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Strategies for Ethiopian Small Retailers Businesses To Succeed Beyond 3 Years

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Abstract

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by

Samson Gebrehiwot

MA, Kazakh State University, 1992

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

In Ethiopia, some small retail business owners (SRBOs) embark on initiatives without adequate preparation, which results in a risk of failure within the first three years. Grounded in the conceptual frameworks of resource-based views, dynamic-capabilities views, and relational views, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies used by SRBOs leaders to survive and grow beyond three years. The participants were four SRBOs from Ethiopia who succeeded in business for more than three years. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, company documents, observations, notes from data sources and analyzed using Yin's 5-step data analysis process. Six themes emerged: business-centric knowledge, entrepreneurial skills, relationships and networking, innovation and creativity, customer-centric approach, and support system. A key recommendation for SRBOs is to develop strategies through business-centric knowledge to succeed. The implications for a positive social change include the potential for SRBOs to stimulate economic growth by creating jobs and generating income for the Ethiopian citizens and providing an expanded government infrastructure with increased tax revenues.

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Dedication

I dedicated my work to those innocent young people who strived to build a better changed and developed Ethiopia but killed by the Derg and EPDRF regimes. Among those, the Derg regime slaughtered at their young ages was my brilliant elder brother Yohannes Negash Gebrehiwot, age 17, my cousins Belete Mekonen Ketema and Markos Tedela Zeyohanness. You all were selfless that your dedication and commitment were a torch to me in the darkest hours of those days. May God rest your souls in peace!

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

During the 2013-2014 fiscal year, small business owners (SBOs) established 200,319 micro and SBOs in Ethiopia (Buli, 2017). The report from the Federal Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency of Ethiopia indicated that SBOs owned approximately 8,593 microenterprises and 10,061 small businesses (SBs) in Addis Ababa in 2014 (Seyoum et al., 2016). The Addis Ababa City Administration Micro and Small Business Enterprise Development Bureau officials classified that SBOs employ six to 13 people (Woldehanna et al., 2018). The small retailing business constitutes formal and informal trade in Africa (Mukherjee, 2016; Strydom, 2015). Business in Africa is radically transforming from small shops, street vendors, and kiosks to stores, grocery stores, and supermarket chains (Strydom, 2015). Despite the emergence of big retailers, small retailing business owners (SRBOs) still dominate the business (Strydom, 2015).

Ethiopia’s SB growth is stagnant (Gerba, 2012; Woldeyohanes, 2014), and more than three-fourths of SRBOs do not grow at all (Woldeyohanes, 2014). Stagnation is a concern for entrepreneurs (Gerba, 2012) and policy makers (Brixiova, 2013). One reason for stagnation is government regulatory programs that stifle the growth of SBOs (Amhaa & Woldehanna, 2016). The programs force SBOs to join informal businesses (Amhaa & Woldehanna, 2016). The other reason for stagnation is that SBOs have limited access to information (Lindvert et al., 2015). Limited access to information deters SBOs to engage with other firms, foreign markets, and government agencies (Lindvert et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

Small Ethiopian retail businesses fail at high rates (Lemessa et al., 2018). More than 76% of small Ethiopian retail business owners fail to succeed in business beyond 3 years (Geleta, 2013; Woldehanna et al., 2018; Woldeyohanes, 2014). The general business problem that I addressed in this study is that some Ethiopians embark on small retail business initiatives without adequate preparation that results in business failure. The specific business problem that I addressed in this study is that some small Ethiopian retail business owners often lack the strategies to succeed in business beyond 3 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple case study was to explore the strategies that some small Ethiopian retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 3 years. The target population consisted of four small Ethiopian retail business owners who have succeeded in business beyond 3 years in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A positive social change may take place through lower failure rates and better viability of SBs that may decrease the poverty levels of the citizens of Ethiopia. Higher profitability of SRBOs may increase tax revenue and allow the Ethiopian government to expand infrastructures. The expansion of infrastructures requires a workforce that may reduce the unemployment rate.

Nature of the Study

A qualitative study is applicable for understanding complex business owners' issues that necessitate exploratory research, detailed participants' experiences, and views to understand and interpret a phenomenon (Aragón et al., 2016). A quantitative method is appropriate for hypotheses testing (Baskarada & Koronios, 2018), measuring variables' relationships, differences (Mishra et al., 2018), and quantification in the gathering and analysis of data (Khalili et al., 2018;

Rahman, 2017). The mixed method approach consists of both qualitative and quantitative methods (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Both mixed and quantitative methods were unfit for my study, because I did not include hypotheses propositions and testing or measuring variables' relationships or variances. A qualitative method was relevant for this research because it enabled me to use open-ended questions and to produce a thick description of participants' knowledge and experiences. The method also enabled me to collect contextual information, understand, and interpret complex Ethiopian issues of SBOs, and to explore what strategies some small Ethiopian retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 3 years.

I chose a case study design. A case study design is fit for doing a thorough exploration of a phenomenon within a real-world context by using multiple data sources (Ridder, 2017) and is flexible for asking why and how questions (Yin, 2018). The case study design was appropriate for this study. My focus was neither about storytelling nor immersing in the culture of participants. I did not intend to generate theories of participants' views of a phenomenon, nor to analyze perceived and lived experiences and worldviews of participants. Because of the previously mentioned reasons, I did not choose the other four designs: narrative, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology.

Research Question

The primary research question in this study was: What strategies do SRBOs use to succeed in business beyond 3 years?

Interview Questions

The following open-ended semistructured interview questions provided answers to the research question:

1. What financial strategies did you use to invest and start your business?

2. What are the business skills very critical to your achievement?

3. What experiences assisted you to be a business owner?

4. How are you financing your business to grow, expand, and sustain?

5. Why and how did you use marketing strategies?

6. How do you sustain your profit?

7. How did you overcome your obstacles?

8. How do you describe your successes?

9. What family, social, or government supports helped you to start, grow, and sustain?

10. Why and how did you use the planning procedures during the first 3 years?

11. What do you advise to new business owners what types of skills and strategies to use to be successful?

Conceptual Framework

Resource-based views (RBVs), dynamic capabilities views (DCVs), and relational views (RVs) are conceptual frameworks that I used for this study. Researchers apply RBVs, DCVs, and RVs to study and interpret the growth of SBs, assuming that resources, capabilities, and relations are the sources of performance and growth (Mandrella et al., 2020). Penrose (1959) was the first to discover the values of a firm's resources (Burvill et al., 2018). Based on the contribution of Penrose and Rubin (1973), Wernerfelt (1984) developed a new perspective for resources-based studies and suggested that businesses could profit by finding resources: valuable, rare, not substitutable, and organizational (Panda & Reddy, 2016). Intangible assets are the sources of competitive advantage (Ocak & Fındık, 2019). According to Prahalad and Hamel (1990), technology, knowledge, and skills are parts of capabilities (Mthembu, 2019). Barney (1991) founded a comprehensive framework that addresses resources (Rockwell, 2019). Barney's RBV conceptual model is relatively static and lacks a certain dynamism (Alonso et al., 2016). Teece et al. (1997) found the missing link and created DCV and discovered how firms combined, developed, deployed, and protected competence and resources (Liu et al., 2019). Teece et al. defined dynamic capability as capacities to change the resource base that provided firms the ability to a continuous adaption to a business environment (Liu et al., 2019). According to Dyer and Singh (1998), resources may span beyond their single boundaries (i.e., Dyer and Singh [1998]) created RV. Dyer and Singh theorized that unique and jointly owned resources are the sources of competitive advantage (Carter et al., 2017). The tenets of RBV, DCV, and RV are resources, capabilities, and relations (Mandrella et al., 2020). Resources, capabilities, and relations are the sources of competitive advantage (Mandrella et al., 2020).

Operational Definitions

Agrarian economy: The economy that indicates preindustrial economy is known as the agrarian economy (Fedosieieva, 2018).

Failure of SBO: Failure of SBO occurs when SBs are unable to make a profit for the last 3-years and may cover termination of SB (Amankwah-Amoah & Adomako, 2019; Li et al., 2019).

Formal small businesses (Formal SBs): According to the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSAE, 2003), FSBs engage fewer than ten people, receive the provisions of registrations, and have licenses (Siba, 2015).

Informal small businesses (Informal SBs): According to the CSAE (2002), ISBs do not have licenses and do not receive a provision of registrations from the Addis Ababa Trade and Industry Bureau and do not pay taxes (Desta, 2018).

Nascent entrepreneurs: Nascent entrepreneurs are individuals who committed resources to start a business, have little prior ownership experience, have tremendous growth values, possess high motivation, and decide to risk starting a business (Juric et al., 2019).

Resource specificity: Resource specificity was the unique support of specific inter-organizational relationships that increase productivity; inimitability could sustain competitive advantage (Laari et al., 2016).

Success of SBOs: The success of SBOs is known to have a positive financial performance or profit for the past 3 years that is equivalent to or larger than the average gain (Jacobs et al., 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are self-evident truths (Chowcat, 2016). Self-evident truths are academicians' opinions that scholars have not verified (Nørreklit et al., 2016). Researchers assume that participants answered the research questions honestly (Kammigan et al., 2018). Elucidating assumptions helps researchers to underpin data gatherings, analysis, and findings (Pitard, 2017). The three assumptions were the following. The qualitative method was an appropriate system of thought and verification that enabled to explore a phenomenon and participants' context in Ethiopia. Four SRBOs took part in the study. Participants answered the research questions honestly. As a backup plan, eight participants were on the list, and a sample was purposeful with the aim of saturation and sufficiency. Owners gave honest and completed answers to the interview questions and did not deliberately present bias. Likewise, the assumption was that the sample could represent SRBOs in Ethiopia and understood their role in the country's economy.

Limitations

Limitations are potential incapacities (Prakash et al., 2017) that likely affect the investigation, weaknesses beyond researchers' control, and significant to the study (Vargas & Mancia, 2019). One limitation was how the level of education could influence understanding of SRBOs of a business and its cycle. SRBOs may be unable to provide adequate answers and may not recollect their experiences. Interviews can have their limitation regarding potential biases of SRBOs because SRBOs may hold responsible others for failure and take credits for successes. SRBOs may not answer interview questions honestly. SRBOs may not be the sole decision makers on the acquisition and allocation of resources. The research findings may not be transferable, for the findings are context-dependent knowledge in time and place. Case studies are microscopic, inherently complex, and time-consuming, and they require multiple data gathering in multiple settings.

Delimitations

Delimitations are limits that researchers deliberately enforce on the research design (Ruiz et al., 2016) to help to describe and define the boundaries of the study (Alonso et al., 2016). The delimitation pertained only to SRBOs working, remaining, and thriving in Ethiopia's business for more than 3 years in Addis Ababa. The conclusion of the study may not apply to all SBOs. The other delimitation was SB's classifications, as defined by the CSAE (Siba, 2015). SBs are either formal or informal (Struwig et al., 2019). The formal SBs have licenses and registration from the

Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, whereas the informal SBs do not have licenses and do not have provision for registration (Harriss-White, 2017). I selected formal SBs and SRBOs. SRBOs had licenses, obtained provision for registration, and paid taxes in Ethiopia. I delimited my study to SRBOs remaining and succeeding beyond the first 3 years. Only SRBOs working or living in Ethiopia could take part in the study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study was to contribute to real-world business practices and to generate social transformation, change. Business researchers aim to enable practitioners or SBOs to make informed decisions and take actions to bring the required or envisioned change (Kerwin-Boudreau & Butler-Kisber, 2016). Within the scope of SB studies, the primary purpose of the study was to reduce the failure rate of SBOs and to increase the chances of their success. The research may help SBOs to produce a business model and obtain the necessary capital from lending institutions. In the developing world, research is important for public policy makers and nongovernmental organizations to gain insights and provide informed assistance for SBOs (Hyder & Lussier, 2016).

The Value to Business Practice

My study may add value to bring wealth, prosperity, and sustainability of business practices. SRBOs may use the information and the insights that SRBOs gain from the research to cultivate and advance their skills of activities to achieve maximum profitability and sustainability. Policy makers and leaders of national and international agencies want to promote informed SB practices. Policy makers and leaders may gain knowledge of unfavorable effects, barriers, limitations, and factors that SRBOs face and may come up with new assistance programs, policies, and procedures.

The study may add to the body of knowledge about entrepreneurial skills of SRBOs in management, marketing, sales, and cash flow analysis that can sustain growth and expand businesses of SRBOs. The results of this study may contribute to the body of knowledge of SBs in Ethiopia. The study may be useful for SRBOs to identify and overcome their trade hurdles. Graduate students may want to open a business and may understand the fundamental challenges and opportunities. The study may include obstacles that SRBOs may face; it may contain hopes of SRBOs from the context of Ethiopia.

Implications for Social Change

Individuals and government leaders have interacted and fought for resources and legitimacy throughout history (Kobusingye et al., 2017; Okumu et al., 2017). The phenomenon of culture, policies, practices, and history has its outcomes because culture, policies, practices, and history influence and shape individuals and organizations (Dressler et al., 2017; Okumu et al., 2017). Legal, institutional, and regulatory frameworks make it difficult for owners and managers to create and grow new SBs or facilitate the growth of SBs in Ethiopia (Amhaa & Woldehanna, 2016). The implication for social change is to promote the advancement and the creation of employment opportunities (Dewi et al., 2018). The social change is also to support economic growth, contribute to the mitigation of poverty, and expand the welfare and income of people in SB (Dewi et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurs may gain insight into what type of skills SBOs should strive to master to overcome the challenges of new businesses. The knowledge from the research may inform and let SRBOs prepare and adjust during the startups and growth phase of SBs. The insight from the study may lead to a decrease in failures of SRBOs, resulting in increased job opportunities, employment, and revenue creation that positively affects social change. The research may be useful to SRBOs and leaders of government and nongovernment organizations. Entrepreneurial students, SRBOs, and leaders from government and nongovernment organizations may gain some knowledge and practices from the findings on how business leaders in Ethiopia can sustain SBs beyond 3 years. Leaders in Ethiopia may use the findings to increase economic and community development opportunities in Ethiopia for startup entrepreneurs in two ways. First, the results may create a different level of awareness for government and nongovernment organizations and may contribute to filling the gap in knowledge and understanding of what skills do SBOs need in Ethiopian small retailing businesses. Second, these findings may help Ethiopia leaders acknowledge different development stages, levels of involvement, and expertise in retailing.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A literature review is an in-depth review, summary, evaluation, and analysis of previous studies relevant to a particular area of research, issues, theories, or on a selected topic (Baker, 2016; Cooper et al., 2018). The literature review is a synthesis of evidence-based sources (Baker, 2016; Koffel & Rethlefsen, 2016) related to small enterprises, RBVs, DCVs, and RVs. The typologies were themes pertinent to the objective of the study and addressing the research question.

The objective of the literature review is to provide background on a selected topic, to create the groundwork for a change in practice, and to synthesize and gain a comprehensive and informed perspective. I applied the literature review to address the research purpose and to demonstrate the gap in the literature by articulating the need for the study and pointing to the worth of the research problem. I retrieved, sorted, analyzed, provided new clarification of the present study, and reviewed the literature as it applied to the research question and topic. I avoided unintended duplication while improving expert development and supporting main contributions to the literature. I paraphrased, evaluated, used citation skills, and skillfully related critical thinking. I implemented theoretical perspectives and frameworks.

The search strategy of the review of the literature included online academic resources such as Google Scholar, Academic Search Complete, Science Direct, ProQuest Central, Business and Management databases, and Multidisciplinary databases. The strategy also consisted of peer-reviewed articles and books at local and university libraries. From business and management databases, I used the library databases of ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, and ProQuest, The World Bank Open Knowledge Repository, and Business Source Complete.

Inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) publication between 2016 and 2020, (b) peer-reviewed and research focus, (c) journals and articles were in English. The literature review comprises 195 references, of which 88.72% were scholarly articles and printed before the date of the anticipated graduation date. I also included books.

The search plan comprised all keywords and phrases, as well as titles, abstracts, and keywords. The primary keywords and phrases applied to the searches were SBs, SB’s failure and success, SB in Africa, Sub-Sahara, and Ethiopia. The main keywords and phrases were entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, SBOs, failure and success of SBOs, management skills, intellectual capital, and learning and human capital. Keywords also contained RBVs, DCVs, RVs, competence, core competence, capabilities, competition paradigm, and a case study design. I reviewed over 157 articles, books, journals, government, nongovernment, and international organizations’ websites for the last 5 years of the anticipated graduation year. I also included many additional articles and books that may provide insights into the growth and development of SB from Ethiopia’s perspectives. Search strategies led scholars to meet their goals and acquired results (Koffel & Rethlefsen, 2016).

Research Purpose

This qualitative exploratory multiple-case study was to explore why small Ethiopian retail business owners often lack strategy to succeed in business beyond 3-years. The primary research question is: What strategies do small Ethiopian retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 3 years?

Competence. Competence included individuals' abilities applied to job-related experience, knowledge, skills, and ability (Kotzab et al., 2018; Peach et al., 2016). The ability to leverage the existing resources created resource barriers; thereby, business owners establish new competence, i.e., owners could generate profit and develop competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 2014). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), Peteraf (1993), and Teece et al. (1997) underlined that the idea of resources, competencies or capabilities had its foundation and roots in the RBVs (Parida et al., 2016; Tate & Bals, 2018).

Competencies and capabilities were firm-specific, i.e., competencies and capabilities encompassed managerial and organizational processes (Chen et al., 2017; Coraiola et al., 2017). Capability came from the externally focused environment, while competence existed internal (Zhang et al., 2020). Scholars categorized capabilities into many classes (Dooley et al., 2017). Teece (2007) identified and classified capabilities into three (Albort-Morant et al., 2018; Dooley et al., 2017). Capabilities included the ability to sense opportunity, seize opportunities, and reconfigure a resource base (Battleson et al., 2016; Takahashi et al., 2017). The first two served fundamental purposes while the third was complex because it might require a model redesign (Dooley et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019).

Scholars in the field of corporate management held differing ideas regarding the developing and the nurturing of competence (Lin, Peng, et al., 2016). Wernerfelt (2014) detailed the benefit of leveraging resources to create barriers to competitors, in doing so, SBOs established original and advanced types of competence that created a competitive advantage. Others' academicians linked competence to innovativeness and discussed how leaders developed it (Ng & Kee, 2018). Danneels (2007) noted that leveraging and exploitation of internal resources facilitated the creation of new competence (Lin, Peng, et al., 2016).

