent less time and money than those seated apart from other diners (Clauzel & Riche, 2015). The strategic atmosphere, price, value, loyalty programs, image, and branding initiatives are ways to promote customer loyalty for restaurant business owners (Tanford, 2016).

Effective day-to-day operations of the restaurant business are instrumental in meeting the objectives of the business.

Small Business Roles and Benefits

Innovation creation. Small business owners have been the key drivers of creative innovation. Innovation, as it relates to research, is new in industries such as restaurant, hospitality, and tourism (Garcia-Villaverde, Elche, Martinez-Perez, & Ruiz-Ortega, 2017). Small businesses can adapt to change and adopt new strategies because of their size and flexibility in making decisions concerning innovation. The restaurant industry plays a crucial role in the hospitality and tourism industry, even though it is considered a sub-industry to hospitality and tourism (Nikbin, Marimuthu, & Hyun, 2016). Innovation can be achieved at a higher level when businesses are in a cluster; for a restaurant, this means being in an area popular for tourism (Ruiz-Ortega, Parra-Requena, & García-Villaverde, 2016). In a study conducted by Lee Hallak and Sardeshmukh (2016) on the drivers of a business's performance in the food industry, they found that innovation occurred in five key areas: products, services, processes, management, and marketing. In the restaurant industry, competitive advantage is just as crucial as in other industries. Small business owners create opportunities for innovation in ideas, products, and services.

Economic development. Economic development is an effort to improve or develop the community's economic well-being and quality of life. Small business owners are the drivers of economic growth since the 1980s (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017). Small business owners use the tenants of entrepreneurial orientation as a guide to achieving

economic growth through profit-driven measures within their business (Kegel, 2016).

Entrepreneurs and small business owners are prone to risk, and they are drivers of economic growth, profit, and sustainability (Cantillon, 2001; Winter, 2016). Small businesses help transform and develop communities (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017).

Entrepreneurs contribute to the economy by adding value in the role of wealth creation, economic development, and transforming ideas into innovation and for both developed and developing countries, small and medium-sized enterprises are crucial for economic development (Amire, Prosper, & Ese, 2016; Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017; Rahab, Anwar, & Priyono, 2016). Small business owners make significant contributions to the local economy. The influence that small businesses have made on the economy has transcended time and positively affected local communities.

Employment opportunities. The restaurant industry is labor-intensive; therefore, career opportunities will always be available. The restaurant industry is the nation's largest private-sector employer (National Restaurant Association, 2013). There has been consistent growth in the restaurant industry, and as a result, the challenge to hire and retain traditional workers has also increased (Feerasta, 2017). By the year 2024, there will be 1.3 million employment opportunities created by restaurants nationwide (The National Restaurant Association, 2014). The continued growth of the restaurant industry leads to the anticipation of rising demand for workers. As of 2019, the restaurant industry will add 1.6 million jobs over the next decade, with employment numbers reaching 16.9 million by 2029 (National Restaurant Association, 2019). In addition to the research that supports the fact that small business owners provide employment opportunities, the federal

government recognizes the importance of small business employment through its support of the Small Business Administration. The argument supports the need for additional resources to assist small businesses in expanding operations and creating jobs (Dilger, 2018). Small businesses are invaluable for understanding the changing paradigms of work and employment (Mallett & Wapshott, 2017; Wellton, Jonsson, Walter, & Svingstedt, 2016). The 115th Congress engaged in discussions relating to small businesses' role in job creation and retention and thus has enacted laws to enhance access to capital for small business owners (Dilger, 2018). Small businesses help stimulate the economy by creating jobs

Restaurant Business Training

Training, learning, and education are important factors that can contribute to operating a small business. However, culinary education and a restaurant industry background are the least important factors in restaurant success (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Agarwal and Dahm (2015) further posited that most restaurant operators/owners either held college degrees or had previously owned businesses and attained minimal formal educations. Small business owners accumulate experience over time (Jogaratnam, 2018; Kurian & Muzumdar, 2017). Small restaurant business owners' learning and education can come from mentoring, informal and formal education, and trial and error.

Employees can be an integral part of the learning that happens in restaurants. Employees who are knowledgeable, informed, and empowered are more likely to share their knowledge with other employees, friends, family, and restaurant clients (Engen & Magnusson, 2015). Employees become restaurant marketers through their education

about the restaurant and the food (Lee et al., 2016; Wellton, Jonsson, Walter, & Svingstedt, 2016).

Summary and Transition

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study will be to explore the success strategies that five family-owned restaurant business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The literature review focuses on themes to include (a) conceptual framework, (b) alternate theories, (c) small business ownership, (d) independent restaurant ownership, (e) basic restaurant business strategies, (f) small business roles and benefits, and (g) restaurant business training. The BSC theory will be the lens through which I examine the research. Utilizing the BSC gives family-owned restaurant business owners a model to focus on the business's strategic goals to effectively develop and implement the successful strategies that will enable them to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Section 1 is the study's foundation, which provides background information that leads to an identified problem, how a researcher might study that problem, the importance of contributing to the research, and how others have studied and viewed it.

In Section 2, I will explain (a) the methodology, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the participant selection process, (d) the reasoning for the research method and design, (e) the population and sampling method. I will briefly address ethical research considerations, summarize data collection and analysis techniques, and support the data's reliability and validity. Section 3 will provide the findings, suggestions for applications to

professional practice, implications for social change, reflections on the research, recommendations for action, and further research on the subject.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the operational strategies business owners use to sustain start-up businesses beyond 5 years. The target population included five restaurant business owners in the Houston area who have sustained their business beyond 5 years. The research may contribute to positive social change by providing strategies that restaurant owners can use to increase employment opportunities for local community members. Reducing business failure rates can also avoid loss of revenue for local communities.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary instrument and data collector for the research study. The researcher is an instrument in the research study because the researcher collects the study participants' primary data using interviews, observations, or artifacts (Yin, 2018). A researcher's role in the data collection process is to solicit answers to questions by building trust, maintaining optimal relations, and respecting ethical issues (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The secondary instrument used was the interview protocol that served as a guide for the interview process. As the researcher, I was responsible for executing a research plan that included selecting a research method and design, collecting research data, analyzing the data, and making future research suggestions. I also worked to ensure that the study's ethics were maintained by adhering to ethical research guidelines for protecting human participants.

My professional experience includes 10 years as an educator in the public-school system and 5 plus years as a licensed personal financial representative in the banking industry. In my roles as an educator and as a personal financial representative, I have interacted with administrators, educators, banking managers, parents, students, clients, and other stakeholders. These positions required me to build relationships, coach colleagues, maintain confidentiality, and foster community development. My background eliminated any professionally biased relationship with potential participants. I do not own a small business in the restaurant industry and have no prior relationship with any of the potential participants chosen for the research. My experience in business has been one of a nascent entrepreneur in the services industry. My experiences as an educator and as a personal financial representative, both bound by professional ethics, enabled me to comply with the professional expectations set forth in the *Belmont Report*.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research published the *Belmont Report*, which protects human subjects' rights during research, in 1979. The *Belmont Report* has three foundational principles-- respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) that promote the fair and equitable treatment of all participants (Kowalski, Hutchinson, & Mrdjenovich, 2017). The researcher's role is to ensure consistency during research following these principles. To ensure that the principle of respect of persons was adhered to, I communicated to each participant that their participation was voluntary and provided them with adequate information outlined in the consent form. The participants were given ample time to review the document and

consent to participation. To ensure that the beneficence principle was adhered to, I minimized risks to the participants by not putting them in a position of discomfort, not affecting their financial status, and maintaining confidentiality. I maximized the benefits of the research to both the participant and society, while minimizing risk. To ensure that the principle of justice was adhered to, I remained fair in my procedures and selection of research subjects by ensuring that all potential participants were treated the same in communication during interviews and postresearch. I used the guidance and standards outlined by both the *Belmont Report* and the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure an ethical and transparent research process.