March (1991) highlighted that competence involved exploitation as well as an exploration of resources (Fu-Sheng et al., 2016). Entrepreneurs configured internal and external resources to develop competence (Fu-Sheng et al., 2016). March (1991) also explained both notions: Exploitations referred to efficiency and improvement, while exploration denoted a term to indicate variation and discovery (Popadić et al., 2016). Helfat and Peteraf (2003) noted that leveraging internal resources benefited SBOs by reducing costs in the form of minimization and use of time and resources and decided firms' competence development (Lin, Wang et al., 2016).

Competence also included an integration of knowledge, skill, and performance; while performance defined as individuals' abilities to apply the knowledge and skills necessary to perform work (Yun & Lee, 2017). Competence was also a point of synthesis and coherent progression of values (Taylor et al., 2016). According to Khan and Ramachandran (2012), competence referred to the range of ideas that indicate continuous refining, developing, enhancing the desired behavior of all workers and valuable outcomes to meet the goal set by business owners, managers (Taylor et al., 2016). Competence included individuals' output (Haralambie, 2016) and the attributes of knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills (Taylor et al., 2016). Competence also covered employees' abilities to meet or exceed jobs' requirements (Taylor et al., 2016), while the term competency referred to inputs that were factors contributing to the success of businesses (Haralambie, 2016). Competence was knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics and demonstrable performance that business leaders could measure (Yun & Lee, 2017).

Core Competencies. Core competencies were not a business portfolio but rather the integration of a variety of capabilities (Pono et al., 2018; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Xie et al., 2016). Core competencies are those resources, capabilities, and competencies that define a firm from its rivalries (Mohamud & Sarpong, 2016). Core competencies involved a particular strength provided that added value related to other firms in the industry (Ng & Kee, 2018). Core competencies included also combined, joint, shared learning in the organization, plus the process of organizing different skills, and integrated various technologies (Bui et al., 2019; Ng & Kee, 2018).

Core competencies resulted from exploiting a firm's tangible and intangible assets (Foroudi et al., 2017). Intangible resources were heterogeneous and imperfectly mobile (Davey et al., 2017). Services incorporated the use of operant resources for the receiver's benefits (Davey et al., 2017; Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017). Leaders combined operant resources with operand or both to create operant resource-based capabilities and to offer customer value (Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017).

Core competencies were the foundation for competitive advantage (Foroudi et al., 2017) and had three broad-based theoretical aspects (Xie et al., 2014). Porter's (1980) industry and environmental-based theory, Barney's (1991) and Wernerfelt's (1984) RBVs, and the third included proponents like Prahaland and Hamel (1990) of competence-based view (Xie et al., 2014). According to Prahalad and Hamel (1990), core competencies indicated collective, shared learning in an organization. Core competencies also comprised of the organization and management of production skills as well as the integration of various types of technology.

Continuous developments, improvements, and enhancements to permit leaders to achieve sustained competitive advantage were the foundation of the core competencies and designated business practices capabilities (Nagano, 2020).

Intellectual capital. Human resource helped organizations to sustain competitive advantage (Lim et al., 2017). Core competencies remained to be intellectual capital (Tinelli et al., 2017). Abeysekera and Guthrie (2005) and Aledwan (2014) noted the classification of intellectual capital as human capital, social capital, and organizational capital (Razak et al., 2016). Intellectual capital entailed human, social, and organizational capital (Macerinskiene et al., 2016).

When business leaders codified and institutionalized individuals' knowledge, individuals' knowledge transformed into organizational capital (Bejinaru, 2016). An organizational capital was deeply rooted in individuals and integrated into the systems of knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, and knowledge integration (Hagemeister & Rodríguez-Castellanos, 2019; Zhang & Zhang, 2018). Business leaders transformed organizational capital through established networks and created social capital. Through network, leaders also formed a unified organization's intellectual capital (Adeel et al., 2018). Physical and organizational assets were essential in value-creating strategies and implementation (Stare & Jaklič, 2020). Assets were also fundamental to achieving local abilities or competencies that enabled SBOs to create and sustain competitive advantage. Core competence was firms' underlying business (Bui et al., 2019) and helped SBOs to achieve competitive advantage (Foroudi et al., 2017).

Capabilities. According to Teece et al. (1997), capabilities were companies' leaders and employees' abilities to use, to adapt, and to transform skills, competencies, and resources to match the demand of the ever-changing environment. Capabilities were path-dependent and idiosyncratic (Schmidt et al., 2017) and had common characteristics across the industries (Zeleti

& Ojo, 2017). The common features were the scarceness of managerial resources and the high cost of creating and establishing capabilities (Rungi, 2015; Ujwary-Gil, 2017).

Capabilities were inherently dynamic (Teece et al., 1997). Seminal writers such as Teece et al. (1997) and Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) understood and defined capabilities from two different perspectives (Pittz & White, 2016). Teece et al. (1997) explained through the lens of competitive advantages, while Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) focused on best practices (Hansen & Møller, 2016; Rungi, 2015). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), Peteraf (1993), and Teece et al. (1997) further indicated that business leaders integrated, built, and reconfigured resources or competencies that were internal and external (Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2016). Leaders exploited capabilities in which case the objective and importance of capabilities were to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016). Leaders and experts entrenched capabilities into organizations because capabilities possessed a high degree of attributes such as inimitability and non-substitutability (Pittz & White, 2016).

Business leaders tried to configure and satisfy consumers' ever-changing demands; in doing so, leaders created a competitive advantage (Teece, 2007). Teece et al. (1997) thought that SBOs responded to the internal and external ever-changing environment by developing, integrating, and combining resources to create competence (Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2016; Lin, Peng, et al., 2016). Competence was the derivatives of capabilities (Zhang et al., 2020). Capability came from the externally focused environment, while competence was internal (Zhang et al., 2020).

Some researchers classified capabilities into operational and dynamic (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016; Kikuchi & Iwao, 2016). Operational denoted the normal daily function of a firm, while the dynamic designated resources business leaders used to modify, to renovate, or to expand operating capabilities (Albort-Morant et al., 2018). Lu et al. (2010) highlighted that some experts contended that resources and capabilities were the same or equivalent constructs, while others noted that resources and capabilities were entirely different constructs (Shan et al., 2014). Madhavaram et al. (2014) indicted that scholars defined the concept of competence and capability as interchangeable. Capabilities or competence were the socially complex, interrelated combination of both the operand and operant resources (Raddats et al., 2015).

Drnevich and Kriauciunas (2011) explained the practical benefit of capabilities that were the cost reduction, high productivity, and the adaptability to accommodate uncertainties (Shan et al., 2014). Startup companies' leaders required benchmarking others best practices to develop capabilities (Rungi, 2015). Lichtenstein and Brush (2001) and Sirmon et al. (2008) demonstrated that startup companies needed to identify, acquire, and turn resources into capabilities (Huikkola et al., 2016). In such contexts, researchers used the two constructs differently as capabilities were the outcomes of synergized resources (Shan et al., 2014).

Acquiring capabilities had a significant influence on the success of SBOs (Raddats et al., 2015). Cooperation and competition among SBOs created capabilities (Pinasti & Adawiyah, 2016). Success was not only financial gains and meeting customer satisfaction but also the capacity to confront and handle challenges and transform those challenges into marketing advantages. SBOs measured their success based on the parameters of financial gains, competitive advantage, and customer loyalty (Raddats et al., 2015).

SBOs needed to develop capability; otherwise, SBOs would be in a disadvantageous position (Raddats et al., 2015). SBOs required to create a synergistic operation and needed to configure the capability of hierarchy because capability lies in the combination of operant resources or the creation of composite operant resources (Frempong et al., 2018). The constituents could be tangible or intangible (Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017). When SBOs used resources as basic operant resources, SBOs committed to resources (Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017).

Leaders combined resources to create a capability and turn resources into benefits, i.e., composite operant resources (Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017). Firms transformed into interconnected operant resources when SBOs synergistically performed and produced valuable market offerings (Deleon & Chatterjee, 2017).

Value and services. Value creation was mutual, reciprocal, interactive, and interactional (Brandl, 2017; Li-Chun, 2017), and customers were the co-creators of value (Marko-Stefan Kleber & Volkova, 2017). A value within the framework of business was the consumers' or beneficiaries' valuation of benefits (Carrington & Neville, 2016). Customer value was the total consumers' perceptions of benefits of the market offering (Perrea et al., 2017). Hunt and Morgan (1995) indicated that resources were not perfectly mobile in firms. SBOs expected enduring differences either in efficiency or effectiveness that created financial performance difference. Business institutions served others and were in the service of others (Colombo et al., 2019). Service was a process to utilize capabilities for the benefits of other individuals, groups, institutions or societies (Kumar et al., 2017).

Business Strategy

Strategy by itself was not an aim, nor was its goal to define objective (Gallo & Tomčíková, 2019). Strategy was rather a tool to achieve the specified goals (Gallo & Tomčíková, 2019) and to achieve objective (Papke-Shields & Boyer-Wright, 2017). Strategic management aimed to achieve and sustain competitive advantage (Elshaer & Augustyn, 2016; Shujahat et al., 2017). The aim was also to create the future without jeopardizing the present; thereby, giving a suitable platform for reacting to changes in the environment (Elshaer & Augustyn, 2016; Shujahat et al., 2017).

Strategic management was a set of managerial ideas and actions that define the long-term performance of business (Gallo & Tomčíková, 2019). Strategic management was a plan to guide and to meet the goals of businesses. Strategic management enabled owners to create long-range directions (Elshaer & Augustyn, 2016) as well about formulate goals and to apply the general concept of a firm (Gallo & Tomčíková, 2019). Strategic management helped SBOs to generate, implement, and control the underlying strategies as well as to provide SBOs with strategic tools to analyze their weakness, strength, opportunity, and risk (Gallo & Tomčíková, 2019). The components of strategic management were environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation, and control (Gallo & Tomčíková, 2019). SBOs needed to recognize the importance of strategic management, for SBOs worked in an environment of risk and uncertainty (Cheng & Humphreys, 2016; Grishunin, 2017).

The questions in strategic management focused on one fundamental issue, i.e., how to create, build, and sustain competitive advantage (Lyver & Ta-Jung, 2018). Competitive advantage was the ability to create value or wealth (Abosede et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2017). A competitive strategy to competitors was the set of consumers needs to satisfy customers through products and services (Sayadi et al., 2017).

Researchers investigated the source of wealth (Ezrim, 2018) and studied how entrepreneurs created, built, captured, and sustained wealth (Teece et al., 1997). Most theories founded on maintaining and safeguarding existing competitive advantage of firms. The aim of competitive forces strategies was to relate an enterprise to an environment (Holmqvist & Ruiz, 2017). The environment was where a firm competes (Teece et al., 1997).

“Why do firms succeed or outperform others?” was the question researchers raised in the field of strategic management (Aas & Breunig, 2017; Böbel, 2017). Strategic management was the process by which business owners analyzed, decided, and implemented to sustain competitive advantage (Shujahat et al., 2017). Business owners and researchers searched for variances in performance, in the creation of wealth and sources of competitive advantage (Shujahat et al., 2017).

SBOs created a business strategy to compete and survive regardless of age or size, and researchers in strategic management explained enterprises' differences in value creation (Bibi et al., 2020; Kapasi & Galloway, 2018). Strategic management was part of entrepreneurship, and the nature of strategic management in entrepreneurship was the transformation, identification, and exploitation of possibilities, options, and chances, and to turn opportunities into sustainable advantages (Ge et al., 2016). RBVs and DCVs were among the dominant research streams in strategic management literature (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Mandal, 2017).

Three Business Strategies

Teece et al. (1997) classified major theories into three: These were Porter's competitive five forces, the strategic conflict approach, and firm-level efficiency advantages. However, Eloranta and Turunen (2015) classified major theories into four. The four paradigms were the market power and competition paradigm of Porter (1980), the RBVs of Wernerfelt (1984), Rumelt (1984), and Barney (1991), dynamic capabilities views of Teece et al. (1997), and a relational view of Dyer and Singh (1998). Teece et al. (1997) synthesized RBVs and capability-based views into the firm-level efficiency paradigm and considered DCVs as the extension of RBVs. Eloranta and Turunen (2015) perceived, and Teece et al. (1997) agreed that game theory was the extension of Porter's (1980) market power and competition paradigm.

The three paradigms were the following. The first was the market power and competition paradigm (Arbi et al., 2017). The primary strategy of the first paradigm was the exploitation of market position and power (Arbi et al., 2107). The proponents of this model were researchers like Porter (1980) (Lin, Peng, et al., 2016) and strategic conflict advocate like Shapiro (1989) (Rengkung, 2018). The second was firm-level efficiency paradigm that consists of RBVs researchers such as Wernerfelt (1984), Barney (1991), and capability-based views of Teece et al. The third was a relational view that includes Dyer and Singh (1998) (Ayala et al., 2019).

Market and competition paradigm. The market and competitive paradigms were a strategic view that asserted markets dynamics and firms' industry structure influenced the competitive nature of business (Arbi et al., 2017; Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). Until the formulation of Porter's (1980) three generic strategies, i.e., low-cost, differentiation, and focus strategies, business strategists could not answer the question of competitive advantage (Salavou, 2015; Viltard, 2017) and Porter's (1985) five forces Model (Ndlovu & Alagidede, 2018; Pederzini, 2016). Porter's (1980) industry-level factors defined each company's revenue, quality of service, market share (Rudra, 2018), and net income potentials (Škuflić et al., 2018). The industry structure had a significant effect on the rules of the game (Marx, 2016). The structure provided strategies available to companies (Teece et al., 1997). According to Shapiro (1989), firms' managers' abilities to play their role in influencing the market structure and its behavior to shape the environment to their advantage was the primary goal of game theory (Rengkung, 2018).

Porter's five forces. Strategic management researchers adopted Porter's (1985) five forces framework: barriers to entry, the threat of replacement, bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, and rivalry among industry incumbents (Maharaj & Sunjka, 2019; Schuurman et al., 2019). Porter's value chain was a set of processes to create value for consumers (Ferdous & Ikeda, 2018). The driving factor of competition and profitability was an industry structure, irrespective of whether the industry was high-tech or low-tech, new or established

(Ndlovu & Alagidede, 2018; Pehrsson, 2016; Su & Tang, 2016). Managers could face a myriad of problems in the short term (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). The industry structure shaped the medium-and-long-term profitability and competitiveness of the industry (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015; Wayne & Lockhart, 2017).

The strategic conflict approach. The strategic conflict approach also related to the first paradigm of the market and competitive paradigm and used tools of game theory (Rengkung, 2018; Teece et al., 1997). Both competitive forces and strategic conflict approach had common grounds and focused on the strategy of product market position (Goralski & Luoma, 2016), i.e., to recognize market imperfection and entry deterrence (Teece et al., 1997). The primary idea was that by manipulating a market environment, business leaders could gain and increase profits (Muldoon et al., 2018).

The strategic conflict approach practitioners used a game theory (Khobragade et al., 2017). Game theory was a set of skills of anticipating, testing, determining optimality of various strategies and explaining the activities and actions of those involved in the competition as well as setting rules and outcomes (Elbeck et al., 2016). Practitioners of the theory applied tools of the game theory to off-balance their competitors (Teece et al., 1997) and to support negotiation and post-negotiation analysis for detailed and productive negotiation that ensured practitioners' abilities to further their interest in the future (Alexandre & Pires, 2017).

The advantages of the market and the competitive paradigm. Porter's five forces enabled enterprises to find a position in business to defend against existing competitive forces (Rengkung, 2018; Teece et al., 1997). These forces provided SBOs to prevent other rivals to create values and take advantage of other competitive forces (Ndlovu & Alagidede, 2018; Snider & Davies, 2017). Porter's framework provided a clear-cut understanding of how five forces related to profitability on an industry level and segment (Pervan et al., 2018; Snider & Davies, 2017). Long-term perspectives and transparency enabled leaders to maximize cooperation that turned a competitive game into a cooperative (Gavidia, 2016). A game theory applied for the analysis of communications between parties which had their goals. The game theory was an instrument to understand human behavior as players in the process of decision making (Mamo, 2016) and to gain insights into the relationships that grew in the process of competition and cooperation (Akhbari, 2020).

The disadvantage of the market and the competitive paradigm. Others challenge the positions of Porter's five forces claiming that the framework did not include uncertainty and was reactive rather than proactive (Pervan et al., 2018). According to Lado et al. (1992), Porter's five forces framework failed to incorporate the dynamic competitive environment and neglected the potentials of the internal business environment (Awad & Amro, 2017; Kharub & Sharma, 2017). The three forces among Porter's five forces that were buyers, competitors, and suppliers, were discrete and did not interact with each other's (Grigore, 2014). Porter's challengers claimed that leaders applied Porter's five forces to create only barriers to entry (Rengkung, 2018).

Firm-level efficiency. The third was a theory that stems from firm-level efficiency advantages that was the resource-based perspective (Teece et al., 1997). Porter's static strategic management led to the creation of more compelling theories such as RBVs and DCVs (Breznik & Hisrich, 2014). According to RBVs academicians, the existence of isolated assets, resources, and mechanisms in a firm were determinant factors for organizations' growth (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016) and performance (Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2016). RBVs did not help to explain the features of the isolating mechanisms that enabled entrepreneurs to achieve a sustained profit and competitive advantage (Teece et al., 1997).

RBVs leaders had the understanding that companies with superior systems and structures received benefits, not because leaders applied strategic investments that may deter entry and increased prices above long-run costs (Teece et al., 1997). These leaders saw and understood that firms minimized their costs or offered high quality or product performance from the implementation of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016). Wernerfelt (1984) was the first to state that owners obtained more economic benefit from firm-specific resources than product market positioning (Pei & Li, 2017). According to Teece et al. (1997), firms' abilities to integrate, develop, and reconfigure internal and external competencies and capabilities, i.e., their capacities to sensing, seizing, and innovating managerial and organizational processes, were sources of competitive advantage (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015; Furnival et al., 2019).

RBVs. Many scholars initially set forth the RBVs, such as Wernerfelt (1984), Barney (1991), Rumelt (1991) (Takahashi, 2015). RBVs were the dominant theory in business and strategic management (Burvill et al., 2018). Researchers differentiated firms by resources firms possessed (Burvill et al., 2018; Situm, 2019) and how businesses succeeded (Situm, 2019). RBVs scholars shared an understanding of a firm's performance that those internal resources other than the external competitive environment determined a company's performance more (Nikolaou et al., 2018).

The history of RBVs. Penrose (1959) was the first to conceptualize and establish organization growth theory (Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2016; Nikolaou et al., 2018). Penrose discovered organizational resources as a determinant of business success (Burvill et al., 2018) identified resources in the firm and innovative management or leadership as the sources of growth and economic value drivers (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016). Succeeding Penrose's work, Andrew (1997) furthered the idea that dynamic changes in the environment and leaders' abilities to mitigate and adjust to the dynamic changes were the sources of competitive advantage (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016). Wernerfelt (1984) established RBVs (Burvill et al., 2018; Day & Jean-Denis, 2016) and emphasized that organizational leaders must focus on resources than products (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016). Barney (1991) identified the attributes of resources, distinguished resources as the drivers of performance, established a link between resources and competitive advantage (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016). Barney characterized resources as valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Rockwell, 2019). Peteraf (1993) depicted an environment under which competitive advantage led to above-normal returns (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016). Grant (1996), Hart (1995), and Teece et al. (1997) refined RBVs, defined the source of competitive, specified the origins of a sustainable advantage as knowledge-based perspective, nature-based view, and dynamic-capabilities views, respectively (Božič & Cvelbar, 2016).

RBVs and competitive advantage. RBVs were a framework of strategic management, and researchers applied the RBVs to appreciate and gain knowledge of competitive advantage (Rengkung, 2018). Resources, in the RBVs, were tangible and intangible assets that SBOs controlled to create competitive advantage (Chatzoglou et al., 2018; Lin, Wang, et al., 2016). Competitive advantage was the foundation concept in strategic management because competitive advantage was an idea that explained variance in performance among organizations (Kiyabo & Isaga, 2019; Sigala, 2016). A business strategy was about long-term action programs and plans to meet performance goals (Rua, 2019; Sigala, 2016). According to Barney (1986, 1991), Rumelt (1984), and Wernerfelt (1984), variance arose among firms because of the heterogeneity of bundle resources and capabilities organizations' leaders possess (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). According to Barney (1991), competitive advantage was the use of a collection of valuable tangible and intangible resources (Chatzoglou et al., 2018; Day & Jean-Denis, 2016). Barney stated sustainable competitive advantage occurred when business leaders developed resources in their disposal and created attributes of resources such as valuable, rare, inimitable, and substitutable or organized (VRIO) (Chatzoglou et al., 2018; Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). The effectiveness of the applicability of competitive advantage produced sustainability (Day & Jean-Denis, 2016).

Dynamic-capabilities views. According to Teece et al. (1997), DCVs were the extension of RBVs (Huy & Khin, 2016; Zeng et al., 2017). DCVs enabled SBOs to identify resources or capabilities that were essential to the firm to gain profit and competitive advantage (Huy & Khin, 2016; Zeng et al., 2017). According to Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) and Teece (2007), dynamic capabilities were the integration, creation, and reconfiguration of internal and external resources to cope up with the changing environment (Huy & Khin, 2016; Rengkung, 2018). Teece (2018) stated that dynamic capabilities in a changing environment were business leaders' creativities, insights, and actions to win or compete continually with their competitors by expanding, improving, and preserving their firm-specific resources. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) referred to dynamic capabilities as best practices (Breznik & Hisrich, 2014) and were distinct and identifiable processes (Rengkung, 2018). Zollo and Winter (2002) defined dynamic capabilities as learned and stable patterns of joint activities and implemented to modify the so-called functional capabilities to achieve improved effectiveness (Rengkung, 2018). Dynamic capabilities in the service sector were collaborative agility, alertness, and customer engagement (Kwon et al., 2018; Mandal, 2019). Collaborative agility, alertness, and customer engagement resulted in valuable outcomes: creating effective service innovation and building a collaborative network (Li & Holsapple, 2018; Rezazadeh & Nobari, 2018).

Leaders scanned their environments to find opportunities and conducted the search inside and outside the firm (Furnival et al., 2019; Huy & Khin, 2016). SBOs sensed opportunities, seized those opportunities, and evaluated values and potentials. Leaders chose appropriate technologies to capture those opportunities, identified target customers, and the importance of noneconomic factors (Furnival et al., 2019; Huy & Khin, 2016). To address those seized opportunities, leaders configured and recombined resources inside and outside the firm (Furnival et al., 2019). Considering the above perspectives, resources were not sufficient to create real value and competitive advantage for an enterprise (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015; Rengkung, 2018). Instead of using the unique set of resources, DCVs leaders set strategies to adapt, reconfigure, and innovate in the ever-changing environment (Rengkung, 2018).

DCVs and competitive advantage. Environment, in the context of DCVs, was the competitive business environment that did not include the broader social and ecological environment (Struwig et al., 2019). Owners could sense and seize new opportunities and reconfigure their resources (Furnival et al., 2019). An environmental change could be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Arbi et al., 2017). Integrative knowledge underlying DCVs and new resources from the external environment could also be a source of competitive advantage that included the creation of routines, alliances, and acquisitions (Arbi et al., 2017). According to Barney (1991), idiosyncratic organization resources and capabilities were sources of competitive advantage (Chatzoglou et al., 2018). Competitive advantage was to gain the above industry average by exploiting market opportunities and neutralizing of competitive threats (Sigalas & Papadakis, 2018). In conclusion, both RBVs and DCVs let researchers understand phenomena under investigation how organizations' leaders pursue competitive advantage using resources and capabilities (Arbi, et al., 2017). RBVs researchers underlined that leaders applied VRIO to gain competitive advantage, while DCVs researchers used internal resources and external capabilities of a firm to maintain competitive advantage (Arbi et al., 2017).

Conceptual Argument of Relational View

A relational view opposed the transactional cost perspective (Vos & Achterkamp, 2015). According to Dyer and Singh (1998), the relational view surpassed the two strategic paradigms, i.e., firm-level efficiency and the market and competitive paradigms, how to achieve competitive advantage and above-normal returns (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). Williamson's (1975) transactional cost theory and the first paradigm, i.e., firm-level efficiency, explained competitive advantage and above-average gains from idiosyncrasies of resources and development of capabilities within firm boundaries and attributes of an organization (Carter et al., 2017; Laari et al., 2016). The argument was that resources could span beyond their single boundaries (Carter et al., 2017) and confirmed the inadequacy of capability defined by Teece et al. (1997) to gain insights of an environment for realizing relational benefits (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015).

Porter's analysis did not sufficiently delve into the network relationships within which the firm was operating, setting in (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). Porter's paradigm strategists perceived the creation of competitive advantage through the attributes of market relationship (Arora et al., 2016). Strategic alliances could create a competitive advantage because alliances were the sources of competitive advantage but not the attributes of market relationships (Arora et al., 2016). The relational view strategists tried to understand the inter-firm network as a unit of analysis (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015) and systematically perceived idiosyncratic inter-firm relationships, connections, linkages, routines, and processes as the sources of competitive advantage and above-normal rent generation, gains (Laari et al., 2016). The relational view extended firms' boundaries, and the unit of analysis in the relational view included the networked business environment. The strategists focused on innovation in relational networks and social capital development through inter-organizational networks (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015).

Relational views. Business leaders, according to Dyer and Singh (1998), knew the importance of relationships. Leaders had insights that competitive advantage emerged from the company business owners owned and from those partners' network SBOs had access (Arora et al., 2016). RBVs strategists claimed that idiosyncratic resources were the sources of competitive advantage, and relational views' theorists theorized that unique and jointly owned resources were the sources of competitive advantage (Crick, 2019). Dyer and Singh identified four sources of competitive advantage through inter-firm partnership, for Dyer and Singh perceived the creation of competitive advantage was beyond a single organization (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). Four categories of relational views' competitive advantage included investments in relation-specific assets, the inter-firm or network knowledge sharing, partner complementary resources and skills, and effective governance methods (Arora et al., 2016).

The relational views and competitive advantage. Above-normal gains and competitive advantage could not be feasible for a specific market or an individual firm, but above-normal gains were the integration of resources dispersed in governance relations (Arora et al., 2016; Brito & Miguel, 2017). Morgan and Hunt (1999), governance mechanism provided partners protections in the form of trust, credibility, and commitment that minimized conflicts, fostered cooperation, and enhanced long-term relationships which resulted in improved performance (Arora et al., 2016). Negative forces embedded in bad policies, processes, and people were factors that hindered organizational change, created conflicts, diminished alliances' performance, and deterred value co-creation relationships that impeded the process of competitive advantage (Fawcett et al., 2015).

According to Dyer and Singh (1998), firms' collaborations to obtain relational gains were the view of relational researchers (Fawcett et al., 2015). The relational view provided researchers with cross and-inter-firm processes, relationships, activities, collaboration, and partnership (Laari et al., 2016). The results of the inter-firm collaboration were trust, credibility, and effectiveness and included commitment and trust in the partners' expertise, skills, and capabilities (Arora et al., 2016; Brito & Miguel, 2017). Partners possessed the skills and complementary capabilities that could share knowledge and information (Doney & Cannon, 1997) and had the ability and willingness to engage in multiparty planning that contributed and demonstrated a commitment to the overall process (Arora et al., 2016). A partnership could help business leaders to leverage these resources by combining resources in unique ways that leaders may not achieve gains independently. The partnership was the source of complex integration of resources, investment, knowledge, and capabilities (Laari et al., 2016) and entailed trust, coordination, adaptation, and commitment (Arora et al., 2016).

According to Dyer and Singh, resource specificity was the driving factors in relational view because of differential advantage resulting from idiosyncratic investments (Laari et al., 2016). Allied partners leveraged their idiosyncratic tangible and intangible resources such as organizations' assets, knowledge, and skills, by mixing, combining, exchanging, or investing in unique ways (Arora et al., 2016). Partners employed effective governance mechanisms across the network of the firm to gain a competitive advantage (Brito & Miguel, 2017; Carter et al., 2017).

Efficient exchange routines and complementary activities facilitated knowledge sharing, inter-organizational learning (Brito & Miguel, 2017). The mechanisms of learning created and established in the network let learners combine resources in unique ways in the network processes to gain competitive advantage (Arora et al., 2016). According to Dyer and Singh (1998), resource specificity was the unique support of specific inter-organizational relationships that enhanced productivity and inimitability of nonreplaceable, nonfungible tangible and intangible resources that sustain competitive advantage (Laari et al., 2016). The integrated partnership produced co-specialization, smooth and rapid information flows, and streamlined processes (Monios & Bergqvist, 2016).

Network. Networks were a set of systems of independent multiple relationships or interactions among businesses, entrepreneurs, and customers in an exchange of goods, services, and information (Nuryakin & Ardyan, 2018). Networks connected businesses and customers, and the connection could be in the form of physical products, information, and technology (Booyens et al., 2018). Interconnections, responses, and reactions strengthened the network through accessing information, interactive learning process, developing and spreading of innovation (Nuryakin & Ardyan, 2018). The characteristics of networking were trust, responsibility, and accuracy (Challen et al., 2019; Liu & Ye, 2020). Through collaboration and cooperation, SBOs could build trust that helped partners share information and resources (Svante et al., 2018). SBOs reduced the cost of business and increase productivity through trust and commitment (Lunnan et al., 2019). When SBOs went beyond transaction-based exchange, SBOs could develop a long-term relationship built on trust. Long-term partnership facilitated inter-organizational cooperation that may bring a competitive advantage and created commitment (Svante et al., 2018). In the case of a strategic alliance, long-term relationship was a relationship mechanism that created cooperation, coordination and mutual commitment among the partners (Børve et al., 2017). Some practitioners and researchers considered trust as the critical factor in creating and developing healthy relationships (Mohy-Ul-Din et al., 2019). Trust was a prerequisite for partners' successes (Lee & Lee, 2019; Yang et al., 2019), an antecedent or predecessor of cooperation and economic development. Trust was an essential feature of business transactions, interactive activities, and cooperation (Lee & Lee, 2019; Yang et al., 2019).

Strategists of firm-level efficiency and Porter's five forces contributed to the body of knowledge on how to achieve CA (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). Strategists did not focus their above-normal gains based on the network relationship within which the organization was operating. According to relational view strategists, Dyer and Singh (1998), an inter-organization network was the unit analysis. Idiosyncratic, inter-organizational partnerships, routines, and processes are the source of CA and relational gains (Eloranta & Turunen, 2015). Through network collaborations, allied partners invested in relation-specific resources, created inter-firm knowledge sharing, advanced complimentary resource and skills, and effective governance mechanisms (Brito & Miguel, 2017). Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) and Stuart et al. (1999) stated that network was the process of joint value creation that may occur through resource complementarity, cost defrayment, and risk sharing among organizations (Lo & Hung, 2015).

Transactional. Transactional market (TM) owners focused on internal and product activities and internally oriented, and their primary aim was not customers' behavior (Glavee-Geo & Engelseth, 2018; Law et al., 2018). TM occurred when there was no intention of future exchange (Glavee-Geo & Engelseth, 2018). Consumers, in the context of TM, were passive, and little interaction occurred (Glavee-Geo & Engelseth, 2018). Transactional marketing (TM) was a process that emphasized a single transaction and product features (Abu Farha et al., 2019; Smyth et al., 2019). It also included a short scale time and limited consumer or customer commitment and moderate communication (Prasetyanto & Setyawati, 2019). TM mitigated opportunism that occurred through competition, while network facilitated the creation of trust and cooperation (Lo & Hung, 2015). The adverse side effects of opportunism were resources and value misappropriation between organizations on the inter-firm relationship (Lo & Hung, 2015).

Entrepreneurs

Creative problem solving, and innovation were the landmark of entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs acquired these capabilities through experiences and learnings (Dao, 2018). Entrepreneurs obtained task motivation in the spheres of their knowledge, interests, and goals (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Entrepreneurs produced novelty of goods, services, or technological processes (Padilla & Cachanosky, 2016) through identifying a market, creating a new system of producing and delivering or obtaining resources to customers (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Entrepreneurs created new goods, new methods of production processes, new market, gained new sources of raw material and developed new organizations that broke existing business monopoly (Acosta et al., 2017).

Entrepreneurs played a significant role in the economy (Naidu, 2018). SBOs involved in creating growth-oriented new businesses, generating employment. Entrepreneurs caused productivity growth (Naidu, 2018), set up and commercialized productivity as well as enhanced innovations (Halabi & Lussier, 2014).

Cantillon (2010) described an entrepreneur as a creative individual who thinks, wills, takes actions, and risks to make gains and profits by strategically allocating and employing resources in the marketplace (Mankgele & Fatoki, 2018; Sahabuddin & Thaha, 2018; Savall &

Hillon, 2017). Entrepreneurs possessed the knowledge for survival, development (Hanifzadeh et al., 2018), and embodied traits that set entrepreneurs apart from ordinary discoverers (Arnold, 2019; Van Rensburg & Ogujiuba, 2020). Ordinary discoverers did not have the will and energy to push through new combination against odds (Arnold, 2019; Van Rensburg & Ogujiuba, 2020).

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship was an engine of the economy and a source of economic development (Sasongko et al., 2018). The recognition, identification, and exploitation of opportunities were the essence of entrepreneurship (Arielle & Storr, 2018; Rossano-Rivero & Wakkee, 2019). Entrepreneurship fostered innovation and enhanced productivity, competitiveness and local and regional development (Halabi & Lussier, 2014; Olteanu & Constantin, 2018). Promoting entrepreneurship enabled policymakers to target unemployment and poverty (Halabi & Lussier, 2014). Entrepreneurial creativity was an implementation of novel ideas to create a new startup business or new resourcefulness and inventiveness within an existing venture (Kunaka & Moos, 2019).

SB Owners

SBOs created jobs and energized economic growth and contributed to the majority new jobs creation (Irene, 2017; Sasongko et al., 2018). The perceptions of SBOs about the state and national economy had an influence on the growth and profit of their business (Braidford et al., 2017; Kaya, 2018). SBOs were sensitive to their communities' issues and partook in the social and economic betterment of their communities and alleviated poverty. SBOs contributed to the growth and development of national economies (Irene, 2017). The role of SBOs in the creation of jobs, entrepreneurship, and innovation was vital, and SBOs drove the socio-economic development of both the emerging and developed countries (Irene, 2017). SBOs faced many challenges such as poor managerial skills, difficulty in accessing financial resources (Mupani & Chipunza, 2019), the dearth of trained personnel, and reduced implementation of new technologies (Karadag, 2015). In emerging economies, SBOs dealt with high rates of taxes and bureaucratic problems (Karadag, 2015).

Success and Failure of SBOs

Researchers did not have a universal theory why SBOs succeed or fail (Gyimah et al., 2019; Hyder & Lussier, 2016) and measured success using economic measures such as survival rate, the number of employees, sales growth, and profitability (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). In the context of Pakistan, researchers evaluated success from the angle of financial resources, marketing strategy, technological resources, government support, along with entrepreneurial skills (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). Likewise, failures of SBOs were either internal or external factors (Li, 2018). Internal factors included those causes within the control or management sphere of owners or managers (Li, 2018). External causes were beyond the control of owners and managers (Oladokun & Ogunbiyi, 2018). The internal factors included a low level of education, unskilled employees, low social capital, poor management, and debt (Mupani & Chipunza, 2019; Xayavongsa & Pholphirul, 2019).

SBOs may not know, which problems to avoid, may speedily fail (Xayavongsa & Pholphirul, 2019). SB failed to grow and expand from the lack of financial planning, limited access to funding, and lack of capital (Karadag, 2015). SBOs did not succeed because of the lack of planned growth, little strategic and financial projection, unnecessary and disproportionate fixed-asset investment and capital mismanagement (Karadag, 2015). Halabi and Lussier (2014) noted there was no commonly acknowledged theory for success and failure of SBOs. Financial factors were not part of the Lussier's (1996) model because start-ups of SBOs did not have sales history that was an essential characteristic of capital models (Halabi & Lussier, 2014). Failure of SBOs was the subject of considerable debate. There was no universally accepted theory about failure of SBOs versus success (Gyimah et al., 2019; Hyder & Lussier, 2016).