I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) for the collection of data. The interview protocol was structured using a script that included (a) interview questions, (b) task prompts, and (c) reminder prompts. The interview protocol streamlined the interview process for both the participant and me. The protocol also ensured consistency in the interview process for all participants and that all of the needed information was gathered. For a qualitative researcher, the interview questions are the research foundation (Yin, 2018), which makes the researcher as data collector vital to the process. I conducted face-to-face interviews for this qualitative multiple case study, in addition to analyzing company documents. Qualitative researchers explore their participants' real-life experiences with the study subject (Alase, 2017). Open-ended questions are useful for probing and getting the participant to share details of their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Also, the interview protocol allowed me to ask follow-up or additional questions.

A researcher must acknowledge any bias in the research process and mitigate it. I mitigated bias by adhering to the standard interview protocol, allowing participants to review their transcript, maintaining field notes for reference, and using multiple sources to achieve triangulation. Researchers use multiple sources to achieve triangulation (Yin, 2018). By establishing an understanding with the participants, remaining objective, and acting with impartiality and awareness, I sought to develop a rapport to ease the participant throughout the interview process. I asked exploratory questions that were not designed to be leading in nature. Researchers must ensure that their personal biases do not impede the study by not using leading questions that might imply bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2017). Competent researchers should not use their understanding and personal viewpoints as a foundation for understanding the research topic. Furthermore, they should be aware of how they represent themselves to the participants (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2017). Efficient and effective data collection is imperative and mostly achieved by a researcher who understands the research area (Kross & Giust, 2019). Understanding participants' language and culture helps shape the process when planning and conducting qualitative studies (Thorpe et al., 2018).

Participants

The criteria for participation in this study were restaurant business owners in the Houston area who sustained business beyond 5 years. The goal of purposeful sampling is to ensure that the population selected can yield useful and relevant data to achieve the research study's desired effect (O'Leary, 2018). A researcher must use a screening process to select the most qualified and experienced potential participants who can

positively affect the research (Yin, 2018). To gain access to potential participants, I requested a list of potential participants from the directors of both the Houston Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Houston Restaurant Association. I sent a Participant Recruitment E-mail/Formal Invitation to those potential participants (see Appendix B). I also posted a request for potential participants on the social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn (see Appendix C). I conducted visits to known family-owned restaurants to introduce myself and my study to the business owners. I also reached out to my business contacts network via email, formal letters, and business phone calls. Finding participants interested in the study's potential and adding pertinent information was critical to gaining access to participants (see Epler, 2019).

For potential participants expressing an interest in participation, I began the process of building a rapport. Establishing a favorable rapport with potential participants is necessary for productive qualitative research (White & Hind, 2015). I developed a working relationship with the participants through constant communication such as initial and follow-up site visitations, reminder phone calls before meetings, and email follow-ups throughout the interview process. I scheduled interviews at the convenience of the participants. I ensured each potential participant of confidentiality throughout the research process. Establishing a strong partnership and honest relationship is necessary to build and maintain trust when researching (King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2018). The selection of research participants as those who had met the criteria of sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years and were willing to share the operational strategies that have helped them align with the overarching research question.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The research method's selection was vital in obtaining meaningful results from the research study. The research method selected for the study was qualitative. Using the qualitative method allowed me to explore the strategies that small business restaurant owners in the Houston area use to sustain startup businesses beyond 5 years. Qualitative research was appropriate for exploring personal experiences and understanding real-world contextual conditions. It is adequate for gathering information from participants who have experienced the phenomenon studied (Yin, 2018). Qualitative research as a method is used to address a phenomenon that cannot be quantified or addressed with statistical measures (O'Leary, 2018). Qualitative studies can include (a) open-ended interviews, (b) content analysis, (c) quality document analysis, and (d) literature synthesis that provide an understanding of human phenomena (Holt & Goulding, 2014). Therefore, I conducted semistructured, open-ended, informal interviews. This process was consistent with a qualitative multiple case study. An in-depth review of the literature and other similar studies supports this method's appropriateness for the study (Onyenego, 2018; Smith, 2018; Ukorebi, 2018; Wallace, 2019). Other examples include the qualitative method used by Hubbard (2018) to study the marketing strategies used by business owners to sustain their businesses, a single qualitative case study conducted by Brown (2016) to explore how small business owners addressed funding deficits to start and operate a business in New York., and Hubbard (2018) to study sustainable marketing strategies for small business restaurants.

Quantitative research studies focus on examining causal relationships between variables, whereas qualitative research investigates phenomena (Barczak, 2015).

Quantitative research focuses on the analysis of numerical data (McKim, 2017). The answer to what, why, and how questions are best suited for qualitative research, as opposed to how many or how often answers are best suited for quantitative research (Yin, 2018). For this reason, the quantitative method was not suitable.

Mixed methods are a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct a study. Mixed-method research poses a challenge to a researcher's ability to produce sufficient available data and adequate participant responses (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014). This research study requires no examination of quantitative elements, so the mixed-method approach was not suitable.

Research Design

The selection of the research design determines how the researcher will gather information throughout the research process. The research design for this qualitative study was a multiple-case study design. A multiple case over a single case study allows the use of multiple sources, which adds to the study's strength, validity, and quality (Tran, 2016). After reviewing the different research designs, I selected the multiple-case study design for this research study because it allowed for a sufficient gathering of information about small family-owned business owners' success strategies. The multiple-case study design aligns with a qualitative study because it comes directly from the participants who have experienced the phenomenon. It is useful for exploring success strategies by interviewing participants and analyzing company documents (Epler, 2019; Yin, 2018).

Case study research uses investigations of one or a small number of entities through multiple data sources and allows flexibility that lacks in other designs such as phenomenology or grounded theory (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Yin, 2018).

I considered other qualitative design approaches, such as ethnography and phenomenology, for this study. Researchers use ethnographic design to explore a phenomenon related to specific cultures and focus on understanding events and issues (O'Leary, 2018; Thomson, Petty, Ramage, & Moore, 2017). Ethnography explores belief systems, behaviors, and languages of specific cultures (Arino, LeBaron, & Milliken, 2016; O'Leary, 2018). Studying small business owners' success strategies did not require understanding the participant's cultures, so this design was not appropriate for the study. Researchers use the phenomenological design to explore the experiences of the participants. Phenomenological research identifies issues or common themes related to individual world views or lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Studying the success strategies of small family-owned restaurant business owners did not require exploring world views or lived experiences, so the phenomenological design was not appropriate for the study.

Achieving data saturation in qualitative research requires depth and quality in the data collected. Reaching data saturation in qualitative research is achieved when there is enough data to address the research question (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Multiple case interviews helped achieve data saturation because of the opportunity to ask multiple participants the same questions. The researcher reaches data saturation when no new ideas, themes, or categories emerge from the interviews (Morse, 2015). The goal was to

collect data that was both rich and thick. To achieve data saturation, I reviewed the data continuously throughout interviewing for repetition and duplication of information. Using multiple sources of data and perspectives from the interviews helped to ensure data saturation. I collected adequate and quality data. I reached data saturation with my final interview.

Population and Sampling

The population for this research study consisted of a purposeful sampling of five family-owned restaurant business owners in the Houston area. A purposeful sampling technique was appropriate for the study because it allowed me as the researcher to conduct an in-depth focus on the phenomenon. Purposeful sampling also allowed me to identify diverse cases, offer multiple perspectives, and provide participants with value to the study. Convenience sampling was not appropriate for this study because selection was based on the participant's ability to bring value to the study. A collection of five participants was enough to explore information and achieve saturation. A purposeful sampling of the research population ensures that participants with experience and knowledge related to the phenomenon are available to provide data (Elfenbein & Schwarze, 2020; O'Leary, 2018). While some argue that a sample size of one can be justified, qualitative researchers use smaller samples, and select anywhere between 3 and 50 participants because numbers can change (Boddy, 2016; Martino, Elvira, & Louzada, 2017; Noohi, Peyrovi, Goghary, & Kazemi, 2016). There is no absolute number required in a sample to accomplish data saturation (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). The subsequent interviews of each additional participant sured data saturation. As

the researcher, I worked to ensure consistency and repetition of questions during the interview process. Data saturation was reached when no new information was provided.

The sample for this study included five small family-owned restaurant business owners who used successful operational strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The recruitment invitation identified eligible participants. In selecting participants for this study, I looked for variation in the ethnic diversity to provide multiple perspectives. Gathering useful data to enhance the literature review is mostly achieved by a researcher who uses a purposeful selection of multiple participants (Kazadi, Lievens, & Mahr, 2015). Researchers rely on their judgment in purposive sampling for choosing members of the population who have been most affected and related to the research issue (Valerio et al., 2016). Recruiting quality participants with appropriate knowledge help to ensure quality research (Yin, 2018). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, participants completed the interview process via virtual Zoom meetings in their restaurants' comfort.

Ethical Research

This study followed a defined set of ethical standards. The process began with obtaining informed consent from the potential participants before participation in the study. Obtaining the participants' consent in a study is part of the ethical research process and requires an informed consent document (Manti & Licari, 2018; Othman & Hamid, 2018). The consent form was emailed to the participants before conducting face-to-face interviews. The informed consent form contained a brief description of the study, participant criteria, information about the researcher, purpose of the study, study procedures, the benefit of participation in the study, risks associated with participation,

information on participant confidentiality, IRB information, and the statement of consent. The consent form should provide the participants with full awareness of their rights (Aguila, Weidmer, Illingworth, & Martinez, 2016). A researcher provides full disclosure of the research project to the participants to include the study's purpose, criteria for selecting participants, and the research's nature (King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2018; Zhang, 2017).

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time via phone, in person, or by email. Participants did not receive compensation or incentives for their participation in the study. The researcher takes steps to ensure the participants' ethical protection, such as obtaining voluntary consent, protecting participants' names, and keeping interview data confidential, which further supported required procedures as identified by (Manti & Licari, 2018). Participants were allowed to ask questions about the research process before signing the consent form. A portable document file referred to as an external flash drive is used to store files. All documents and data related to the study are kept secure in a locked file box. I will maintain documents 5 years after completion of the study to protect participant confidentiality. Final doctoral manuscripts included the Walden IRB (approval no. 07-1720-0233663).

To preserve privacy and ensure study participants' confidentiality, I assigned codes as BO1, BO2, BO3, BO4, and BO5 for each participant. Using codes to identify participants in the study is an additional safeguard to protect the study participants'

identity and privacy (Lahman et al., 2015). I removed personal information that could identify participants from any documentation outside of my view.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. In qualitative multiple-case study research, a researcher is the data collection instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; O’Leary, 2018). When gathering the information that supports a phenomenon, researchers are valuable instruments for collecting the data (Gatsmyer & Pruitt, 2014). Researchers use semistructured interviews to capture information, data, and thoughts from the participants (Elsawah, Guillaume, Filatova, Rook, & Jakeman, 2015). Interview questions derived from the literature review provide a foundation for researchers to acquire the knowledge to achieve data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The second data collection instrument was semistructured interviews using an interview protocol (see Appendix A). The semistructured face-to-face interviews will provide the participant with an opportunity to answer seven open-ended questions. Face-to-face interviews with the participants are recommended for open-ended semistructured interview questions (Paine, 2015; Singh, 2014). I ensured the consistency of the interviews by using the same sequence of questions for each participant. A digital voice recorder, along with notetaking, was used to document the accuracy of the interview. An audio recorder can capture participant responses to interview questions (Gamo-Sanchez & Cegarra-Navarro, 2015).

The third and final collection instrument was company documents related to leadership meetings, training and development, press commitments, and policy and

procedures. These documents supported information gained from the interviews. The use of company documents supports the participant's responses and establishes historical data in qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Requesting access to additional information such as other data, reports, and company documents is another way to triangulate the research data. It gives the researcher additional information from a primary source (Lodhi, 2016; Potts, 2018).

A suitable case study interview protocol procedure was used to guide the researcher and determine reliability and validity. One way to gather data from participants for research studies is to use interview protocols (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview protocol outlined the pre-interview, the interview, and post-interview procedures. The interview protocol was used repeatedly with each participant. In a qualitative study, the interview questions are designed to initiate a conversation with the participant to elicit more information. A thorough review of the literature guided the creation and use of my interview questions. As a doctoral student, I relied upon feedback from my colleagues, my professor, and my mentor as a field test of my interview questions, to ensure that I had formulated questions that would answer the central research question. Pilot testing research questions with a close population provides information that can better the interview protocol (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Pilot or field testing ensures that the questions will work as intended in real practice (Yeong, Ismail, Ismail, & Hamzah, 2018). As a researcher, my role was to add follow-up questions based upon their initial responses to obtain more details or greater insight to answer the research questions. Based on the research objective, as outlined earlier, my

questions were relevant to the study. My interview questions were structured to go in different directions with their answers, possibly providing information not previously covered. I formulated my interview questions to allow the interviewee to talk uninterrupted. The final question was an open-ended question that allowed the participant to offer additional information and perhaps revisit their earlier responses freely.

To further enhance the study's reliability and validity, I used both the transcript review and member checking as a follow-up. Transcript review should be a prerequisite in qualitative research as time is needed for the participant to go back and review responses to questions and clarify intended meaning; this should be conducted promptly to ensure that the participant can recall their responses (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Astedt-Kurki, 2015). A researcher follows-up with the participant to share their interpretation of the interview responses for accuracy (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2016). After interviews, transcript reviews allowed the participant to confirm my reporting of their responses. A subsequent follow-up with member checking allowed the participants to review and approve the final summaries of the audio recorded interview, which will enhance the reliability of the results (Harvey, 2015; Vance, 2015). After recording, reviewing, and transcribing the interview responses, the researcher should give the transcript back to the participants for further clarification (Morse, 2015; Yin, 2018). After the interview had been interpreted, I checked with the participants for response validation.

Data Collection Technique

In qualitative research, the data collection process involves gathering information relevant to addressing the overarching research question. Hence, the collection of data in qualitative multiple case studies includes sources like (a) interviews and (b) archival documentation (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Therefore, the primary approach to collecting data for this research study was semistructured face-to-face virtual interviews. Opened-ended questions, along with tables and graphs, can help interpret and understand information (Bryman, 2017; Popoola et al., 2018). Seven opened-ended interview questions and follow-up questions were used during the interview to collect the data. I collected data from multiple sources such as interviews, social media platforms, company documents, restaurant review websites, media from local publications, and prior restaurant visitation. Semistructured interviews containing open-ended questions allow for more in-depth responses from the participants and provides a researcher more freedom to take supplementary notes and gain a deeper understanding of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

An interview protocol was also used to ensure that step-by-step procedures were followed for each participant. Using an interview protocol enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collected from participant interviews and ensures consistency in the interview process. The qualitative researcher uses it as a guide and standard to follow (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Cooper, 2016). To comply with the recent CDC safety guidelines in response to COVID-19 informal semistructured interviews were conducted virtually to explore the strategies that small restaurant business owners in the United

States' southern region can sustain businesses beyond 5 years. Before conducting the participant interviews, I emailed each participant a copy of the seven open-ended interview questions, along with possible follow-up questions. The audio recorder was used throughout the interview. I strictly adhered to the interview protocol as a guide to ensure consistency of the interview and all conversations and actions focused on the participant. After the participant interviews, I reviewed company documents that were provided by some study participants. The interview took place via face-to-face virtual Zoom meetings at a mutually agreed upon time. I scheduled interviews at the convenience of the participants. The participant's rights and privacy are best protected using a secluded area to conduct face-to-face interviews (Johnson & Esterling, 2015).