The failure of businesses was related to aspects of owners' behavior and internal and external elements (Mupani & Chipunza, 2019; Xayavongsa & Pholphirul, 2019). SBOs were looking inward and did not focus on customers and market requirement because of the occurrence of failures (Mayr & Lixl, 2019). SBOs also had poor management skills and believed that SBOs could do the activities by themselves. SBOs did not consider applying strategic management. Strategic management approaches enabled SBOs to grow sustainably and profitably (Elshaer & Augustyn, 2016; Shujahat et al., 2017). The Lussier and Halabi's 15 factors were as follow. The first five features were business experience, capital, partners, education level, and age of the owner. The second five were planning, management experience, record keeping and financial controls, economic timing, and family business experience. The third five were staffing, marketing skills, minority ownership, use of professional advisors, and product/service timing.

Management Skills

Performance management was activities, which confirm the consistent achievement of goals effectively and efficiently manner (Wang et al., 2018). Ineffective management was one of the leading causes of SBs' closure (Xayavongsa & Pholphirul, 2019). SBOs required having marketing, sales, and cash flow analysis skills to maintain the growth (Visser & Chodokufa, 2016). Marketing people aimed to create strategies and generate income for sustainable profitability. SBOs identified the needs of buyers and used prospecting and demonstrating products (Oyedele & Firat, 2019).

Learning and Human Capital

SBs lacked structured human resource policies (Mupani & Chipunza, 2019). Employees gained knowledge, skills, and experiences tacitly (Venkatachalam et al., 2019). Human capital encompassed the individual stock of proficiencies, insights, personality traits to execute business-related activities and had a mechanism to distinguish employees' experience, proficiency, education, training, and social relations skills (Venkatachalam et al., 2019). Acquiring basic knowledge and training ease and facilitate creativity and helped workers to possess tacit knowledge. Tacit marketing knowledge consisted of an investigation of customer and business rivalries, target market analysis, and assessment of features of the cultural and economic environment (Basit et al., 2017).

Transition

The current literature on achievement and failure of SBOs were equally diverse and varying. In Section 1, I discussed the background of the research problem in the literature review. In the literature review, the discussion included themes such as entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, SBs, SBOs, success and failure of SBOs, management skills, and learning and human capital. The Section contained a focus on the need to identify development opportunities and constraints and lay the groundwork for the research. Also included was the nature of the study, the research question, and the conceptual framework. In the documentation, I explored SB from many perspectives. The perspectives were RBVs and DCVs, as well as RVs and included SBs, learning of SBOs, and competitive advantage. SBs are quite different from medium and big enterprises, and researchers do not conduct or evaluate SBs from the perspectives of big businesses. Managers and SBOs take into consideration the changing world from the perspectives of competitive advantage. Section 2 has a thorough account of the research methodology and design, population and sampling, data collection instruments, and techniques. The chapter contains a comprehensive discussion of data gathering and organization techniques, data analysis techniques, reliability, and validity.

Section 2: The Project

The CSAE categorizes SBs into formal and informal. The formal SBs have licenses and registration from the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, whereas the informal SBs do not have permits and are not registered, and they do not pay taxes. Of 98% of micro and SBs, 65% are SBs in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

SBs account for more than half of employment in Addis Ababa. Only one-third of new startup enterprises have succeeded beyond 3 years. The problem under exploration in this study was strategies that small Ethiopian retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 3 years. Inquirers have not identified factors that allow SRBOs to survive beyond 3 years. There has been little research on what promotes the growth of these SBs or what contributes to their failures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple case study was to explore strategies that some small Ethiopian retail business owners have used to succeed in business beyond 3 years. The target population consisted of four small Ethiopian retail business owners that have succeeded in business beyond 3 years in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The result social change may take place through lower failure rates and better viability of SBs that may decrease the poverty levels of the citizens of Ethiopia. Higher profitability of SRBOs may increase tax revenue and provide the Ethiopian government to expand infrastructures. The expansion of infrastructure requires a workforce that may reduce the unemployment rate.

Role of the Researcher

Research consists of rules, researchers, paradigms, arbiters (reviewers and editors), publications, and trophies (Everett & Earp, 2015). Reviewers require knowing the roles of researchers, and scholars should clarify their roles in qualitative research (Sanjari et al., 2014). Kruth (2015) and Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that researchers conducting a qualitative study represent the primary data collection instrument. Social scientists accept the role of the researcher as a participant in understanding a context and collaborator in findings (Pelosi, 2015). The researcher is a tool for data collection and analysis across all phases of a qualitative research project and has an ultimate influence on data gathering and analysis within qualitative research (Gelling, 2014). In this multiple-case study, as a study researcher implementing qualitative research methodology, I was the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and representations of findings.

Researchers facilitate a condition that lets participants construct and narrate their experiences and outlooks (Harvey, 2017) and possess a perception that participants are active and interactive individuals (Sorsa et al., 2015). Researchers must also be open and flexible to establish trust (Robinson, 2016) to obtain rich and in-depth interview data (Sorsa et al., 2015). The investigator goal is to understand the perceived realities as realities appear to participant (Laitinen et al., 2014). I perceived participants as active and interactive individuals. I built trust and facilitated conditions that provided participants a ground to narrate and construct their experiences, outlooks, and worldview.

Qualitative researchers understand that the assumption of research is safe (Harvey, 2017) that create a benefit to individuals, communities, and societies at large (Bromley et al., 2015). Qualitative researchers' inability to handle the research study correctly may bring significant physical, social, communal, legal, or economic damage (Bromley et al., 2015). Researchers must observe and stick to the ethical rules that govern the scientific community (Everett & Earp, 2015). Qualitative researchers always bear in mind that the responsibility to cause no harm is in the hands of researchers (Harvey, 2017). Researchers ensure that participants feel secure and comfortable to share their thoughts and experience (Harvey, 2017).

Because I was the primary data gatherer, I adhered to the ethical guidelines and standards of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979, known as The Belmont Report. Belmont Research protocol that underlies the protection of human subjects has the fundamental ethical principles for human subject research (Laage et al., 2017). The fundamental principles are respect-for-person, justice, and beneficence (Laage et al., 2017), and expressing ethical actions (Bromley et al., 2015). Students use IRB-approved human subjects' procedures, which include assigning pseudonyms to both interviewees and location to protect confidentiality (Burkhardt & Bennett, 2015), and pseudonyms include individuals, places, and organizations (Sanjari et al., 2014). Qualitative researchers take into accounts such as anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. The central principle of informed consent is the responsibility of researchers to inform participants of the different features of the study in a comprehensible language (Sanjari et al., 2014). I protected personal information such as secure data storage method, elimination of identifier components, and pseudonyms and used informed consent. I did member checking after data collection.

Qualitative researchers directly participate in interviews, transcriptions, analysis, verification, and reporting the research's ideas and themes (Sanjari et al., 2014) and are the data collection tool (Kruth, 2015). Qualitative researchers recognize that qualitative researchers as an instrument in interviews, transcriptions, analysis, verification, and reporting the research's ideas and themes lend to the potential for bias (Toews et al., 2016). The reason is that the opinions and experiences of qualitative researchers come as part of their perspective on a case study research (Yin, 2018). Consequently, inquirers' explicit understanding of their social background, training, beliefs and assumptions and feelings, which social scientists term the process as reflexivity, help inquirers to conduct different stages of their studies with ease (Norton, 2017). The process of understanding researchers' subjectivity is a step forward as a way of learning as a co-constructor of data (Norton, 2017).

I took notes, digitally recorded, and transcribed verbatim to reduce personal bias using bracketing. Bracketing mitigates unacknowledged preconceptions or bias, which may taint the study process (Snelgrove, 2014), enhances the rigor of the study (Jorgensen & Duncan, 2015), and accurately describe participants' life experiences and worldviews (Heinonen, 2015). One way of proving the absence of bias in the study, I did not have a personal or professional association with any of the prospective participants. I also applied triangulation and member checking to mitigate bias. Triangulation helps researchers to collect data from multiple sources (Yin, 2018), and members checking provides members to verify the information researchers collected (Harvey, 2017).

In qualitative research, interviews are the primary source of data (Jeong & Othman, 2016). Researchers understand participants' lives, phenomena, and context through interviews (Easterling & Johnson, 2015). I used the same standardized interview protocol to enhance reliability. An interview protocol keeps all participants engaged on the same questions and issues (Jamshed, 2014).

Participants

Inquirers apply purposeful sampling to increase information richness (Ames et al., 2019; Wiens et al., 2016). Homogeneous purposeful sampling involves choosing specific individuals with a similar category to identify and enrich cases about a selected phenomenon of interest

(Stratton, 2019). Purposeful sampling ensures that participants have experiences in a phenomenon in question (Stratton, 2019).

I selected participants according to the purpose and research question that shed light on the phenomenon. I chose eight participants using the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce directory and personal references. I also used purposeful sampling and selected a homogeneous population that met the selection criteria. In qualitative studies, the research question determines the eligibility of participants (Stratton, 2019). Eligibility is the inclusion and exclusion criterion of participants (Quinn & Ravani, 2016). Based on purposeful sampling, I established the eligibility guidelines for the study participants. The participants of this qualitative exploratory multiple-case study were four SRBOs. The eligibility criteria were: (a) SRBOs living in Ethiopia, (b) their businesses are in Ethiopia, (c) participants thriving in the retailing business beyond 3 years, and (d) the owners were above the age of 21.

The criteria include the willingness to participate in the research (Morar et al., 2015; Sheppard et al., 2016). I acquired the knowledge and skills of communications. The experience of culture, social interactions, and language skills influence accessing and selecting participants (Fjellström & Guttormsen, 2016). I personally contacted SRBOs and tell SRBOs the importance of the research and received their consent because access to participants is the determinant factor for the failure and success of the study. After searching using the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce directory and personal references and finding participants, I let participants know the study's objective.

Researchers treat participants as partners and experts to build trust and to create a conducive working relationship (Hart-Johnson, 2017). The informed consent process helps to facilitate and establish the relationship between a researcher and participants and enable interviewees to understand the importance of the study (Hart-Johnson, 2017). A case study protocol facilitates the creation of a working relationship between participants and a case study researcher (Yin, 2018). I used the disclosure and consent form for signature before I commenced the interview. The copy includes a notice to each interviewee, the objective of the research, the responsibility and commitment, and adhere to confidentiality terms. I let participants know that interviewees are free to discontinue and withdraw at any time without penalties. I ensured members that their personal, identifiable identities and information remain confidential and did not incorporate in the study report.

Openness, negotiation, communication, and transparency are the cornerstone allowing respondents to share their concerns and deciding whether to participate or withdraw from the research (Persad et al., 2019). Establishing connections such as listening, asking relevant questions, learning, and observing enable researchers to create a conducive working atmosphere (Costello & Dorris, 2020). After getting permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I contacted the potential nominees via phone calls. The consent form contained my contact information to allow the participants a chance to share their questions or concerns.

I informed participants personally and through a letter, the intention of the study, and described to SRBOs that participation was always voluntary, and their right to withdraw anytime SRBOs wanted. I provided participants with the letter, interview questions, and the informed consent form. The consent form is consistent with Walden's ethical requirements and stipulates the potential risks, benefits, issues of confidentiality, and a voluntary participation description. After I obtained consent from SRBOs, I scheduled interviews. I provided the semistructured questions 5 days before the interview and informed participants that the first interview may last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Social scientists apply three research methods, which are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods, to know and understand a phenomenon (Kruth, 2015). Quantitative researchers collect data through numerical, statistical measurements of a phenomenon (Divan et al., 2017; Koivu & Damman, 2015). Researchers analyze the data, applying the mathematically based system that is statistics (Divan et al., 2017; Koivu & Damman, 2015). Statistics is a standard system, which both natural and social scientists apply (Koivu & Damman, 2015). Quantitative researchers conduct their studies in a controlled environment to provide an objective investigation of an event (Kruth, 2015).

Qualitative research consists of non-numeric textual data and small samples' usage to uncover deep rich insight (Kruth, 2015). Qualitative researchers perform their research in a natural environment and do not try to control the setting and the participants (Kruth, 2015). The objective of qualitative researchers is to try to understand a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants, and inquirers suspend preconceptions to know the accounts of actors in the day-to-day situations (Fletcher et al., 2016). Consequently, inquirers study personal experiences to find and explore common themes (Lindberg et al., 2016) and extract data from language, various expressions, and implied meanings to know and understand a particular environment (Kruth, 2015). Researchers summarize themes or approaches, organize and present the frequency of mentions of topics, phrases, or words (Kudlats et al., 2014; Percy et al., 2015).

Mixed method is either a concurrent or sequential explanatory study that provides researchers to explain a phenomenon using either first quantitative data or qualitative in two concurrent or consecutive phases within one study (Bentahar & Cameron, 2015). Researchers interconnect data and integrate results at some stage of the research process and face the challenges of priority, implementation, and integration (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). Hybrid method inquirers implement mixed method when either a quantitative or qualitative method is insufficient to understand the research problem better or capture the trends and details of a phenomenon (Ma, 2015).

The use of quantitative and mixed methods in this study were not appropriate, for I did not choose to gather data through numerical, statistical measurements. A qualitative study helps scholars to explore complex multiple and heterogenous dimensions of SBOs that need exploratory study, detailed participants' skills, insights, and views to understand and interpret a phenomenon (Aragón et al., 2016). An exploratory study is essential where there is limited evidence, and limited evidence is the reason why qualitative researchers adopt qualitative approach (Aragón et al., 2016; Bradbury-Jones & Broadhurst, 2015; Kruth, 2015). Inquirers address fundamental and practical problems in the field of business management, and without applying the qualitative method some managerial processes are very challenging to identify, understand, and investigate (Aragón et al., 2016; Runfola et al., 2016). My aim with this study research was to explore what strategies small Ethiopian retail businesses owners used to succeed in business beyond 3 years. Inclusive of the above criteria, I chose qualitative research because qualitative research enabled me to gather relevant, rich, and in-depth data to investigate the unexplored phenomenon and to know individuals' attitudes and perspectives in the context.

Research Design

The five qualitative designs are (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, (c) narrative, (d) grounded theory, and (e) a case study (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Kruth, 2015). I chose a case study design. Narrative researchers concentrate on a single individual or groups and identify significant events narrating in chronological order (Joyce, 2015; Kruth, 2015). Narrative inquirers uncover complex problems (Kourti, 2016) and apply a narrative to explore the biographies and experiences of individuals told chronologically (De Loo et al., 2015). Narrative design was not applicable because I did not intend to describe individuals' biographies and experiences chronologically.

Meaning was the essence of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The central idea of phenomenology is the intentionality of consciousness; individuals are always conscious of something (Matua, 2015). Phenomenological researchers aim at exploring and understanding the essence of an experience (Kruth, 2015). Phenomenological investigators analyze perceived and lived experiences and worldviews of participants to produce new meanings, set aside presuppositions and prejudices not filtered through reflections for evaluating data, and accept perceptions as sources of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994; Percy et al., 2015). The focus of the study was not to explore and reflect the lived experience of participants or the essence of an experience.

Inquirers use grounded theory when researchers concentrate on the creation of theory (Kruth, 2015). Rather than writing a description of an experience or an exploration of a case (Kruth, 2015), grounded theory inquirers generate approaches of participants' views of a particular phenomenon, develop and elaborate theories (Percy et al., 2015). Grounded theory was not relevant to the type of problem I intended to investigate in the study because the researchers of this strategy used data to create a theory.

Ethnographers seek to understand how people together create and sustain cultures (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Ethnographers aim at describing shared social beliefs, cultural behaviors, patterns of attitudes, and experiences of a group over a long time and apply ethnography (Kruth, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Wall, 2015). I did not intend to explore beliefs, behaviors, or ethnic groups for a very long extended time.

A case study design is a strategy of inquiry, which allows inquirers to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-life context using multiple sources (Houghton et al., 2015; Kruth, 2015). Case study researchers explore a bounded system from multiple perspectives and concentrate on contemporary issues (Reidge, 2003; Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2018). Stake (1995) and Yin (2018) described the use of a case study as a strategy of inquiry that enables inquirers to study a phenomenon in a real-life setting (Ridder, 2017; Runfola et al., 2016).

Case study researchers apply this methodology in the field of management and organization studies to promote understanding of the dynamics present within single settings (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Researchers reveal and construct issues and dynamics by comparing similarities and contrasting differences in multiple case studies (Ridder, 2017) and are instruments to look into known issues from different perspectives (Stichler, 2016). According to Eisenhardt (1989), case studies are valuable to study a phenomenon characterized by little empirical substantiation, where researchers have little scientific evidence about a phenomenon. Few researchers to date have conducted studies on small retailing businesses in Africa (Dakora et al., 2014) and particularly in Ethiopia (Gerba, 2012). If the research topic has limited sources of literature or evidence, a case study is the right inquiry approach (Bradbury-Jones & Broadhurst, 2015; Kruth, 2015; Runfola et al., 2016). Inclusive of the above criteria, I chose a multi-case study design for the study because a case study allows the gathering of relevant, rich, and in-depth data and focusing on contemporary issues, and enabled me to do a thorough exploration and interpretation of a complex data.

Novice scholars face a dilemma about determining data saturation in their studies (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Saturation occurs when further coding is no longer viable (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Saturation is a summit or a pinnacle, or the point at which additional data are irrelevant to a particular issue (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). Researchers strike a balance or attune tradeoffs whether to use a large or small number size in agreement with the objective of the study and design of a particular research study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Roy et al., 2015). Saturation is about information redundancy; any other additional data gathering does not yield new emerging data (Gentles et al., 2015).

I used data triangulation to ensure data saturation. Triangulation is the arrangement of several strategies in the exploration of the same phenomena and one way of warranting data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018; Gentles et al., 2015). Saturation implicates adequate information and collect quality data to support the research (Foley et al., 2017). No other additional coding is feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I also used triangulation as a mechanism to ensure data saturation and assured that I could no more obtain new emerging ideas, information, and when I found the repetition of themes.

Population and Sampling

Population

Poppe et al. (2017) classified sampling into three: purposeful or purposive, snowball, and quota. The three sampling, purposeful or purposive, snowball, and quota, enables participants to voice their experience and insights holistically and naturally (Poppe et al., 2017). Purposeful and purposive sampling is an equivalent expression of the same concept (Gentles et al., 2015). The term purposive sampling is more often applicable to terminologies of representative sampling in quantitative (Gentles et al., 2015). I chose purposeful or purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a mechanism to select participants under pre-selected criteria that address the research question (Gentles et al., 2015; Poppe et al., 2017). According to Van Manen (2014), the use of purposeful sampling is to help to select interviewees based on their knowledge and eloquence to describe the target population under the study. Purposive sampling is a non-random mechanism, which ensures researchers include categories of target or study population (Robinson, 2014).