Using face-to-face semistructured interviews and archival documents have both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of using semistructured interviews include an allowance for in-depth conversation, the discovery of rich descriptive information, and immediate interpretation and clarity of the data collected (Yin, 2018). Face-to-face interviews offer advantages such as observation of social cues from voice and body, which cannot be observed via a telephone interview (Oltmann, 2016). Some disadvantages of using semistructured interviews are (a) subjectivity in the interpretation of the data, (b) inability to statistically validate the participant's information, (c) time consumption, and (d) overestimation of the problem by the interviewee (Yin (2018). Other disadvantages of semistructured interviews include inaccessibility to participants willing to take the time to interview and the potential time and financial resources imposed on the researcher (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The

advantages of using archival documents include having access to additional data sources, increasing interview data's strength, and further insight into methodologies. Some disadvantages of using archival documents include the length of time required for reviewing and the participant's opposition to disclosing company information. The use of company documents can provide insight into the organization's decision methodologies (Perkmann & Schildt, 2015). There are several advantages and disadvantages within data collection techniques that might impact qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2017). Archival documents add substance to the data collection process in qualitative research (Yin, 2018).

To minimize potential disadvantages, I used member checking following the interviews to clarify the interpretation of data. After transcription of the interview recordings, the transcript was emailed to the participant for member checking, and a follow-up time was scheduled within a week to discuss the review. Member checking allows the participant to review the interview session's transcript for clarifying and correction before analysis by the researcher. To further overcome disadvantages, as the researcher, I maintained an unbiased perception of the problem, conducted increased potential participant access activity to ensure access to willing participants, and minimized the study's time and financial resource requirements. To reduce disadvantages in using archival documents, I limited the scope of documents being requested and reminded participants of my commitment to confidentiality of any information disclosed, including data gained from the company documents.

Data Organization Technique

Organizing and storing data that were collected through the research process was a requirement in qualitative research. Researchers often reduce the risk associated with bias by using analysis software such as Nvivo to organize, code, analyze and review information (Carney, Botter, Bradshaw, & Yung, 2017; Male, 2016). Sonix software was used to transcribe the participant interviews, and NVivo software was used for organizing and tracking the data. OneNote was used for maintaining a reflective journal of my interview notes. Likewise, Yin (2018) suggests that creating a sound data management system and maintaining a chain of evidence is necessary for a qualitative study. Yin (2018) further stated that one of the core areas of a research study is the data management technique, which affects its validity. The labeling system consisted of codes assigned as (a) participant one (BO1), (b) participant two (BO2), (c) participant three (BO3), (d) participant four (BO4), and (e) participant five (BO5). The data was also color-coded to identify themes within the research.

All data collected from the research study is maintained in a locked fireproof file storage box for 5 years, with access only available to me. I created a data list to keep track of the data collected. I stored electronic data on a password-protected external hard drive. Camfield and Palmer-Jones (2013) also acknowledged that data storage enhances verification and confidence. To assure confidence in the research process, Jao et al. (2015) suggested the shredding of research data.

Similarly, Gandy (2015) also proposed plans to shred all raw and electronic shows reliability and high ethical standards. Hence, the data collected from the study will

remain in the locking file storage box for at least five 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy both hard and electronic copies of the data.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research in a case study often includes the collection of data from multiple sources. The data that were used for analysis consisted of data collected from face-to-face interviews and company documents. I used Yin's thematic analysis process for data analysis. The thematic analysis allowed for (a) interpreting data, (b) deductive and inductive methods, (c) analyzing different processes, and (d) coding and pattern recognition (Yin, 2018). The data analysis in qualitative research was conducted through a three-step process, which included preparation and organization of the data, identifying emergent themes within the data, using emergent themes within the data, and presenting that data. Preparation and organization of the data were achieved using Microsoft Excel. An inductive approach to analyzing using interview data, observations, and artifacts can be used to identify emergent themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). NVivo software will be used for coding and sorting of the data. Once the coding and sorting are complete, identification of the themes will emerge. As the researcher, I looked for keywords and phrases related to the concepts discovered through my exhaustive review of the current literature on operational strategies for small family-owned restaurant businesses. I also correlated those themes within the BSC context to begin the process of category building, followed by theoretic constructs. Themes develop as the outcome of coding and sorting data (Clark & Veale, 2018). I took all of the necessary steps to analyze the data and compile the theoretical findings for presentation.

Triangulation is the process a researcher uses to validate their research findings. Four types of triangulation are used in research: (a) data, (b) investigator, (c) theory, and (d) methodological (Flick, 2002). Data triangulation uses different data sources, such as data collected at different times, data collected from different places, and data collected from various people (Flick, 2002). Investigator triangulation uses more than one researcher to gather and analyze the data (Flick, 2002). Theory triangulation looks at the data using multiple theories (Flick, 2002). Methodological triangulation uses more than one data collection instrument to gather data (Flick, 2002). As the researcher, I used methodological triangulation because I included semistructured interviews, archival documents, and member checking from my data collection techniques.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity of case study research are dependent upon the trust that was placed on the data that has been collected. Qualitative researchers use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to establish that the results are valid and reliable (Nelson, 2016). Qualitative researchers establish reliability through dependability in their studies must maintain the highest standards of academic research to ensure reliability and validity (Jedrezejczak & Anders, 2017). During the interview process, a researcher's biases might distort the study's credibility, validity, and trustworthiness (Ajagbe, Isiavwe, Sholanke, & Oke, 2015). A researcher's ability to demonstrate trustworthiness and experience to maximize the study's validity is critical (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The two concepts related to the study's accuracy, steadiness, and trustworthiness were reliability and validity. Researchers do coding to ensure

reliability, validity, and credibility (Yin, 2018). Triangulation and member checking were used to achieve reliability and validity.

Reliability

Reliability in research refers to how the researcher will ensure that the data collected is dependable, thereby establishing its dependability. Researchers ensure their research's dependability by making proper decisions, using appropriate methods, and maintaining adequate documentation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Duplication of results in repeating the study indicates the study's reliability, and procedural replication yields the same results (Morse, 2015). The focus of dependability was to ensure the data instrument's quality, the data collection, and the data analysis. Dependability was achieved through expert interview participants, consistent interview processes, transcript review, member checking, and accurate data interpretation. Dependability in this study, as it relates to data, was established through the use of precisely detailed processes in data collection and thorough study documentation. As it relates to study participants, dependability was established through a structured interview process using an interview protocol consistently applied to each participant.

Validity

Validity in research refers to how the researcher ensures credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation. To ensure credibility, the researcher will involve the use of reflexivity, saturation, and triangulation. A thorough review of the data's interpretations ensures credibility and validity (Leung, 2018; Yates & Leggett, 2016). The trustworthiness of qualitative research is based on the claims that warrant

terms such as credibility (Levitt, Pomerville, Surace, & Grabowski, 2017). Reflexivity involves the use of field journals to capture thoughts and ideas and make connections. The absence of reflexivity compromises the authenticity of interpretation (Daniel, 2018). Using interview transcripts and documentation confirmation ensures methodological triangulation.

Researchers might provide very rich and detailed descriptions of the research context to support transferability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The consistency and transferability of the processes and procedures used in the case study influence its reliability (Yin, 2018). Clear and descriptive statements about setting, culture, and period permit transferability of findings across contexts and explain how the results relate to the research question (Levitt et al., 2017). I sought to ensure transferability by choosing a diverse group of potential participants for this study. The findings might extend to other demographics not represented by the participants and ensure richness in the descriptions so that readers find the information transferable for future research.

Researchers ensure confirmability through triangulation, audit control trails, and detailed descriptions in the data. The researcher ensures confirmability through triangulation, detailed methodological descriptions, and complete audit trails (Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, & Gonzalez 2018; Johnson et al., 2017). It is incumbent upon the researcher to ensure that findings come from participant responses and not the researcher's personal biases (Fusch et al., 2018). Using methodological triangulation, maintaining audit trails, and using detailed descriptions promoted confirmability in the study.

Saturation ensures that enough data was collected to support findings that did not vary. Data saturation is determined by researchers as the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Yin, 2018). Although the concept of data saturation differs from one researcher to the next, there is a consensus that there are no guarantees in advance of the data collection process (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). Researchers asked each participant the same questions to ensure data saturation (Dawson, 2019). Data collection ceased when no new findings had developed.

Summary and Transition

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the success strategies that five family-owned restaurant business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Section 2 began with an explanation of a researcher's role, which included selecting participants, research method and design, population and sampling methods, principles to safeguard ethics, data collection, organization, analysis, and the process to ensure reliability and validity the study. Section 3 includes presenting the research findings and sharing the themes that emerged from my analysis of the data. I followed up with suggestions for application to professional practice and implications for social change. Section 3 concluded with reflections from the research along with recommendations for action and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the operational strategies that family-owned restaurant business owners in Houston, Texas, used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I explored the data using the BSC as my conceptual framework to connect the data to the literature. I used NVivo software for theme identification. The resulting themes were (a) maintaining customer focus and satisfaction, (b) engaging in continuous learning and process development, (c) practicing efficient operational strategies, and (d) committing to innovation and change. To gather interview data, I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews using the videoconferencing platform Zoom with five restaurant business owners. I also collected public and company documents to include training manuals, memos, financial reports, business licenses, permits, and fictitious business name statements. Interviews averaged 45 to 60 minutes. The participants were assigned numbers from one to five. For example, BO1 represented the business owner participant I interviewed first. The findings of my research identified the operational strategies that restaurant business owners used to sustain their businesses. In this section, I present (a) the findings, discuss the study's (b) applications to professional practice and (c) implications for social change, and offer (d) recommendations for action and (e) recommendations for further research. The section concludes with my overall reflections on the research. The results provide family-owned restaurant business owners operational strategies that may lead to sustainability if put into practice.

Presentation of the Findings

The study's findings highlighted participants' operational strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Four key themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis, which addressed the overarching research question, What are the operational strategies that some family-owned restaurant business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years? Four themes emerged from the research: maintaining customer focus and satisfaction, engaging in continuous learning and process development, practicing efficient operational strategies, and committing to innovation and change. After transcription of the participants' interviews, management, and organization of the data in NVivo 12, methodological triangulation, and member checking, data saturation was reached. No additional themes emerged.

I coded the participants' names as BO1, BO2, BO3, BO4, and BO5, to ensure privacy and confidentiality. All five participants answered the same seven interview and follow-up questions. BO1 has been in business for over 30 years with 20 plus employees. BO2 has been in business for 25 years with 27 employees. BO3 has been in business for 8 years with 12 employees. BO4 has been in business for 10 years with 11 employees. BO5 has been in business for over 10 years with 9 employees. I reviewed participants' documents, including business licenses, permits, fictitious business name statements, and public documents, including press releases, association business reviews, and websites, to verify participants' information from the individual interviews.

Theme 1: Customer Focus and Satisfaction

The first primary theme to emerge during the data analysis emphasized customer focus and customer satisfaction. All five participants discussed the value of focusing on customer experience and satisfying their customers' dining needs. The participants confirmed that developing and maintaining customer relationships is essential to the sustainability of their businesses. Table 1 reflects Theme 1, which emerged from an analysis of the data collected from participants.

Table 1

Participants' Responses Related to Customer Focus and Satisfaction

Participant	Number of responses related to customer focus and satisfaction
BO1	14
BO2	16
BO3	11
BO4	18
BO5	12

Trends in the data indicated that making customers feel welcomed, appreciated, and cared for were these business owners' goals. Leaders incorporate customer satisfaction in the performance measurement by utilizing a customer focus strategy to improve corporate performance and enhance its financial stability (Ilyasin & Zamroni, 2017). BO1 stated, "Your customers are part of your family." BO3 stated, "We need to

figure out a way to do this stuff to where we're safe, and we're comfortable, and our guests feel the same way." How the restaurant looks and feels seemed to be a consistent theme with all of the participants. BO4 stated, "So something really important to understand is we wanted to get to know our customers since the beginning to identify who they are." BO2 admitted that it says a lot when your customers watch you and appreciate what you plan because you are concerned about them. Han, Bonn, and Cho (2016) insist that restaurant owners who make an effort to listen to customers and satisfy their needs build good lasting relationships. Further supporting Han et al.'s contention, BO1 stated, "People come in every day, and we're here to listen to our customer's suggestions, recommendations, and things they would like to see on the menu." BO2 acknowledged, "I knew what we had built, and I knew the relationship that I had with my customers." Williams (2017) identified relationships and consistent food quality as two themes that emerged from his restaurant study. A review of press releases, customer reviews, and vision statements provided by BO2 and BO3 provided evidence of acknowledgment of customer focus, expression of customer's sentiments, and a mission to serve customers.

Going above the expectations of the customer was another strategic goal of the business owners in this study. Meeting and surpassing the customer's expectations is essential due to the competition in the restaurant industry (Cai & Chi, 2018). BO3 reflected on conversations with customers centered around surpassing the expectations regarding food offerings based on ethnic flavors. BO3 recounted a story where a customer praised the chef for infusing different ethnic flavors in a traditional meal. This

interaction was the hallmark of the restaurant's appeal to its target demographic. BO3 credits the strategy of focusing on the customer to the sustainability of their family-owned restaurant. BO4 stated, "So we do promotions, happy hours and brunch, and things that are attractive to our clientele. It's always been the customer at the top of the priorities. I love cooking for all the people." BO5 acknowledged that there were times that they did not satisfy the customer, sharing, "We had customers that loved our product so much that would come in and eat and go out to the car and drink their alcohol and come back in." By acknowledging that they had not met the customer's full expectation, the business owner ensured that the food and the restaurant experience would keep them coming back. They were committed to focusing on the customer experience and satisfying the dining expectations of the customer. Customer satisfaction and retention, along with market and account share, are not only valuable to profitability, but they should be a primary focus (Nguyen, 2017; Pare, 2016; Singh & Sethi, 2017).

The environment of a restaurant and the atmosphere can have a lasting impact on customers. BO1 acknowledged, "With every renovation, we wanted our customers to see some remnant of times passed while welcoming a fresh new environment." BO3 shared, "The pandemic has caused us to use our outdoor spaces more than we ever had, so we invested a small amount into making those spaces warm and inviting." BO5 expressed the importance of the experience of the customer, "So when you're talking about making your customers, at their most comfortable level, when they enter into your restaurant, one of the first things is the ambiance, how it looks." BO5 provided employee training materials that outlined a customer focus on routines and processes that ensured great

restaurant customers' great experiences. Customer focus and satisfaction proved to be a vital component in the operational strategies that helped sustain participants' businesses in this study.

Theme 2: Continuous Learning and Process Development

The second theme to emerge from the data was the importance of embracing continuous learning and putting in place processes that develop with the business's growth. All five participants agreed that continuous learning is necessary to stay relevant in the restaurant industry. The findings revealed that continuous learning and developing processes ensure that the business stays relevant and viable. Table 2 reflects Theme 2, which emerged from an analysis of the data collected from participants.