Quota-based sampling is a technique that helps researchers to identify and represent the same portion of the entire population (Kline, 2017; Poppe et al., 2017). Snowball sampling is applicable for a marginalized, not easily accessible, difficult-to-reach or hidden community. Researchers apply snowballing sampling to ask and identify other individuals based on the recommendation in the sample (Kline, 2017; Poppe et al., 2017). I did not select quota-based and snowball sampling because I did not intend to represent the same portion of the entire population nor to explore the marginalized or hidden population.

Researchers determine sample size based on three criteria: the objective of the study, design and professional judgment, and experience (Sim et al., 2015). Sample size, which is an element of design, is a consideration in qualitative research and affects the validity of research (Vasileiou et al., 2018). In defending the sample size, researchers often cite the works of scholars as a basis for their ranges of sample size justification (Gentles et al., 2015). Researchers like Creswell (1998, 2002) from experience observed that three to five cases are enough for a case study, and up to 10 individuals for phenomenological research (Roy et al., 2015). McCracken (1988) considered that conducting eight lengthy, in-depth interviews was a waste of time, money, and resources (Roy et al., 2015). Eight participants are sufficient for data saturation in a multiple-case study. Gentles et al. (2015) underlined that experienced researchers apply four to ten cases. According to Yin (2018), citing Peter Szanton's (1981) that was an exemplar of a multiple-case study or replication design, eight cases or participants are sufficient for developing a convincing effect. Westrenius and Barnes (2015) apply eight cases in their Australian SB studies, and Omar (2015) used four cases of women SBs in Johor Malaysia.

I purposively selected eight SRBOs as participants and choose four SRBOs based on willingness, experience, eloquence, and knowledge for this research from Addis Ababa. Researchers collect data from participants (Asiamah et al., 2017). The selected participants belong to a study population (Poppe et al., 2017). A population is a group of individuals possessing universal, shared features, characteristics, or attributes (Asiamah et al., 2017). Researchers categorize a population into three types: general population, target population, and accessible population (Asiamah et al., 2017). The general population is the largest group of qualitative research (Poppe et al., 2017). Following the above criteria, people in this population share at least one essential feature, and one of the features is being SBO in Addis Ababa.

The target population is the most eligible potential participants that possess other attributes and best source of information and may include inclusion and exclusion criteria (Wesson et al., 2017). The target of the sampling is to confirm that the sample results in abundant, relevant, and imperative essential data that can address the question posed (Patton, 2015; Wiens et al., 2016). I selected participants according to the pre-selected criteria and addressed the research question.

The pre-selected criteria for the target population are as follow. The target population is SRBOs succeeding in the retailing beyond 3 years. The target population is those SRBOs working in Addis Ababa. The nominee should engage actively in the SBs activities and must be at least 21 years of age. The business must be in operations at least above 3 years and should be among formal SB that have licenses and registered. The selected must be a resident of Ethiopia. The chosen participants should know international trade. To obtain more information, the interviewees' experience and knowledge is determinant. I had a plan for eight volunteers and chose four as per criteria. The research question was what strategies do SRBOs use to succeed in business beyond 3 years?

The accessible population is those group of individuals meeting the target population criteria and are willing to participate (Asiamah et al., 2017). I selected the target population according to the above criteria and was voluntary to participate in the study and was willing to sign the consent form. The exclusion criteria are ISBOs operating for more than 3 years.

Scholars use the term saturation to assess the adequacy of a sample (Hennink et al., 2019). Data saturation is the redundancy of information (Boddy, 2016; Roy et al., 2015). Data saturation is a point or stage where additional data gathering does not provide new information or issues identified (Gentles et al., 2015). Data saturation is also a term to indicate that researchers have achieved enough data gathering (Kline, 2017), have identified, explored, and exhausted issues, concepts, conceptual categories, linkages (Hennink et al., 2019). Frequent member checking helps to gain more detailed and accurate information and provide researchers with opportunities to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Interviews offer detailed and in-depth information (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The rationale for applying purposeful sampling was that the carefully chosen participants met unique, different, or essential perspectives on the phenomenon and could provide information-rich cases for in-depth research. I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews with selected and voluntary participants. I did interviews at favorable and convenient places to the SRBOs. I ensured the interview location was quiet and with minimal interruptions and distractions. I intended to take an hour and half of the interviews of each participant that included member checking and established rapport. I collected working documents SRBOs, financial data, and business plans.

I conducted observation and took field notes of my observation at their workplaces and during interviews. I also used triangulation and member checking for data saturation. I adhered to the ethical standards of The Belmont Report and ensured protecting confidentiality by keeping SBO information secret and coded.

Ethical Research

Leaders of the scientific communities formulate the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence to maximize the possible benefits of society and minimize harm to individuals (Hajivassiliou & Hajivassiliou, 2015). The scientific communities created a formalistic system and mandatory guidelines that consist of filling out forms and getting ethical clearance from the institutional committee (Greenwood, 2016) and designed informed consent (IC) and revered the principles (Anae, 2016). The ethical policies and guidelines leaders formulated are subject to four notions: responsibility, respect for autonomy, beneficence, and justice (Bennett, 2016; Bromley et al., 2015). Because of ethical misconduct during the Second World War, scholars gave extreme emphasis on the code of conduct in their research studies (Ramchandra, 2014).

Researchers delve into the concept of vulnerability originated in the United States Belmont Report (Bracken-Roche et al., 2017). Some critics contend that the guidelines do not help researchers develop ethical behaviors and protect vulnerable populations (Bracken-Roche et al., 2017; Madeira, 2015). Supporters of the regulations defend these ethical rules claiming that the ethical review board can regulate experts' actions and provide the ethical review board tools for avoiding damage and harm to participants (Bromwich, 2015). Responsibility involves ethical activities; respect for persons indicates voluntary participation; beneficence embodies maximizing benefits and reducing harm, and justice denotes the idea of the fair distribution of benefits and risks of research (Bromley et al., 2015). Dilemmas that involve ethical concerns is respect for privacy, the creation of honest and open interaction, and avoidance of misrepresentation (Sanjari et al., 2014).

Before conducting research, researchers require a priori informed consent (Pip Creswell & Jean Gilmour, 2014) because voluntarily signed approval is mandatory for doing any research (Alahmad et al., 2015). The informed consent (IC) is a permanent testimony or record (Lad & Dahl, 2014). IC includes more information than word of mouth can convey, and members can use IC as a reference (Lad & Dahl, 2014). The institutional review boards have little power to direct or manage informed consent communication and must ensure that the document is complete (Lad & Dahl, 2014). IC also serves as a legal contract that establishes a contractual relationship between researchers and study participants (Lad & Dahl, 2014).

Procedures and ethical guidelines of IC require researchers to inform members voluntarily, and scholars document the agreement (Kim & Kim, 2015). Most participants do not understand the value of IC (Brehaut et al., 2015; Hajivassiliou & Hajivassiliou, 2015). The value of IC is the protection and enhancement of their autonomous decision (Brehaut et al., 2015; Hajivassiliou & Hajivassiliou, 2015). IC is an ongoing process (Pip Creswell & Jean Gilmour, 2014; Vučemilo & Borovečki, 2015) whereby participants express their consent (Negussie et al., 2016; Vučemilo & Borovečki, 2015) or refuse to take part in the research (Vučemilo & Borovečki, 2015). IC protects individual subjects (Pip Creswell & Jean Gilmour, 2014).

IC has two primary purposes, which are to respect and promote individuals' autonomy and protect individuals' autonomy from potential unintended harm (Hajivassiliou & Hajivassiliou, 2015). The principle of respect for persons incorporates the provision of information, comprehension of information, and voluntary participation (Negussie et al., 2016). IC also includes, in the process, the objective of the study the procedures, which are how many times researchers gather data and the expected duration of interviews (Negussie et al., 2016). IC contains the possibility of withdrawal from the study at any point of the investigation, as well as maintain the privacy of the participant. Respondents have the right to communicate researchers' institutions for questions and information about participants' right (Negussie et al., 2016).

Researchers reflect the value of beneficence, justice, and respect at each stage of their studies (Amerson & Strang, 2015). Compliance with ethical principles is an essential factor to be successful in research (Pip Creswell & Jean Gilmour, 2014). Researchers explain and ensure that participants have a clear understanding of the research purpose and procedure (Kim & Kim, 2015), and the IRB obligate researchers to disclose the objectives, risks, and benefits of participation (Pip Creswell & Jean Gilmour, 2014). Information sheets and consent forms are the most important instruments to explain the study and record signatures of participants that indicate members' voluntary consent (Pip Creswell & Jean Gilmour, 2014). Confidentiality and respect for members are paramount ethical principles in the research, as well as create and deepen trust between the researcher and participants (Alahmad et al., 2015). The breach of these two principles may harm individuals by creating stigma and discrimination (Alahmad et al., 2015). The simplified version of informed consent is effective in improving participants' understanding of IC (Kim & Kim, 2015).

People live and mature through relationships with others and are relational (Anae, 2016). Relational dimensions provide researchers with insights into the nature and applicability of ethics (Verbos & Miller, 2015). In developing countries, qualitative researchers provide a relevant, informed consent, which is suitable and applicable to the culture of the countries while aligning the IRB's set of rules (Addissie et al., 2014; Amerson & Strang, 2015; Killawi et al., 2014). Qualitative inquirers conduct research studies in a culturally appropriate manner while bringing into line, adapting, and weighing principles of ethical research in developing countries such as in Ethiopia (Abay et al., 2016).

Negussie et al. (2016) raised concerns about signed documented forms in some cultures, for ethics is all about right and wrong; good and evil (Kirsten et al., 2017). Individuals' and communities' experiences indicate that potential participants may not be willing to sign because their consent in the "legal" forms have made potential participants a victim in the political, economic, and social life (Negussie et al., 2016). The harm includes the loss of property and sanctions against participants (Negussie et al., 2016). Gaining informed consent requires good communication skill (Pip Creswell & Jean Gilmour, 2014), is an arduous process in the traditional society, and creates frustration for researchers (Alahmad et al., 2015). In some cases, in Ethiopia, researchers consult families before inquirers communicate with individuals, and some incentives are necessary for participants to conduct research (Negussie et al., 2016). Negussie et al. have recommended allowing adequate time for participants to decide whether to participate in the research or not. IC regulations are not enough for participants to make optimal decisions (Brehaut et al., 2015; Hajivassiliou & Hajivassiliou, 2015).

I introduced potential members to the research, first, through face-to-face conversations and then via a cover letter. In the letter and a face-to-face discussion, I discussed the objective of the study and explained the confidentiality and privacy of their participation. Participants participate voluntarily (Vučemilo & Borovečki, 2015). I informed members of their right of withdrawal and could remove themselves from the research study at any time. Participants received small t-shirt gift item; I kept their identities secret. Participants received a copy of the research. The data remains secured in a safe place for the coming 5 years.

Respondents received copies of the informed consent form. I discussed with the participants the goal of the study. The consent form includes details about expectations from the members, a statement of consent, a statement of confidentiality, a description of the voluntary nature of their participation, and telephone address (Negussie et al., 2016). Candidates received the assurance of anonymity. The anonymity of street names and addresses of SRBOs and locations of SBs remained secret. I maintained the anonymity of owners' names and the names and addresses of SB in data coding. I conducted data gathering only after getting the approval of IRB, the IRB number is 03-13-20-0298481. I remained honest and kept participants' information confidential. I maintain data in a safe place for the coming 5 years. After 5 years, using the latest technology, I will erase and destroy the data.

Data Collection Instruments

Researchers have an implicit share in gathering valid and reliable data and use and reuse their data-gathering instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; L; Yin, 2018). Qualitative inquirers use interviews to collect data and prepare schematic questionnaires to obtain information and explore a phenomenon that addresses the central research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers implement semistructured interviews that contain open-ended questions for all participants that help the interviewer to explore systematically and comprehensively (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers apply other types of semistructured interviews and conduct a face-to-face interview, through a phone conversation, and via email as well as web-based interviews (Zeytinoglu et al., 2017). The interview questions include the central research question and other lists of overarching research related issues (Nelson, 2016).

Qualitative researchers guide respondents to focus on the core issues, change the phrases and order of questions, raise new flexible analytical problems and have the freedom to ask for elaboration. Researchers can refine their questions during pilot testing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I was the primary tool for data gathering and conducted a semistructured face-to-face interview with selected SBOs.

Researchers have an implicit share in gathering valid and reliable data and use and reuse their data-gathering instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2018). Qualitative inquirers use interviews to collect data and prepare schematic questionnaires to obtain information and explore a phenomenon that addresses the central research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The interview questions include the central research question and other lists of overarching research related issues (Nelson, 2016). Before initiating the interview, respondents should have time to reflect on the questions (Witt et al., 2016). Researchers guide respondents to focus on the core issues, change phrases and order of questions, raise new flexible analytical problems, and have the freedom to ask for elaboration and refine questions during pilot testing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I was the primary tool for data gathering and will conduct a semistructured face-to-face interview with selected SBOs.

I audio recorded because the primary purpose of the interview was to have the depth knowledge of participants' experience. The reason for the use of semistructured interview is that researchers use semistructured as their primary instrument to collect data (Demirdöen, 2016; Wilson et al., 2016). During the process, the interviewer poses questions to know about a phenomenon, while the interviewee provides knowledge about a phenomenon by replying to the questions (Witt et al., 2016). A semistructured interview is flexible that has structured elements (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

Case study researchers use multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). Triangulation is a qualitative research strategy to test and ensure validity through the convergence of information from various sources (Abdalla et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers produce convergent findings by applying multiple approaches or triangulation and enhancing the validity of the study's conclusion (Adams et al., 2016). Jick (1979) viewed triangulation as the combination of several inquiries or strategies in the investigation of the same phenomenon (Hayashi et al., 2019).

I used the latest voice recorder application on my laptop. I also used a handheld digital recorder and tested it before I started recording. The primary gathering tools are (a) interview template, (b) digital voice recorder, and (c) the latest Audacity computer software (Burton & Nesbit, 2015). The computer, which accommodated the Audacity software, was a laptop. Recording of interviews is more accurate and efficient than handwritten notes because qualitative researchers may miss essential points during writing (Jamshed, 2014). I also wrote notes in coiled notebooks during the interviews.

I took notes to record date, time, and location, and to understand words and insights that I learned in moments, and I used analytic ideas to sort and organize emerging themes. I included direct quotations from the data that supported the insight in the notes or memos. The data gathering techniques consist of recordings, members' observations, and interviews notes (Zeytinoglu et al., 2017). Comparing the sources of data, transcribed data, and handwritten interview notes, researchers triangulate the data sources (Booton, 2018).

The interview protocol included 11 semistructured interview questions. Interview Protocol is an instrument that creates an initial, solid ground for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Witt et al., 2016). The protocol also enables researchers to standardize their assessment (Burton & Nesbit, 2015). I shared interview transcripts with members. I shared transcripts with members in person and gave respondents from two to three weeks to read and give their feedback.

Qualitative inquirers have to determine a quiet site (Jamshed, 2014). A quiet site is convenient for the participants (Jamshed, 2014). I interviewed four willing participants. First, I called participants, introduced, explained the objectives of the study, asked for their willingness, and arranged a meeting. After I met participants, I discussed the importance of IC and provided participants a copy of IC, and scheduled a date, time, and location for an interview. I interviewed respondents for an hour individually. I also set aside an hour additional time for lateness and emergencies. Open-ended questions help members to deliver their wealth of experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the process of semistructured open-ended questions, new themes and concepts may arise or emerge through the interaction, and the richness and depth of the interview increase the validity of the research (Burton & Nesbit, 2015; Zeytinoglu et al., 2017).

Member checking is a process of sharing interview transcripts and includes drafts of the final reports to ensure researchers are representing members and their ideas accurately (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). Member checking provides an opportunity for members whether researchers transcribe their thoughts, perceptions, and interpretations correctly (Hadi & Closs, 2016). Member checking is an essential constituent of validation in which researchers seek to identify views of participants about the accuracy of data collected, descriptions, or even interpretations and validate the reliability and credibility of data collection instruments (Bowman, 2016; Hadi &

Closs, 2016). Researchers ask participants to review transcripts for accuracy and palatability and request alternative languages or interpretations (Bowman, 2016; Hadi & Closs, 2016) and do not promise that the version would be in the final draft (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). Regardless, some feedback is worthy of inclusion (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). As an essential part of data collection instrument, I conducted member checking.

Data Collection Technique

The objective of the qualitative case study was to explore what strategies some small Ethiopian retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 3 years. Participants included purposively selected SRBOs from Ethiopia. Researchers devise a strategy to gather data (Chu &Ke, 2017). Yin (2018) indicated that case study researchers use multiple sources of evidence to ensure data validity and reliability. Case study researchers primarily apply semistructured interviews, participant observations, and documents (Chu &Ke, 2017). I used face-to-face semistructured interviews, reviewed SRBOs documentation, and conducted SRBO-employee observation.

IRB permitted a conditional approval. I had planned to go to Ethiopia to gain a cite approval and collect data in February 2020, but due to COVID-19 and bureaucracy, I could go to Addis Ababa at the end of May, the government quarantined me for fifteen days upon my arrival. IRB wrote a letter of support to the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington D.C. to gain access to the directory of formal SB and their telephone addresses. The Embassy wrote to the Ethiopian Diaspora Agency, and then the Ethiopian Diaspora Agency wrote a letter to the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations. The Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations wrote to Walden University that the Chamber would cooperate to give access to the data. Walden IRB approved to collect data. Initial request to the Chamber was to gain access to the formal SBs directory, and the initial communication with the potential participants was via telephone for two SRBOs participants for a pilot test. I selected eight SRBOs participants for the pilot test and choose four SRBOs for the study.

The initial communication was to explain who I was, how I got SRBOs telephone numbers for SRBOs. The participants' initial concerns were how I gained access to their telephone numbers. The initial telephone conversations were to ask SB physical addresses and make appointments. After the initial telephone conversations, the face-to-face communications included the purpose of my research and informed consent for pilot participants, permission to audio record SRBOs, facilitation of quiet and private areas, delivery of a copy of the IC and interview questions, and their decision and consent within a week. A week was enough to consult with their families and decide to participate or not.

Research requires a pilot test (Dikko, 2016; Stauber et al., 2017). A pilot test provides researchers insights into refining and producing relevant questions (Dikko, 2016). Researchers apply a pilot test phase to ensure that inquirers sufficiently describe all elements (Thellesen et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). A pilot test is essential for a qualitative study, for conducting a pilot test refines interview protocol and is a useful instrument for improving the reliability and validity of qualitative research (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I applied a pilot test to develop an exact case study protocol, including validity and potential bias. For a small number of participants, researchers use a pilot test to enhance the interview questions' internal validity (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). According to Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001), researchers apply the same interview questions, ask participants to identify vagueness and difficult questions, record the time taken, and decide to continue or discard the problematic questions. Researchers check that respondents give each item answers, assess the time and range of responses for each question, reassess and revise interview questions (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

Pilot studies are essential because pilot studies provide qualitative researchers with opportunities to assess procedures in gathering initial data in a new context and increase success (Stauber et al., 2017; Thellesen et al., 2017). A pilot test necessitates more time, cost, and feasibility of data-gathering instruments than the actual study (Yin, 2018). The selection criteria for picking a pilot study are convenience, access, and proximity (Yin, 2018). The pilot test is broad to include substantive issues. Moreover, the pilot test can influence a literature review, theoretical issues, relevant questions, and methodological issues such as prioritizing observation or gathering data (Yin, 2018).

At the beginning of July 2020, assassins shot and killed renowned singer, riots ensued, rioters burned businesses and killed many civilians and businesspeople. Most SRBOs closed their businesses due to political instability and insecurity. After the riot, the pilot-test participants consulted with their families and were willing to give interviews at home and in the church, respectively, due to the political insecurity the SRBOs felt. After obtaining SRBOs consent, I conducted the pilot test, asked participants the interview questions' clarity and assessed the interview questions. The interview questions needed no changes based on the pilot test. For their participation and sacrifice, I presented the two participants with a small t-shirt gift item.

After conducting a pilot study, the communication with eight participants using the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce directory and personal references was to schedule appointments for a meeting where the site was convenient for the potential respondents in person. After meeting and thanking participants for their willingness to come and participate, respondents introduced themselves. The discussion included the study's objectives and the purpose and importance of IC that the researcher would keep their identities anonymous.

I also explained to eight potential purposively selected respondents why I contacted participants face-to-face, the study's objective, confidentiality, privacy, and participants' willingness to participate voluntarily in the research. The discussion included the respondents' right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and the need for four voluntary participants who were SRBOs. I disclosed the criteria that I set to choose respondents: SBOs overcome challenges and succeed in businesses (Watson, 2016).

Potential interviewees received a copy of IC and scheduled date, time, and location for an interview. I collected eleven open-ended questions in person, letting SRBOs prepare for interviews to address the central question: What strategies do small Ethiopian retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 3-years? Once potential participants agreed to continue to participate, the participants signed the informed consent.

Approving a document was a critical factor in some cultures, and the responsibility was not only a personal matter. Mentioning the value of family and community involvement is the first step to building trust (Negussie et al., 2016). The meeting also encompassed that participants would agree to let the researcher in the workplace conduct observation on participants, see business documents or any additional documents such as memos, letters, business letters, working papers, financial data, and business plans relevant to the study, and the need for member-checking. SBOs should focus on internal business processes (Hanggraeni et al., 2019).

For a month, the political situation was very unsafe and seemed out of control. Businesspeople closed their businesses, and the local population did not have access to the internet. I had reduced access to the internet and used government offices through contacts and networks.

Among the eight participants, after consulting with their families, four were willing to participate in the interviews, observations, and member-checking. Three potential participants wanted to participate but were not ready for audio-recorded interviews. One SRBO did not respond at all. Participants scheduled a date, time, and a convenient, quiet location of their choice for an interview in two weeks. Two SRBOs preferred to give home interviews, one SRBO in the restaurant and the other SRBO in the office. Four participants signed the IC before the interview commenced.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated that researchers apply semistructured interviews with open-ended questions as a data-gathering technique to know, understand, and gain rich insights into the participants' experiences, knowledge, skills, and outlooks. SRBOs responded to eleven interview questions in order of 1 to 11, and participants answered some probing questions that let the researcher gain their knowledge, practices, insights, and record interviewees. The time framework for the interview for each participant was from 45 to 60 minutes. Participants chose the interview location and time.

I audio recorded SRBOs interviews using a digital recorder to capture their knowledge and experience. I used an Olympus WS-852 digital voice recorder with 41 days of audio recording capacity, adjusting the mic sensitivity to the voice volume automatically. I downloaded the latest voice recorder application on my laptop and plugged Olympus WS-852 digital voice recorder into my computer without using USB cable. The digital recorder's choice was for better clarity, simplicity, storage capacity, not prone to hacking, no need for a USB cable, and pose no threat or suspicion for port inspection in the third world. Mobile phones are susceptible to security risks and data breaches (Alsaleh et al., 2017).

I converted the audio files into written Amharic language, reviewed the full-text transcriptions in detail, provided summaries, and returned in person for further clarifications to the interviewees whether I summarized their thoughts, perceptions, and interpretations correctly. Data gathering is an iterative qualitative research process (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Yin, 2018). I translated the Amharic interview into English. I also took notes during the interviews to catch the main points discussed in the interview.

I conducted observations of how SRBOs expressed themselves when communicated with customers and employees in the SRBOs workplace. The observation included facial expressions, body movements, SRBO communication, whether SRBO listened or spoke more often, gestures, eye contacts, voice, and handling. Delivering the semistructured interviews in advance helps potential respondents to reflect and prepare for other emerging questions (Oates, 2015; Seedat et al., 2014). The qualitative multiple case study requires a semistructured face-to-face interview.

I reviewed organizational documents. The organizational documents review indicated that SRBO does not have a standard book of account, formal financial statements, and pay taxes as determined by tax-collectors. SBs must not have a book of accounts or financial information, and SRBOs pay taxes as determined by tax-collectors. Therefore, SRBOs do not have standardized financial statements and do not prepare income or profit loss statements. SRBOs prepare their financial statements as SRBOs deemed necessary or the way SRBOs understood it.

The SBs continuity, sustainability, and security allow SRBOs to always buy materials on hand, cover the necessary expenses, pay the wages, and enable SRBOs to pay for daily, weekly, or monthly traditional rotating credit saving association' allowances (Ikub) without any hassle. However, for the business to thrive, the owner's lack of in-depth accounting knowledge, tax cuts, and fees require various tax knowledge and standardized accounting protocols, which put SRBOs at risk and impede SRBOs from aspiring for a higher business level. As a result, SRBOs prefer to stay where they are to ensure their continuity and sustainability. Secondary data enhances trustworthiness (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2018).

After writing down the translated and interpreted data, I emailed and called SRBOs to ensure the participants received the email about the interpreted data and themes. I let participants review and confirm within 15 days. After 15 days, SRBOs confirmed that the interpretation revealed their outlook and experience. Member checking is one of the processes of assessing trustworthiness in data gathering techniques (Ang et al., 2016; Hadi & Closs, 2016). Member checking is the verification of the information researchers interpreted (Harvey, 2017).

I used methodological triangulation to gain insight into the context of SRBOs in Ethiopia and applied three conceptual frameworks or theories RBVs, DCVs, and RVs. Researchers use methodological triangulation as the combination of multiple data collection that includes interviews, direct observation, document analysis, participant observation, and field notes about the same phenomenon (Fusch et al., 2018). Triangulation is the gathering of data from various sources of the same phenomenon (Yin, 2018), the convergence of information from multiple sources (Abdalla et al., 2018), and one way of justifying data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018). Data saturation involves adequate information (Foley et al., 2017). I applied methodological triangulation that contained interviews, observations, and SRBOs company documents.

Data Organization Techniques

A case study has three principles of data organization techniques (Yin, 2018). Three principles of data organization techniques are multiple data sources, create a case study database, and maintain a chain of evidence (Yin, 2018). A single source is not advisable for researchers to conduct a case study (Ridder, 2017).

Coding is the first step of the data organization technique to interpret the raw data (Bonello & Meehan, 2019; Elliott, 2018). Coding enables researchers to capture words and phrases that capture salient information and label words and phrases (Bonello & Meehan, 2019). Researchers aggregate codes that have the same characteristics into categories and remove categories unrelated to the research question. Qualitative inquirers refine and merge categories and see if there is a relation among categories to create themes within-case and a cross-case (Bonello & Meehan, 2019). I used a folder structure like drawers and dividers, and nest, layer the folders within each other for a hierarchy. I began with four folders and created other folders for coding, pattern coding, and categories.

The first step was broad coding; the second stage was pattern coding. The third stage was grouping into a recognizable concept. I reviewed the entire data, broke down the data to identify themes and patterns, and assigned numbers and letters to designate categories. I created a code table for consistency, transparency, and accessibility. I categorized the coded data into groups and used subtopics and topics. Researchers apply computer-assisted qualitative data software (CAQDAS) to handle, store, and manipulate many data and provide understanding and meaning to the text (Houghton et al., 2015). Moreover, the software cannot substitute the researchers' critical analysis proficiencies (Niedbalski & Ślęzak, 2016). NVivo version 12 is a CAQDAS that provides data organizers with a process for managing data and ideas in both types of analysis within-case and cross-case analyses and is a useful tool, particularly for case study research (Niedbalski & Ślęzak, 2016; Zamawe, 2015).

Storage and retrieval of information are critical (Yin, 2018). The codes for the participants are SRBO1, SRBO2, SRBO3, and SRBO4. Corresponding codes for organizations SB1, SB2, SB3, and SB4; for field notes I used SB1-Memo1, SB2-Memo2, SB3-Memo3, and SB4-Memo4. Codes for observation are SB1-Ob1, SB2-Ob2, SB3-Ob4, and SB4-Ob4; codes for documents SB1-Design1, SB2-Design2, SB3-Design3, and SB4-Design4.

The function of NVivo© software is to aid analysis, which supports data organization systems, rather than performing the actual analysis like quantitative statistical software (Zamawe, 2015). For this study, I used NVivo 12. Qualitative researchers' responsibility is critical in analysis, and NVivo is nothing but a data organization package, which supports the data management process (Zamawe, 2015). I electronically uploaded the interview transcripts, field notes, observations, and companies' documents and keep the data on a password-secured hard drive and secure the hard drive memory data for the coming 5 years. After 5 years, using the latest version of the data eliminator, I will destroy the files protected by personal code on my laptop.

Data Analysis

I began data analysis after completing the data gathering and data organization. Analyzing and interpreting data are the most challenging part of a case study, for most of the inquirers do not know what to do with the collected data (Yin, 2018). I used the latest NVivo version 12 to handle, store, and manipulate a large quantity of data. NVivo is one of the best CAQDAS tools and reduces time and money-consuming qualitative data analysis efforts (Hilton et al., 2016; Zamawe, 2015). The emphasis on the research topic is to find, determine, classify, and understand themes. Themes related to what strategies do some small Ethiopian retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 3 years.

According to Patton (1990), researchers apply multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Ang et al., 2016; Carter et al., 2014). Researchers viewed triangulation as a qualitative research strategy to test and ensure validity through the convergence of information from various sources (Fusch et al., 2018; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Triangulation is the combination of several inquiries or strategies to investigate the same phenomenon (Ang et al., 2016). Triangulation encompasses the convergence, complementarity, and dissonance of results on related research questions, which researchers obtain from various methods or methodology, data sources, theoretical perspectives, and researchers (Adams et al., 2016). Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) established four types of triangulation (Abdalla et al., 2018; Fusch et al., 2018).

The four triangulation types are methodological triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation (Adams et al., 2016; Fusch et al., 2018). Methodological triangulation is the use or implementation of multiple methods of data gathering about the same phenomenon. Methodological triangulation includes interviews, direct observation, document analysis, participant observation, and field notes (Fusch et al., 2018). Theoretical triangulation is the deployment of two or more theories and investigates the same research problem dimension from various theoretical perspectives (Hoque et al., 2015; Modell, 2015). Investigator triangulation is the corroboration of two or more scholars' integrative analysis in a study (Adams et al., 2016; Archibald, 2016). Investigator triangulation is the involvement of different researchers in investigating the same data and phenomenon (Archibald, 2016). Data source triangulation is the gathering of various data of the same phenomenon from multiple settings over time to study continuing interactions (Fusch et al., 2018).

I used methodological triangulation that included interviews, observations, and SRBOs company documents. I applied three theories: RBVs, DCVs, and RVs. I uploaded information into the latest version of NVivo 12. Qualitative case study methodology (QCSM) is a comprehensive approach to explore a complex issue (Houghton et al., 2015). Methodologists do not formulate adequate data analysis guidance for QCSM (Houghton et al., 2015). According to Eisenhardt (1989), in multiple case study, researchers apply two types of analyses: Within-case study and cross-case analyses (Houghton et al., 2015). Scholars develop themes to capture and unify the nature of the phenomenon and do not explore the context as separate units instead establish inter-relationships (Houghton et al., 2015). I used a within-case study and cross-case analyses.

Morse (1994) created four analysis strategies: comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing, and recontextualizing (Houghton et al., 2015; Racine & Lu, 2015). Comprehending is the collection of adequate data in which researchers can compose detailed, coherent, and rich descriptions (Houghton et al., 2015; Muganga, 2015). Comprehending involves initial, broad coding, or comprehending is a process of creating codes inductively. The code is a conceptual label that researchers extract raw data, and, in NVivo, the first code text structures are nodes. Researchers use research questions to create opening lists of codes, which are preliminary decontextualized data (Muganga, 2015). Researchers remove information from the context (Muganga, 2015) and use tree nodes in NVivo to acquire conceptual clarity and identify patterns among data (Houghton et al., 2015).

Synthesis is the creation of more meaningful pattern coding, analysis using explanatory and inferential codes and is the first step of sense-making, the merging of perceptions (Houghton et al., 2015; Muganga, 2015). During the conceptualizing stage, researchers fractured and decontextualized data. The second step is synthesizing. Researchers reassemble and create a more meaningful pattern, summarize critical information, collect and categorize the same codes conceptually, make thematic statements, and give sense-making expressions (Muganga, 2015). Theorizing is the collection of an identifiable group of concepts and integrated understanding of events, processes, communications, and exchanges (Houghton et al., 2015) and is a mechanism where researchers distill and create orderly memos (Carmichael & Cunningham, 2017). Theorizing is a way of making comparisons among different perspectives, observational data, and testing the executive summary statements against the data so that researchers can find and trace back to the data (Houghton et al., 2015; Jagals & Van, 2016).

Recontextualizing is the creation and development of propositions, which apply to the context and population (Houghton et al., 2015). Researchers formalize and systemize the tested executive summary statements into a coherent set of explanations and propositions and compare their findings with those of previous similar studies to ensure the transferability of their findings

(Houghton et al., 2015). I applied the four analysis strategies: comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing, and recontextualizing in the study.

The five stages of Yin's five-step analysis are compiling, dissembling, reassembling, interpretation, and conclusion (Yin, 2018). I also implemented Yin's five-stage plan of analysis. According to Yin, compiling is transcribing and put into a useable form or creating a database. I read and reread the transcript and become familiar with the data and made a database in this stage. The second stage is disassembling (Yin, 2018). I took apart, broke down the data separately, and created new meaningful fragmented groupings or labels. The second stage process requires coding that is initial data analysis or unit of analysis. Reassembling is the process of clustering and categorizing the labels and codes to create themes that reveal a bigger picture, and according to Yin, this is the third step. The fourth step is the interpretation steps, which according to Yin, are the narration of what the researchers understand as a whole of the themes they found. Yin posited the last is the conclusion that is the recommendations and application of the findings. Researchers conduct qualitative analysis by focusing on the research question (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Reliability and Validity

Scholars cannot apply quantitative measurements of reliability and validity to qualitative methods because both methods have different philosophical outlooks, approaches, and purposes (Baskarada & Koronios, 2018). Validity refers to the precision, integrity, and application of the systems that the results reflect and are consistent with the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). Reliability denotes the consistency and replicability of the research that any scholars using the same approach can reach the same comparable conclusions (Noble & Smith, 2015).

In qualitative research, researchers achieve neutrality or confirmability when researchers address consistency and applicability by differentiating philosophical perspectives and experience from participants' accounts (Noble & Smith, 2015). Validity in qualitative research signifies truth value that there is no one reality but multiple realities: researchers recognize their viewpoints may result in methodological bias and accurately report participants' views (Noble & Smith, 2015). I conducted a pilot test, triangulation, and member checking to enhance the study's reliability and validity. Quantitative researchers use four criteria to validate their research and findings: internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity, while qualitative researchers correspond the analogous measures as dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Lincoln and Guba (1985) replaced the quantitative terminology of reliability and validity with the qualitative term trustworthiness that constitutes four criteria. Trustworthiness subsumes four dimensions: dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability.

Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which a standard, procedure, or instrument produces similar outcomes on repeated research (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Reliability is the minimization of inaccuracy and bias (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015) and represents the constancy and stability of the data. Qualitative researchers compare reliability to dependability in qualitative research (Cope, 2014).

Reliability refers to dependability that reflects the steadiness of data over analogous settings (Cope, 2014). Dependability is the logical, traceable, and carefully documented investigation process (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Ways of achieving dependability are conducting members checking of data interpretation, transcript review, interview protocol, and data saturation. Before I conducted a pilot test and semistructured interviews, and doctoral committee members validated interview questions and interview protocol. I did the initial interviews and interpreted interviews. Then, I gave those interpretations back to participants for validation. I conducted member checking to verify the accuracy of the report and the validation of the data interpretation. Data saturation is a mechanism by which researchers ensure the dependability of their findings (Yin, 2018), and I confirmed the dependability of the outcomes by achieving data saturation. The strategy to establish dependability is by creating an audit trail (Cope, 2014). I applied primary data, secondary data, field notes, identified method and methodology, integrated and connected findings to the existing literature and the study's conceptual framework, and established a clear research path.