Table 2

Participants' Responses Related to Continuous Learning and Process Development

Participant	Number of responses related to continuous learning and process development
BO1	13
BO2	17
BO3	8
BO4	12
BO5	10

BO1 insisted, “You have to be here to absorb like a sponge the daily problems that you’re going to face as a business operator just to get the doors open.” BO2 attributed his business's continued success and growth to have gone through a formal business training course offered by Goldman Sachs. A significant source of employee learning that is increasingly acknowledged is informal learning activities (Keith, Unger, Rauch, & Frese, 2016). BO3 recounted his varied background as learning that helped him to be successful, stating, “I was a bartender, a busboy then a server, then a bartender, and then when I transitioned to the back of the house, dishwasher prep cook up to chef working in decent restaurants in Houston.” BO4 stated that owning a restaurant is a learning experience and further stated that even though he had experience working for restaurants for many years, he didn't have to run a business until having his own. Rosenberg and Ferlie (2014) noted that by implementing new procedures and improving employee skills, continuous learning and growth might enhance firm value, investment performance, and productivity. BO5 took a checklist approach with their employees so that when they come in every day, there are things in place to ensure food quality is maintained and that all equipment was working properly. BO5 further stated, “We had to learn how to balance between the food cost and what we wanted our bottom line to stay in.” In the context of this study, continuous training and skills development improved performance. BO4 and BO5 stressed the importance of having key employees trained continuously in different restaurant areas to ensure the continuity of employees' processes and skill development. Learning and being innovative can mean returning to one’s roots

(Matheus, 2020). BO1, BO2, and BO3 shared that they have stayed true to their roots. They all grew up in the restaurant industry, carried on their families' legacies, and continue to represent their heritages in the foods they serve. The analysis of the data from BO1 and BO2 and training materials provided by BO5, continuous learning, and process development was an ongoing strategic goal for business sustainability.

Theme 3: Efficient Operational Strategies

The third theme to emerge from the data was the importance of having efficient operational strategies. All five participants associated efficiency in daily operations with strategies that focused on the following four areas (a) food quality control strategies, (b) service quality control strategies, (c) process improvement strategies, and (d) cost control strategies. All five participants shared that implementing efficient operational strategies has been the key to sustainability for their restaurants. Table 3 reflects Theme 3 that emerged from an analysis of the data collected from participants.

Table 3

Participants' Responses Related to Efficient Operational Strategies

Participant	Number of responses related to efficient operational strategies
BO1	21
BO2	16
BO3	13
BO4	12

BO5

9

Efficient operational strategies, which generally include time, resources, and funds, leads to operational efficiency and sustainability. Efficient operational strategies can be related to productivity improvement, cost reduction, risk management, and asset use (Giannopoulos et al., 2013;).

BO1 recalled, “I thought about what we could do to cut other costs without cutting quality of service or food and maintaining a price point that's reasonable for our guest.” BO2 shared that they brought in a business coach to help with streamlining operations and operating the business. The findings support Ndevu and Miller (2018) assertion that establishing measurable goals can keep the business moving forward. BO3 commented on their approach to lean management, “That's what led into creating a new model that was solely based on sustainability, not about profitability.” BO3 further commented that they engaged in activities that helped sustain the business during lean times, such as opening the outdoor bar to traveling bartenders who had sustained job loss, reducing margins on menu items, and temporarily reducing menu items.

Additionally, BO3 also approached the landlord with a request to consider lowering rent payments to a margin-less minimum to share the sacrifice of staying in business. BO4 stated, “We started with like used equipment in a place that already had things to go, so those decisions I made based on what to do in inventory every week, so we take what we have to use and what we have and what we need.” BO1 and BO3 shared

financials that indicated that they regularly did a line item budget analysis, which included negotiating with creditors, lenders, and service providers for extended payment options, lowered payments, and decreased services. BO5 stated, “We had to hire in other people to help us because we didn't know about certain things.” BO2 stressed the need to update their cash register system with a point of sale system that allowed them to track sales and monitor inventory. The management systems include point of sales systems and inventory management systems, which can help the restaurant manager efficiently manage the restaurant operations and control costs.

Theme 4: Commitment to Innovation and Change

The fourth and final theme to emerge from the data was the importance of being committed to innovation and willing to change with time. All five participants have different ways of looking at how they approached innovation and change within their day-to-day operations. All five participants indicated that embracing innovation as a strategy and understanding that moving from the mindset of “this is how we have always done things” to have the aptitude and attitude to change and adapt has been key to their long-term success in staying relevant and competitive. Table 4 reflects Theme 4 that emerged from an analysis of the data collected from participants.

Table 4

Participants' Responses Related to Commitment to Innovation and Change

Participant	Number of responses related to commitment to innovation and change
BO1	11

BO2	9
BO3	10
BO4	10
BO5	9

BO3 stated, “You've got to be able to change it up daily, so innovation, I mean like that's the base of being a restaurant.” BO3 further communicated, “You have to be innovative to be competitive.” Allowing the traveling bartenders to use the space brought in income for both the bartenders and the restaurant and opened the door to possible business relationships. BO2 emphasized that they were at the forefront of innovation with the installation of food lockers. This touchless process required installing food warmer lockers to access a code once an order was placed and purchased. BO3 shared,

We dropped items, and we changed our menus, and we innovated with the curbside pickup. COVID-19 brought new challenges, so we decided to change the menu to make it smaller. We have to provide special to-go containers because we want to serve the same decoration, the same plating that we do. We want to do it so that food can travel and get to your house.

Innovation is not always about reinventing the wheel (Matheus, 2020). BO4 contends that email blasts have been sent every so often to their customers, with special discounts and promotions, and that this was innovative to them as a restaurant. BO5 stated, “I can say that we were one of the first restaurants ever to serve french fries and

sweet potato fries together, and actually, we were one of the first ones to serve sweet potato fries.” These innovation strategies support Wojan, Crown, and Rupasingha (2018) claim that restaurant business owners who are innovative in their products and services are more likely to survive. BO1 expressed, “So as time has gone on, we have tried to evolve with the health consciousness.” This statement supports BJ's (2020) findings, who postulated that increasing profitability depends on attracting and serving a broad customer base, which means offering a broad and customized menu.

All five participants agreed that during this time of COVID-19, they needed to change how they reached their customers as they continued to serve them. According to Randhawa et al. (2016), managers must be willing to innovate with their product and service offerings to maintain a competitive advantage over their competitors. This research connected with the findings that the business owners shared about the use of food delivery services. While BO1 embraced curbside pick-up of food orders, they were reluctant to use providers like Uber Eats and Doordash due to the high percentages charged per customer order. BO2 and BO3 welcomed the opportunity to use these delivery services to keep their food available to their customers. The participant's ages and years in business ranged greatly; hence, different generations can perceive innovation and change as welcoming and hindering.

Customer management and innovation, which includes social processes, are reflected in effectiveness and efficiency and positive community contributions (Abdillah & Diana, 2018; Asiaei & Bontis, 2019). The innovation's compatibility to the organization's culture drives its usage (Ax & Greve, 2017; Gupta & Salter, 2018; Ortiz-

Villajos & Sotoca, 2018). For BO3, engaging in feeding seniors and at-risk communities has allowed them to make positive contributions to the community, which has caused the community to show the same positive support for the restaurant. BO4 also contributed to their local community by feeding bagged lunches to neighborhood students who had been impacted by COVID-19. For change to be effective within the organization, a strategic plan must be identified and communicated to everyone (Alqahtani, 2016). BO5 ensured their strategic plans' effectiveness by implementing training manuals to communicate their customer service strategies to front-end employees. BO4 also instituted processes that all employees were required to learn and use in daily operations. In the age of COVID, it is incredible that restaurants have adapted quickly with only their creativity as a road map (Rodell, Hansche, Battis, & Walhout, 2020).

Findings Related to Balanced Scorecard Theory

The BSC is a model for strategic evaluation and performance measurement (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The BSC is a simple and effective tool that can be easily adapted to measure restaurant performance. A successful business strategy must have clear strategic goals that outline the desired financial, customer, internal processes, and employee growth performance objectives (Asiaei, & Bontis, 2019; Panggabean, & Jermias, 2020). Four themes emerged from the research data: maintaining customer focus and satisfaction, continuous learning and process development, practicing efficient operational strategies, and a commitment to innovation and change. The findings of this study linked to all four perspectives of the BSC.