Validity

Historically, the idea of validity is a concept that integrates a set of scientific and objective criteria (Jang et al., 2014). Researchers apply these scientific and objective criteria to determine the degree to which the findings of research could approximate the truth with certainty (Jang et al., 2014). Scientists equate the notion of test validity with objectivity and accuracy (Noble & Smith, 2015) to measure unobservable individuals' qualities or abilities (Jang et al., 2014). Methodologic philosophers of interpretative and constructive paradigms like Lincoln and Guba (1985) questioned the adequacy of value-free or value-detached test validity and have challenged any foundation of absolute criteria for legitimizing knowledge claims. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that what researchers claimed to evaluate was not observation devices rather inferences derived from indicators. The inferences are about meanings, interpretations, and implications of actions, which the interpretation entails (Jang et al., 2014). Validity is the extent to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on evidence (Jang et al., 2014). Qualitative researchers correspond validity with the comparable measures of credibility, transferability, and confirmability in qualitative studies (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015).

Credibility. Credibility corresponds to internal validity (Yin, 2018), that deals with the believability of account of a phenomenon and findings (El Hussein et al., 2015). Credibility is a term that describes accurate and logical descriptions (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015) and truth of data and its interpretations. Individuals in a similar situation recognizes the experience, and the findings convinces readers as true (Cope, 2014; El Hussein et al., 2015). Credibility is also a familiarity with the research topic, logical connection between observations and categories, and the sufficiency of data so that experts agree with claims (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Researchers achieve credibility by implementing prolonged engagement, Yin, and member checking strategies (Abdalla et al., 2018). I conducted a continued engagement with members and applied data triangulation using multiple sources to ensure the gathering of comprehensive data addressed the research question. I collected data from face-to-face semistructured interviews, observations, company documents, as well as member checking that enabled me to triangulate.

Confirmability. Confirmability is analogous to construct validity, which is the development of new tools to link abstract concepts to measurable indicators or entities in quantitative research (Aravamudhan & Krishnaveni, 2015). Scholars' abilities to identify correct operational measures produce confirmability (Yin, 2018). Confirmability is also the idea that study readers can easily understand findings and interpretations linked to data (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). The objective of rigor is the precision to represent respondents' views and their contexts (El Hussein et al., 2015). Confirmability is the accuracy of the data reflected in the researchers' capacities to validate that data represent respondents' perspective but not scholars' bias or vantage points (Cope, 2014; El Hussein et al., 2015). Fittingness also includes records of activities, convincing illustrations of evidence, logical presentations (El Hussein et al., 2015) and a chain of evidence also is one criterion (Yin, 2018). Four significant steps to maintain a chain of evidence is (a) case study findings; (b) case study database, which are documents, observation, and interviews; and (c) citations of specific evidentiary sources in the case study database. A chain of evidence also includes case study protocol (Yin, 2018). A case study protocol links questions to protocol topics, and research questions (Yin, 2018). If another observer reads the findings and wants to trace the basis for the outcomes, then the evidence must convince the reader in both ways. Researchers learn in both directions from case study questions to findings or vice-versa (Yin, 2018). Maintaining a chain of evidence must be tight enough to persuade the reader presented in the chain of evidence (Yin, 2018).

I demonstrated impartiality in many stages of my studies such as in the interpretation, illustrations, and conclusions, and I confirmed that my findings result from the research data. I achieved confirmability through a detailed audit trail and triangulation. I used NVivo because the software helped me to enhance the confirmability of the research. NVivo provided me with an extensive path of decisions when I gathered data and conducted the analysis. I established an audit trail, applied NVivo query tools so that I may determine if the views were not the perception of a single respondent but rather the perceptions of many participants.

Transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used transferability to indicate the notion of generalizability. According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), transferability is similarities researchers find in another research context (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Transferability is one of the four criteria, which indicate whether qualitative researchers apply or transfer the assessment beyond the borders of the project (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Transferability corresponds to external validity or generalizability of findings in quantitative research. Scholars ability to illustrate the research outcomes have meaningful connotations, fittingness, relevance, and applicability to other corresponding contexts (Cope, 2014; El Hussein et al., 2015). In the meantime, qualitative researchers keep the meaning and inferences of the original study (Cope, 2014; El Hussein et al., 2015). Transferability also has practical usefulness in understanding practice (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Practitioners judge if the findings have intrinsic associations with the practical knowledge, which helps business management field or organizations (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Qualitative researchers do not directly indicate, as in the case of quantitative research, the transferability of their findings (El Hussien et al., 2015). Transferability occurs when readers find that the findings have meanings and decide the adequacy and transferability of the results in their context (Cope, 2014). Transferability is the ability of scholars to keep a chain of evidence (Yin, 2018). The rich, thick description of data is the strategy to confirm transferability.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I clarified the study area to explore what strategies small Ethiopian retail businesses use to succeed in business beyond 3 years. Why SB could not grow and mature, subsequently, investigate factors that facilitate their progress and impediments. The findings may have positive social implications by providing and supporting SB to continue and withstand the obstacles for their survival. Apart from their survival, SB may contribute to poverty alleviation and benefit the unemployed, their lateral and end customers, families, communities, and the Ethiopian economy. Section 2 consists of explaining my part in the data gathering practices and provides a report of the research topic and an in-depth dialog of the study and study samples. The doctoral study includes a qualitative methodology and a case study design. The participants for the research included SRBOs and managers in central Ethiopia. Participants were also successful SRBOs remaining in business for at least 3 years. Respondents are owners and SBs managers in

Ethiopia's retailing business. Before getting the agreement from the IRB, no data gathering took place.

I used referred articles and used Ulrich's Periodical Directory to confirm that articles were scholarly. In Section 3, I included the research findings, a comprehensive interpretation of the empirical evidence, and synthesized to the conceptual framework. The conclusion of Section 3 is to provide a conclusive implication for social change, further research recommendations, and my considerations.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The objective of this qualitative exploratory multiple case study was to explore strategies that some small Ethiopian retail business owners have used to succeed in business beyond 3 years. This study's primary research question was: What strategies do SRBOs use to succeed in business beyond 3 years? The target population included four SRBOs that succeeded in business beyond 3 years in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I conducted open-ended semistructured interviews to understand, explore, and learn about strategies that four SRBOs used to succeed in business beyond 3 years in Ethiopia. RBVs, DCVs, and RVs were conceptual frameworks that I used for this study. The data came from four SRBOs interviews, SB documents, memos, and SRBO-employee observations. The study design was an exploratory multiple case study. I applied NVivo 12 that was a data analysis software to import, organize, code, and explore that grouped data into themes. I used methodological triangulation of open-ended semistructured interviews, business documents, memos, and observations, six thematic categories emerged. The six themes were (a) business-centric knowledge, (b) entrepreneurial skills, (c) relationship and networking, (d) innovation and creativity, (e) customer-centric approach, and (f) support system. The findings showed strategies that SRBOs have used to succeed in business beyond 3 years. Themes help researchers to understand the context under exploration (Fernández-Sola et al., 2020). I presented the themes that explained the context under investigation discovered during triangulation. I also conducted triangulation and member checking. Researchers conduct triangulation and member checking to ensure validity and reliability of the study and data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018; Hall, 2019).

Presentation of the Findings

The primary research question in this study was: What strategies do SRBOs use to succeed in business beyond 3 years? Data sources for the study analysis and findings were semistructured interviews, SB documents, observations, and memos from four SRBOs in Ethiopia.

Table 1

Emergent Themes

Themes

The first theme that emerged during the analysis was business-centric knowledge in a successful small retailing business. Business-centric knowledge was essential, without which SBOs could not succeed. SRBOs, who had skills and experience, study the market, and they know how to develop specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the business, could gain a competitive advantage. All four participants created particular knowledge and skills, and SRBOs applied their skills, knowledge, and attitudes to differentiate from other competitors to produce excellent quality, customer service, and product innovation.

One of business-centric knowledge was customer knowledge. What did my customers want, and what might be their future requirements for future products or services? All participants said managing customers and identifying needs was vital. SRBO1 underlined, “SRBOs need to identify customers’ needs, carry items that meet their needs, and treat them as families.” SRBO2 added, “I have to study my customers’ needs.” SRBO3 indicated, “First, I need to know what the customer wants and what attracts the customer.” SRBO4 added, “Customer is first. In Ethiopian terms, the customer is the king. You need to be able to please your Customer as much as you can.” SRBO4 added, “There are small items that may not bring SRBOs that much profit. But SRBOs have to be able to carry those items.”

Experience was the memory of past events that SRBOs learned skills and expertise, learned mistakes, and applied in businesses. SRBO1 indicated that prior experience in business gave real expertise to survive and succeed. SRBO1 underlined the experience, “And I saw how my spouse paid, paid the price for negligence, so I have to be careful in my business.” SRBO2 stated, “My past thoughts and experiences have given me the courage to start again, doing my retailing business.” The business experience was a lesson that SRBO1 said, “This (the experience) has made me more diligent, attentive, and hardworking.” SRBO2 shared the retailing experience before starting a business. SRBO2 expressed, "I was doing a little bit of retailing stuff; I used to work. I used to take bread here and work in commission for retailing. I worked at one time, the commissioning and retailing job." SRBO3 emphasized the value of experience, "When you have work experience, through time, you know what customers want." SRBO2 indicated, "I used to go sell small items to those who worked there in addition to my work. When I met them and communicated with them, I accepted their feedback." SRBO3 explained the importance of business knowledge and how experience and training enabled SRBO3 to get inspired, "I will reach great heights." SRBO4 stated, "My families are people in the business community." SRBO4 added, "I started the business, as I told you when I was incredibly young, but I grew up supporting my father. That means I know the job."

Market knowledge was to know about your service sector and how others entered, competed, and performed in the market; how much other SRBOs charged, and new products to attract customers. All four participants agreed on one critical experience. Market knowledge was the most vital factor to grow and expand their businesses. SRBO2 indicated, "I change my strategy if the profit may start going down. I study my strategy well."

SRBO1 detailed,

> I had studied the business because I went around buying things and observing. When I started working, I had many kinds of products that I purchased from the shops. I also watched the quality of products, assessed, and interviewed businesspeople how retailers were doing. I learned from these businesspeople. I used to go around checking working hours, studying, and observing if the business has sufficient business activities. Researched, observed, tested mine and others' flavors. (SRBO1, personal communication, August 4, 2020)

SRBO3 said, “When SRBOs trade, SRBOs do research.” SRBO4 indicated, “SRBOs have to be able to study.” SRBO4 added what nascent SRBOs should ask, “What kind of business should I open that can be feasible?”

The other crucial business-centric knowledge feature was that SRBOs should strive to know about suppliers to start a business. Suppliers may give discounts and information about the status of items in the market. SRBO4 described the market and, after observing the market. SRBO4 started the distribution work to the neighboring retailing community in addition to retailing.

SRBO4 expressed,

> The price of the company is stable, constant most of the time, but if there is a shortage and if there is no a lot of production, brokers, and sellers in Merkato, distributors make big profits by suppressing market speculation, and distortions (SRBO4, personal communication, July 4, 2020).

SRBO2 and SRBO3 said that selecting and building client relationships was essential, for clients provide SRBOs with the advantage of discount and access and knowledge of the quality product. SRBO1 stated, “My clients are excellent. Clients told me in advance that such kind of item in shortage and advised me to store.”

SRBOs indicated critical skills that SRBOs should strive to possess: Planning, knowhow of expenses, and saving. SRBOs also showed that registering, first-in-first-out approach, inventory knowledge, and customer-oriented service enhanced the survival, growth, and expansion in retailing. SRBO2 stated, “We had a plan as a startup. SRBO2 added, “When we plan, it’s a matter of priorities.” SRBO3 underlined, “I started to plan. What did I do? I could not do all things by myself." SRBO1 indicated, "You make a plan: When you plan, you understand, you need to have some capital at some point. During this time, you may say, 'I should buy this.'" SRBO4 stated, "I had to save that was my plan, and we made it happen. I bought a car, and the car was better than pushing items, loads by the cart."

All participants underlined SRBOs should strive to save money; one of the saving mechanisms was engaging in the traditional ROSCA that let SRBOs save money and invest. SRBO2 said, "When I understand and know my income and expenses, I started to save on what I worked on." SRBO1 added, "I will list the cost of goods, profit, and the cost of labor." SRBO1 stated, "Businesspeople must know the income and expenses of a business. If SRBOs do not understand the income and expenses, their organizations will not grow." SRBO1 stated, "It is good to know the income and expenses of the business. A business should grow." However, SRBO1 expressed a nongrowth factor, "There are so many factors that prevent a business from growing." SRBO1 added, "Expenses prevent businesses from growing." SRBO4 also described the challenge of saving in the bank and underlined,

> When I work, I can have a chance to save, deposit in Ikub. It is impossible to keep in a bank while withdrawing your money. Something is always coming up. Something else is also coming up; so, there is still a chance to draw (SRBO4, personal communication, July 4, 2020).

SRBO4 stated that the saving solution is only in traditional saving, i.e., Ikuib.

Lussier (1996) stated that SBOs better had the prior industry experience to conduct effective business practice. Lussier predicted that those business owners with little experience in their business were likely to fail. According to Ropega (2020), business experience prior to initiating own business was essential. SRBOs should strive to learn the knowledge and skills required to do business (Rankhumise & Letsoalo, 2019). One of the skills that SRBOs should attempt to learn was marketing (Mandják et al., 2019; Nuryakin & Ardyan, 2018). SRBOs using marketing created value for customers and established, cultivated, developed relationships, and seized value in return (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). SRBOs created and developed relationships based on trust; trust was vital for SB's survival and growth (Nuryakin & Ardyan, 2018). In developing countries like Ethiopia, business owners made contracts with individuals SRBOs trust, for trust was a fundamental factor that tied communities and enforced responsibilities than formal law enforcement institutions such as court and police (Fandl, 2020). Ismanto et al. (2020) indicated that business culture influenced SB's survival, growth, and development. SRBOs trusted the traditional saving system than the formal financial institutions for saving and investment (Fandl, 2020).

Resources were either tangible or intangible, and business owners used resources to compete and achieve competitive advantage (Wernerfelt (1984). Prahalad and Hamel (1990) stated that owners created integrated and various resources to compete and succeed in the marketplace. Skills and knowledge were intangible. Further, organizational leaders' specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes may pose difficulty to imitate by their competitors (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

According to (Barney, 1991), resources had valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable features. Firms were heterogeneous because entrepreneurs' experience, knowledge, and insights differed from one to another (Barney, 1991). Following Barney (1991), all four SRBOs competed with others' rivalries by exploiting their unique experience, knowledge, and attitudes to gain a competitive advantage. SRBOs' specific knowledge, experience, skills, and attitudes created values that were immobile, imitable, and non-substitutable.

The main pillars of RBVs, DCVs, and RVs were resources, competence, capabilities, and relations were the source of performance, growth, and competitive advantage (Mandrella et al., 2020). Competence was the business owners' knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities (Peach et al., 2016). Taylor et al. (2016) underlined that competence was business owners' input and contributed to business growth and competitive advantage. The business-centric knowledge theme aligned with the body of knowledge concerning the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

Emergent Theme 2: Entrepreneurial Skills

The second theme that emerged during the analysis was entrepreneurial skills in a successful small retailing business. Participants acknowledged that learning, cultivating, and applying entrepreneurial skills played a significant role in the retailing business. SRBO1 indicated that entrepreneurs should strive to identify their interest in business, and SRBOs possess and cultivate skills to decide, commit, and persevere.

SRBO4 emphasized, "The first is to convince yourself. There are always problems. Still, you have to believe that problems pass, and you get solutions." SRBO4 added, "The first is moral, internal resolution, commitment. Once you know how to preserve your morals, you will never fail whatever comes in your way. Even when you fail, there is a chance to rise."

SRBO1 stated,

> And while my spouse was managing one, I asked myself, why not I went searching for any other job, traditional culinary, considering my culture, for I had skills in traditional

culinary, because, at that time, I didn't know what else to do (SRBO1, personal communication, August 4, 2020).

SRBO1 added,

With no money in my hand, I asked a dealer, go-between to search for a shop where I could make my commerce; I boldly started looking for a shop to rent. I found a shop. When I saw the shop, I had no money in my hand (SRBO1, personal communication, August 4, 2020).

SRBO3 stated, "The interest, passion, and desire were inside me. I could say I started with no money and access to credit. But after identifying what I want, I just started to satisfy my desires." SRBO1 underlined the key to success, "The key to success is not to give up. I do not give up; a business can fail no matter what you do or may slow down. But my mind does not rest." SRBO2 discussed that SRBOs should attempt to ask if SRBOs have maintained the necessary skills and knowledge to grow; one of the skills was cultivating patience. SRBO1 highlighted the need for patience, "I have a patient attitude. I am patient." SRBO3 added, a commitment was not enough; SRBOs should consider saving and establishing ROSCA, communication skills, and building trust.

SRBO3 emphasized the skills to do business,

When SRBOs trade, SRBOs do research. SRBOs conduct a study; SRBOs do research. What do people take in the area, take here, what is the village? What do villagers want? SRBOs study: do villagers wish to quality, cheap, or do villagers want expensive (SRBO3, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SRBO1 added, "I learn from my failure. I would ask the question of why the business failed." Business owners strive to create access to finance (Rankhumise & Letsoalo, 2019). SRBO1 underlined the risk to form Ikub or traditional revolving saving and crediting association, "When I gather people to collect their monthly or daily premiums, I am taking a risk." SRBO4 stated that SRBO needs to have the skills to assess the trend and market and find out what customers want. SRBO2 said, "My abilities are to take care of my customers, to be able to persuade my customers, to provide good things, to study the current market situation." SRBO4 added that owners could not attract and retain customers without creative thinking and innovation; all participants stated that focus and resilience are essential qualities to succeed and ready to learn from failure. All SRBOs indicated that SRBOs learned from failure as an opportunity to assess themselves and scan the changing environment. SRBO1 expressed, "I do not despair; I do not lose hope. I believe that once I fail, I can rise again. Believing that failure a lesson by itself." SRBO1 added, "I learn from my failure. I would ask the question of why the business failed." SRBO1 told how failure was a learning experience, "I would take all the above into account as a learning experience. I will be meticulous, cautious not to make such mistakes again. Other than that, my business failed, for I wanted to do my job." SRBO1 added, "When I take a risk, I think there might be a chance to go bankrupt. There may be bankruptcy. I do not stop working and risking for fear that I may fail."