The BSC theory customer segment's customer segment focuses on identifying the customers and markets and measuring performance in these segments. The BSC customer perspective aligns closely with a customer focus strategy (Ilyasin & Zamroni, 2017). Customer focus and customer satisfaction represent the two measurement groups of customer core and customer value proposition, which make up the BSC's customer perspective (Fitri & & Ida Bagus Putu Wira Diana, 2018; Panggabean, & Jermias, 2020). Restaurant owners understand that focusing on customer service management and maintaining customer satisfaction is important and that satisfied customers spread positive word-of-mouth, which leads to sustaining long-term business (Wernerfelt, 2016). The customer focus and satisfaction theme confirmed the findings that align with the BSC customer perspective, a leading indicator. In the BSC model, the customer's perspective has two components the customer core and the customer value proposition, which includes measures of customer acquisition and retention, customer satisfaction, and customer relationship. BO1, BO2, and BO3 shared numerous media releases and awards that evidenced the restaurant's success in the areas of customer acquisition and satisfaction. BO5 shared guidance contained in training manuals that outlined strategies for customer satisfaction and the customer management process. BO4 acknowledged the importance of addressing customer satisfaction as an ongoing target.

The BSC theory's financial segment focuses on revenue growth, cost reduction, and asset use and relates to how shareholders view the business. The business's financial goals are achieved by ensuring that revenue and profitability are increased through meeting the customer objectives, internal process objectives, and the growth and learning

objectives (Kaplan, 1992). Resources, both tangible and intangible, can ultimately impact a small restaurant business (Kurian & Muzumdar, 2017; Panggabean & Jermias, 2020). The theme of efficient operational strategies confirmed the findings that align with the BSC's financial perspective, including revenue growth, cost reduction, and asset use. BO1 and BO3 shared financial statements that identified their cost reduction and revenue growth strategies. BO2 and BO5 are currently in a growth state, one in a new location and the other adding additional business lines and shared processes to add operational capabilities. BO3 admitted to being in a sustaining stage and added additional revenue growth opportunities through additional business interests. BO3 shared business licenses and certificates for additional business interests.

The BSC theory's internal business process segment focuses on internal business processes that create value. The processes and competencies allow the business to develop products and services that create value for the customer and improve operations' efficiency, which leads to revenue and margin growth (Kaplan, 1992). A commitment to innovation and change means being willing to learn and grow, so the BSC perspective provides the foundation for the financial, customer, and internal processes to thrive (Fitri & Ida Bagus Putu Wira Diana, 2018; Panggabean & Jermias, 2020). The theme of commitment to innovation and change confirmed the findings that align with BSC's internal business perspective, including operations management process, customer management process, innovation process, and regulatory and social process. BO2 shared an operations management process that they instituted, which allowed for a safer food retrieval process for customers during COVID-19. This touchless process required

installing food warmer lockers that customers could access after placing and purchasing orders. BO4 offered planned discounts, which increased value for customers. BO3 credited much of their customer retention success because they have been avid supporters of programs to feed the community through the restaurant. One of the business line additions was a non-profit designed to deliver free meals to seniors and at-risk communities.

The BSC theory's learning and growth segment focus on learning and innovation, growth of the employees' business, and development. Learning and growth, including employee training and aligning employee skills with jobs, is an important part of the success of a BSC approach to management (Ilyasin & Zamroni, 2017). The BSC's learning and growth perspective aligns closely with employees and organizational performance; specifically, continuous training and skills development improve or impede performance (Ilyasin & Zamroni, 2017; Panggabean & Jermias, 2020). Once business owners identify objectives and measurements for the customer and internal business perspectives, the gap between the skills and capabilities required can be realized (Iranzadeh, Nojehdeh, & Emami, 2018). The theme of continuous learning and process development confirmed the findings that align with BSC's learning and growth perspective, which provides the foundation for the previous perspectives. All four business owners invested in infrastructures, such as human resources, system capability updates, and information technology. Investments in these areas ensure that the organization is performing at its maximum output. BO2 updated the cash register system with a new pos system that supports both sales and inventory. BO1, BO3, and BO5

invested in upgrades that added ambiance and value to their customer's dining experience and income streams that increased revenues.

Applications to Professional Practice

This study's primary purpose was to explore operational strategies family-owned restaurant business owners use to sustain their businesses. My research findings uncovered four key themes: maintaining customer focus and satisfaction, continuous learning and process development, practicing efficient operational strategies, and a commitment to innovation and change. Restaurant business owners could apply these findings on family-owned restaurants' business practices study's findings to be applied to family-owned restaurants' business practices by providing practical operational strategies that would lead to long-term sustainability. They could implement a BSC model to measure their restaurant performance by selecting indicators for each perspective.

The first performance measure of the BSC is the customer perspective. Creating value and differentiation from a customer's perspective is a BSC strategy (Martello et al., 2016). Family-owned restaurant business owners could select performance indicators that focus on their customers. Performance indicators such as customer satisfaction score, customer retention rate, and average plate to table time relate to effective customer strategies. Evaluating customer service surveys to assess customer satisfaction, measuring customer retention through loyalty programs, and listening to customers were the strategies that were used by the business owners of this study. Having a customer focus and satisfaction strategy was congruent among the business owners in this study.

The second performance measure of the BSC is the financial perspective.

Business leaders should view both financial and nonfinancial measures to see a balanced picture of the organization's performance (Ndevu & Muller, 2018; Panggabean & Jermias, 2020). Family-owned restaurant business owners could select performance indicators that focus on their finances. Performance indicators related to business finances could include net profit margin, working capital, and current accounts payable. Efficient operational strategies such as cost control, service quality, food quality control, and process improvement strategies were employed by is the study's business owners. These operational strategies helped to increase working capital and net profit margins and decrease accounts payable.

The third performance measure of the BSC is the internal perspective. The most critical area for an organization's success is its internal business processes (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Family-owned restaurant business owners could select performance indicators that focus on their internal processes. Performance indicators related to internal processes could include measuring core competencies, investing in technology, and cross-function training. Measuring what we do well, investing in technology and staying relevant, and reducing cycle and serving time are strategies that the restaurant owners use to improve effectiveness.

The fourth performance measure of the BSC is the innovation and learning perspective. The learning and growth perspective is important to the business's success, as it involves employee skills (Ilyasin & Zamroni, 2017). Family-owned restaurant business owners could select performance indicators that focus on business's learning and

growth both the business and employees' learning and growth. Performance indicators related to the business and employees' learning and growth could include monthly sales growth, server benchmarks, continuous training, and investments in innovation. A commitment to innovation and change and continuous learning and process development was an ongoing tool used by this study's business owners.

Implications for Social Change

My study results have identified successful operational strategies that family-owned restaurant business owners can use to improve and sustain their restaurant businesses, ultimately preventing business failure and avoiding long-term sustainability. With long-term business sustainability, business owners can create jobs, develop human capital, and contribute to economic development and job sustainability. Long-term business sustainability could lead to increased economic growth in local communities. Additional benefits to community members of the community members might include new employment opportunities, reduced unemployment rates, less government dependence, improved public services, and investments into the local and national economies. I might share the findings of my study with trade organizations and institutions through seminars, conferences, webinars, and in-person training. Because of the diverse ethnic backgrounds of family-owned restaurant business owners in Houston, its restaurant industry supports many cultures, and sustainability within those businesses will reflect sustainability within those communities.

Recommendations for Action

My research resulted in four key themes: maintaining customer focus and satisfaction, continuous learning and process development, practicing efficient operational strategies, and a commitment to innovation and change used by the restaurant owners to sustain their businesses longer than 5 years. The recommendations for this study's actions relate to the literature and the emergent themes. The BSC approach serves as a framework that integrates the four perspectives of a business model, which restaurant business owners can use to understand how the organization's vision and daily activities align to the strategic implementation of the business's goals. My first recommendation is that family-owned restaurant business owners implement a BSC type measurement tool to develop and implement operational strategies effectively. My second recommendation is to develop operational strategies that target maintaining customer focus and satisfaction, continuous learning and process development, practicing efficient operational strategies, and a commitment to innovation and change. My third recommendation is that business owners consistently monitor and adjust these operational strategies as needed throughout the business life. My final recommendation is to share my research study's findings with professional restaurant business associations, small business development functionaries such as SBA and SCORE, and other business associations. I would also welcome the opportunity to present my study results at business seminars and conferences, through webinars and training sessions.

Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations within this study included limited transferability of the findings, inability to apply the findings to a franchise or chain type restaurant business, limited geographical focus on restaurants in the Houston, Texas, and surrounding areas, participant's reluctance to disclose confidential information, and the requirement of business survival beyond 5 years.

I recommend further research using a quantitative, correlational study of family-owned restaurants to test the significance of the relationships among variables such as customer focus, continuous learning, efficient operations, and commitment to innovation. Because the findings of this qualitative study are not generalizable and limit transferability, a quantitative study's findings would overcome this limitation.

I recommend further research using the qualitative case study design in a franchised brand restaurant versus a family-owned one. This study's findings do not apply to franchised restaurants because of predefined operations. A multiple case study designed to explore franchised and chain restaurants' operational strategies would overcome this limitation.

I recommend further qualitative research of family-owned restaurant business owners' operational strategies, continuing the case study design, but in different geographical regions. The geographical focus limits this study's findings, so broadening the geographical reach would overcome this limitation.

I recommend that future researchers also study the operational strategies of partnerships and corporate-owned restaurant businesses that have survived beyond 5

years. Because this study's findings focus on family-owned restaurant businesses, a study purposed for other restaurant ownership types such as partnerships and corporate-owned structures would overcome this limitation.

Reflections

My personal bias and preconceived ideas and values included assuming that any successful family-owned restaurant business would be excited about wanting to share their story. I had notions about the restaurant owner being willing to share their successful operational strategies with potential competitors. I worried about whether they would see value in taking time from their businesses during this challenging time of COVID-19 and if they would even consider my request for an interview. More importantly, whether they would be trusting enough of me to share openly. Finally, would the business owners be comfortable enough to share confidential business documents? I reflected on the possibility of not getting participants who could think about something other than the impact of COVID-19. After collecting data, I reflected on how warm, receptive, and open the participants were.

Additionally, I reflected on whether I could have used a more specific topic, such as financing or marketing strategies for family-owned restaurants. I wondered if approaching such a comprehensive topic would yield thick, rich results. Upon the conclusion of my findings, I realized that my study's focus allowed for a more comprehensive approach to operational strategies that focused on all aspects of the business. This approach yielded findings that will prove beneficial to the sustainability of family-owned restaurants. Finally, I reflected on my initial expectations of the program,

my entire doctoral journey, the growth that I have made both personally and professionally, and what the future may hold for me because I pursued this journey. The doctoral program was a lot more challenging and intense than I expected. This journey challenged me at an academic level that I previously thought was unattainable for me. I have grown personally, professionally, and academically beyond measure. I look forward to pursuing the opportunities that will come to me due to having gone through this doctoral journey. I chose to conduct my research in an industry with which I had no affiliation. I chose family-owned restaurants instead of franchises because I wanted independent restaurant owners to have proven success strategies to sustain their businesses. As a result of my doctoral journey, I have a new respect for research and its role in advancing education, social change, technology, and economics.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the operational strategies that family-owned restaurant business owners in Houston, Texas, used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The conceptual framework that grounded this study was the BSC. The four tenets of the BSC represent financial and nonfinancial measures of indicators of business performance through four interrelated perspectives: (a) financial, (b) customer, (c) internal business process, and (d) learning and growth. The operational strategies used by these family-owned restaurant business owners in the BSC context reveal that selecting key performance indicators in a balanced view supports the theory's tenets. The family-owned restaurant business owners' underlying consensus is that implementing operational strategies that focus on maintaining customer focus and

satisfaction, continuous learning and process development, practicing efficient operational strategies, and a commitment to innovation is the foundation of building a business that lasts beyond 5 years. This study indicates that family-owned restaurant business owners who implement balanced operational strategies will experience greater success levels in the sustainability of their restaurants.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interview should be completed within 90 minutes.

1. Introductions, provide a brief overview of the study and develop rapport.
2. Acknowledge that participant has received the informed consent form and interview questions.
3. Give the interview participant a copy of the signed consent form.
4. Discuss measures taken for the privacy and confidentiality of data to be collected.
5. Turn on the voice recording device.
6. Turn on the backup voice recording device.
7. Introduce the participant with the identification code, date, and time.
8. Present interview questions in detail, starting with Question 1; follow through until the final question has been answered.
 1. What strategies did you use to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
 2. What strategies were most useful in helping to sustain the growth of your business?
 3. What data sources did you use to develop the strategies you are using to sustain your business?
 4. What assessments did you use to confirm the strategies were successful in sustaining the business?

5. What were the key barriers to implementing your strategies for the continued success of your business?

6. How did you address the key barriers to implementing your strategies for the continued success of your business?

7. What else can you share with me about your organization's strategies for sustaining the growth of our business?

9. Ask follow-up and probing questions for more detailed inquiry.

10. Conclude the interview process and discuss the transcript review and follow-up member checking interview process that will last up to 30 minutes.

I will inform the interview participants that during the follow-up member checking interview:

a. I will interpret and synthesize the interview transcripts by using a paragraph style format for each question.

b. I will provide a printed copy of the synthesis to the interview participant.

c. I will ask probing questions related to other information in conformance to the IRB approval.

d. I will ask the interview participant if the synthesis is reflective of their answer or clarify if anything is missed.

e. I will ask the interview participant if they would like to add additional information.

f. I will continue the member checking process until there is no new data brought forth.

11. Schedule the follow-up member checking interview.
12. Thank the participant for their time, consideration, and participation in the study.
13. Turn off the voice recording device.
14. Turn off the backup voice recording device.
15. Affirm contact information for follow-up questions from the participant.
16. End interview protocol.

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment E-mail Invitation

Please Share Your Expertise as a Restaurateur for a Family-Owned Restaurant

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Vickie Matson and I am a doctoral candidate for my Doctorate of Business Administration at Walden University. As a requirement of my doctoral study completion from Walden University, I sincerely request your participation in a research study on small business sustainability. The purpose of the research study is to explore the strategies that small restaurant business owners in the Houston area use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. My study will document the activities of the first 4 years of a business to identify strategies for reducing restaurant failure before the fifth year. It appears that you meet the criteria for this study: an owner and operator of a family-owned restaurant, in the Houston area, with fewer than 100 employees and more than 4 years in operation.

I understand that your time is valuable, and I would appreciate your consideration in participating in this study. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and confidential. If you agree to participate in the study, I will contact you to deliver consent form and a copy of the interview questions and briefly explain the scope of the study. I will then schedule two (2) face-to-face personal meetings: one for a recorded interview to answer seven open-ended questions and a financial and legal document review, then a second meeting to review the interview transcript for accuracy. The intended time is less than 90 minutes per meeting.

You will receive a copy of the study upon its completion. Thank you very much for your time and anticipated cooperation with this study.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact me by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX to schedule a brief time for delivery of consent forms and explanation of the scope of the study.

Sincerely,

Vickie Matson

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

Appendix C: Social Media Post

Seeking Research Participants in the Restaurant Industry

Looking for five family-owned restaurant business owners in the Houston area to participate in dissertation research to explore the operational strategies that family-owned that family-owned restaurant business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Participation in the study will provide you with an opportunity to positively contribute to the potential success of local restaurant owners and take an active role in establishing success standards for the restaurant industry. Your participation will also contribute to positive social change by reducing restaurant business failure rates, increasing employment opportunities, and increasing revenue for the local community.

If interested, please message me at www.linkedin.com/in/vickiematson.