SRBO4 indicated, "Our job is that it has its cool flow; then, at some point, the job lets you down. When sale slows down and goes down, you do not have to quit." SRBO4 underlined, "First of all, what you need to do is that you need to bring your experience, knowledge, and capital and invest in your business to sustain your work." SRBO4 described the context in which SRBO operate, "These days, in Ethiopia, a lot happens and there was no peace at all. The absence of peace has its own impact on your work. Do you understand me?" SRBO4 added, "It means, the political conflict and all others impact the business sustenance. Second of all, there is a pandemic, Corona, creates problems." Then, SRBO4 indicated how to use entrepreneurial skills, "What do you do with these problems when you are involved in the business? You bring some profit of the past and experience; add all these to produce effects to sustain your business."

Entrepreneurial skills increased business performance (Mohamad & Chin, 2018) and boosted entrepreneurial aims that let entrepreneurs choose and make a conscious decision (Yarima & Hashim, 2018). Entrepreneurs focused on what entrepreneurs had and improved and innovated ways to attract customers and get profit (Coda et al., 2018). The readiness to learn and change provided SRBOs with a capacity to improve and innovate (Sánchez-Báez et al., 2018). SRBOs learned from their failure and perceived challenges, including loss, as a learning opportunity (Asenge et al., 2018). SRBOs had a strong desire, commitment, and determination to improve and change (Kunaka & Moos, 2019), focused on customers' attraction and retention, and always scanned their environment for opportunity and innovation (Asenge et al., 2018). Entrepreneurial skills included motives, traits, individual talents that helped business owners to survive and grow (Ibidunni et al., 2018). Cultivating and developing entrepreneurial skills were requirements for effective business practice (Ibidunni et al., 2018).

RBVs researchers applied four resource criteria defined by Barney (1991) that let business owners have a competitive advantage. Entrepreneurs created valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable, for some business owners learned from successful entrepreneurs and imitated to some extent to compete. However, business owners wanted to create a durable competitive advantage to succeed and achieve a competitive advantage, and entrepreneurs applied their knowledge, skills, and understanding to explore their business environment and tried to integrate, build, and reconfigure their internal resources to address their customers' needs (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). All four participants used their entrepreneurial skills to explore and understand their business environment and customer needed and tried to integrate, build, and reconfigure resources, including entrepreneurial skills to deliver values to customers. SRBOs understood that by combining, building, reintegrating their resource, SRBOs captured a share of value and increased revenues and profit. RBVs, DCVs, and RVs were sources of competitive advantage (Mandrella et al., 2020). The competitive advantage concept was creating wealth and profit (Abosede et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2017). Competence was individuals' skills and abilities, business-related experience, and knowledge that let business owners succeed (Peach et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2016). Entrepreneurial skills such as commitment, perseverance, and a willingness to make a change contributed to all participants. The entrepreneurial skills theme resonated with the body of knowledge regarding the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

Emergent Theme 3: Relationships and Networking

One of the six themes that emerged during the analysis was the role of networking and relationships in a successful small retailing business. Participants acknowledged the establishment, use, and proper exploitation of networks, and alliances played a significant role in succeeding in the retailing business. Participant SRBO1 discussed creating, establishing, and building individual and social ties and connections as essential factors from the initial step to the business growth stage. Relationships and networking helped SRBO1 to create the business and expand its reputation in the community that SRBO1 serves. Participants SRBO1, SRBO2, SRBO3, and SRBO4 stated that the network and relationship helped get discounts and quality products from the clients and referrals from the customers that helped SRBOs expand their businesses. All participants indicated that alliances and partnerships helped all SRBOs established traditional rotating credit and saving associations (ROSCA). Most people did not conduct financial transactions within established state institutions in developing countries (Fandl, 2020). Individuals made contracts with trust, for trust was a fundamental factor that enforced than law enforcement establishments or courts (Fandl, 2020). ROSCA acted as an informal financial institution that allowed SRBOs to create a common fund that members contributed money on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, while a ROSCA member withdrawals the funds at each assembly that benefited SRBOs to support and help one another, to forge alliances, and to grow and expand their business. SRBO1 stated that the value of Ikuib that individuals who knew each other grouped to create an alternative financial vehicle was critical.

> I joined Ikuib, a daily Ikuib. As soon as I got the Ikuib, i.e., the rotating fund, I paid for one of my friends' debt that I borrowed. And then I finished the first round of Ikuib. Then, I started to collect the second round of Ikuib; by expanding my business, I could pay the debts that I borrowed from my other friend (SRBO1, personal communication, August 4, 2020).

SRBO2 also stated, "I have weekly Ikub. Sometimes, I have day-to-day Ikub. It depends on the season." SRBO2 expressed the effects of seasons on Ikub, "I change my saving activities and Ikub accordingly." SRBO3 described the benefit of Ikub, "I started to collect Ikub. And then I bought the machine I needed." SRBO3 well aware of the value of Ikub also "lets you communicate with other people, i.e., customers." SRBO4 underlined the benefit of Ikub "The Ikub system helps you to save whether you like it or not. Once you collect your share of Ikub either, you will save the money again or invest in a new business."

SRBO3 stated, "Relationships with people are great." SRBO1 said, "Our formidable relationships created a trust that does not let customers look for any other." SRBO1 added,

> Clients also trust me, take good care of me, and my relationship with customers and vendors is good. I mean, my connection is good with those who buy from me, and from those, I buy their services and items, individuals who bring the necessary material to my business. So, those, those relationships, networks brought me where I am now (SRBO1, personal communication, August 4, 2020).

SRBO1 stated, “I have many clients. And we have a perfect family relationship with clients. We look like a family.” SRBO1 underlined, “The clients are excellent. Clients told me in advance that such kind of item in shortage and advised me to store.” SRBO 2 said, “We have relationships, network. Some people come to you and tell you what is needed.” SRBO3 underlined, “My customers brought others as a referral.” Moreover, SRBO3, when retailing slowed,

> I know customers from many companies, I will go there and give customers credit for the products not sold and come from the bazaar. These customers will pay me within a period of two or three payments of their salaries, i.e., within two or three months (SRBO3, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SRBO4 said, “When you give, there is nothing as collateral. But you do it in trust.” “When people are aware of my services and informed,” SRBO1 said, “Where is the address? Give us the address.” SRBO1 stated that networking let you have the advantage to get access to the best product that contributed to the expansion and growth of a business. SRBO2 indicated the awareness and promotion of networks increased sales, for customers had their relationship that may affect you either way. SRBO3 stated that SRBOs got quality products. Networking provided owners opportunities to build economic relationships, share information, and achieve competitive advantage (Abbas et al., 2019).

Creating a business network let business owners access market information, improved performance, and gained profit (Lu, wei, et al., 2020). Networking enabled SRBOs to create sustainability (Mohamad & Chin, 2018) and increased business knowledge and marketing skills (Rankhumise & Letsoalo, 2019). Business owners’ behavior influenced in creating network resources (Franco et al., 2016). SRBOs should strive to commit to building client and customer networks for effective business practice, for SBs were incapable of standing and tackling on their own and achieving competitive advantage (Franco et al., 2016; Sefiani et al., 2018).

RBVs, DCVs, and RVs were sources of competitive advantage (Mandrella et al., 2020). Competitive advantage, in business, was the creation of wealth and profit (Abosede et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2017); in the context of SBs creating and building relationships and the network was business owners' skills and abilities that let business owners succeeded (Peach et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2016). The relationship and networking theme aligned with the body of knowledge regarding the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

Emergent Theme 4: Innovation and Creativity

The fourth theme that emerged during the analysis was innovation and creativity in a successful small retailing business. Creative and innovative skills to change and improve the business environment was essential for business owners (Sánchez-Báez et al., 2018). These skills helped assess SRBOs businesses' efficiency and financial positions, improved attracting and retaining customers, and scanned their business environment for new opportunities (Munizu & Hamid, 2018). However, in developing countries, governments lacked to formulate innovative policies that supported innovation in SBs (Silva et al., 2019).

SRBO1 said, "I began working in my own way, speeding the turnover daily and using the profit by adding something else. I was expanding my business." SRBO1 added a new financing source by forming Ikub, "I prepare a contract, regulations by myself." SRBO1 stated, "I am the first to take the money collected. I use the funds per my priorities." SRBO1 expressed the second advantage of financial creativity,

> When I am a collector, the money collected is capital for me, and the Ikuib can be in a week or a month; the money collected will bring many things, i.e., a lot of advantages to

me. Until the winner person receives the money, I use the collected money for my purpose (SRBO1, personal communication, August 4, 2020).

SRBO4 underlined, “Customers want beauty, and when customers see beauty; customers feel happy, and beauty has the power to attract opportunities.” SRBO1 stated, “I started renovating that shop and growing the other one. What did I do then? My retailing included Anbasha; now, I opened a new bakery elsewhere.” SRBO1 added, “I looked at the activities carefully, researched how others respond to flavors, and established my own flavor.” SRBO2 sold shoes and said, “I started working on a repair, expanding, and adding to my retailing business. We started with only leather shoes. We thought about how to expand our business; there was a belt. Then came the bag.” SRBO3 said,

> I innovated. Due to those innovations, I got financial rewards, and I save on the prize. I used what I saved to buy new equipment, machines. It is innovation, creation; it’s about being creative all the time. It’s to create a design. Customers want new things, design, fashion in quantity, and quality. I expand my market in such away (SRBO3, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SRBO4 stated,

> The store has grown. I changed the store from what it was, was originally used, to what I said, unfit for the present generation, to the new up-to-date style that fits for the new generation. Created the new procedure. So, I had to make some changes and continue that work (SRBO4, personal communication, July 4, 2020).

SRBO4 added,

> So since I was a retailer, I started by saying why not distribute items to local shops in addition to retailing. I sell at a price from Merkato, that is, at the same price as shop owners buy from Merkato. Local SBOs do not incur transportation cost, for owners no

more transport their items from Merkato (SRBO4, personal communication, July 4, 2020).

Creative and innovative skills to change and improve the business environment were one of the effective business practices for business owners to compete and succeed (Sánchez-Báez et al., 2018). Creative and innovative skills and risk were the fundamental requirements for SBs to grow and develop (Marom et al., 2019). Resources, capabilities, competence, and relations were the source of development and innovation (Mandrella et al., 2020). SRBO4 stated that without innovation and creativity, business owners could not change and compete. Business owners scanned and configured the internal and external environment to develop competence (Fu-Sheng et al., 2016).

Teece et al. (1997) created dynamic capabilities, and Winter (2003) identified two levels of portfolio capabilities: Operational or ordinary capabilities and dynamic capabilities. The operational or ordinary capabilities were routine activities defining a set of actions to run a business efficiently (Winter, 2003). All four SRBOs could create everyday activities that could meet their customers' needs. Teece (2007) classified dynamic capabilities into two: Microfoundation and higher-order capabilities. The Microfoundation included firms' adjustments and recombination of ordinary capabilities, including developing new products and services. All four SRBOs applied their experience, knowledge, and skills to understand their customers' needs. SRBOs tried to adjust and recombine ordinary capabilities by innovating their business practices to deliver values that met their customer needs and enabled SRBOs to retain and expand their customer base. Capabilities were an integral part of DCVs (Battleson et al., 2016; Takahashi et al., 2017). SRBOs developed the ability to sense and seized opportunities and reconfigured their resource base to change and improve their businesses that resulted in innovation (El Hanchi & Kerzazi, 2020; Lu, Tang, et al., 2020). Business owners developed a network that enabled SBOs to gain resources and innovate and gain competitive advantage (Lu, Tang, et al., 2020). The innovation and creativity theme aligned with the body of knowledge regarding the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

Emergent Theme 5: Customer-Centric Approach

The fifth theme that emerged during the analysis was the customer-centric approach in a successful small retailing business. SRBOs should try to know and understand their customers' needs and wants and attract and retain their customers (Rahman et al., 2018). SRBO1 stated, "Customer handling is critical." SRBO1 added, "In business, you should not say, 'No, I do not have.' Whenever a customer comes to the store to buy something, I believe customers should get what consumers want." SRBO4 stated,

> Customers come to buy and think that you carry items, and customers should never return empty-handed without buying. You need to be able to provide that: So, there should be no. Do not say 'No.' I do not carry such items (SRBO4, personal communication, July 4, 2020).

SRBO1 added, "Customers should not return empty-handed due to shops not carrying essential items." Customers say, 'We just come to you with confidence, for we know that you carry items that no other carries. We find the items we need.'" SRBO1 underlined, "You need to identify customers' needs, carry items that meet their needs, and treat customers as families." SRBO2 added, "I have to study my customers' needs." SRBO3 stated,

> First, I need to know what the customer wants and what attracts the customer. Owners need to possess honesty and build trust. I may be hurt or lose moneywise, but I will say and give customers that customers will benefit me, recompensate me tomorrow (SRBO3, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SRBO4 underlined,

> The core of the business is the customer. And you need to be able to think thoroughly about the customer. No matter how much you work, no matter how much you bring and fill your items, no matter how much you invest, if you have no customer, it is a zero-sum game (SRBO4, personal communication, July 4, 2020).

SRBO2 said,

> My abilities are to take care of my customers, to be able to persuade my customers." So, to get as many customers as possible, it is better to handle customers, convince customers, be aware of behind a customer, for customers have networks (SRBO2, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SRBO1 emphasized the importance of communication, "Communicating with a person means handling a person. You take care of that person." SRBO1 stated, "Customers came to buy because customers have trust in what I prepare and sell." SRBO1 expressed, "The confidence I have let customers buy more. Therefore, customer handling is decisive." SRBO3 stated, "You must listen to customers fully, without complaining, for customers' desires and wants are right." SRBO3 added, "What Customers want from you is that on-time delivery, affordable price, quality, and good service." SRBO1 underlined, "A customer brings in another customer, lets you retain customers." SRBO4 remarked, "You need to be able to please your customer as much as you can. And you need to be able to feel empathy for your customer." SRBO4 noted, "If you doubled your price when you sell to your customers, buyers never forgive you; never treat you as a human being. Your principle should be a little profit per item and a high turnover." The customer-centric approach is a critical strategy for SBs' effective business practice (Ngek, 2018).

RBVs researchers strived for focus among business owners' needs and wants. SRBOs should consider creating relationships with customers that enabled SRBOs to develop trust and commitment to retain customers and achieve customer loyalty (Datta et al., 2018). Quality services allowed business owners to satisfy and keep customers (Sigit Parawansa, 2018). Business owners could establish relationships with customers, for relationships let owners understand service recipients to meet and retain customers (Areiqat et al., 2019). Business and organizational leaders focused on how to keep customers (Areiqat et al., 2019). Individuals' skills and abilities helped to retain customers (Darzi & Bhat, 2018). Entrepreneurs created relationships.

SRBOs built business relationships that were a customer-centric approach with customers and clients to increase their sales and sustain their growth. Entrepreneurs configured internal and external resources and followed a customer-centric approach to grow and develop (Battleson et al., 2016; Takahashi et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs applied the customer-centric approach to create valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable resources to create a durable competitive advantage that sustains SRBOs in the marketplace (Barney, 1991). Entrepreneurs also tried to adjust and recombine ordinary capabilities using customer-centric approaches to meet and satisfy; thereby, maintaining SRBOs profit (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). All four participants used their customer-centric approach to deliver superior values to customers to increase revenues and profit. In developing countries, SBOs had proximity to their customers to offer well-tailored outstanding customer value (Ngek, 2018). The customer-centric approach enabled SRBOs to create, establish, and build social and trade ties and networks that allowed SRBOs to create a competitive advantage (Ngek, 2018). Competence was the source of competitive advantage (Mandrella et al., 2020), and the customer-centric approach theme aligned with the body of knowledge regarding the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

Emergent Theme 6: Support System

The sixth theme that emerged during analysis was a support system in a successful small retailing business. A support system was essential, and government support in training and financial support alleviated SRBOs business challenges (Rankhumise & Letsoalo, 2019; Zhu et al., 2019). Training support helped SRBOs acquire new knowledge and skills to improve their performance (Rankhumise & Letsoalo, 2019). Lack of government support let SRBOs struggle for survival (Zhu et al., 2019).

SRBO1, SRBO2, and SRBO4 stated that family support was a critical factor in their success. SRBO1 acknowledged the assistance of the family, and said, “There were times when family members brought their children, brought their workers, spent two or three days with me, making bread.” SRBO4 got support from his family and the community in which SRBO4 got backing, help, and assistance. SRBO4 summed up the support, “I grew up in the environment plus family.” SRBO4 indicated, “The capital I started with was a family capital. The business was my father. I grew up working with my father. It was my father who gave me this job.” SRBO1 initial capital to start a business came from friends and expressed, “My friends gave me 20,000 Birr; that was 10 thousand Birr from each of my friends; it means 20,000 Birr!” SRBO1 added, “I have friends who love me very much. I have friends who are more concerned about my life than their own. And friends help me.” SRBO2 stated the importance of friends,

> If the problems are family or health-related issues, friends advise me with many parables. There are several times that I say, ‘That’s enough, I’m back on track! Thank you; no more.’ Then, I am relieved of the problems. I breathe a sigh of relief. I become happy (SRBO2, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SRBO2 stated, “When a holiday approaches, the local government prepares a bazaar.” SRBO3 noted that the government and organizations’ support was critical to get training, access to market, and getting shopping place.” SRBO4 did not get any help from the government.

SRBO4 expressed the support from the government as “Zero support at the government level.” SRBO2 and SRBO3 indicated the government’s support in facilitating Bazar that can help SRBOs sell their products. “While I was working on traditional culinary, SRBO1 stated, “I got coaching to sew clothes and tailoring. Among the many training opportunities, I chose to tailor. I learned to tailor, benefited from it; it helped me.” SRBO3 stated,

> The District sub-city gave me this shopping place. I found new access to sell my products; the government facilitates a bazaar three times a year. New Year, Happy Easter, and Christmas. The government offers various pieces of training. I got training the necessary skills to conduct trade and business: bookkeeping, saving, and other related training pieces. After the training, I started to save money (SRBO3, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SRBO2 also stated,

> As a community, we are one. That my children contribute to supporting my business, local governments prepare bazaar; the community comes to buy and becomes customers. So, the support is from all: From the Family, the community, and the government (SRBO2, personal communication, July 29, 2020).

SBOs needed support from government institutions (Pavlykivska et al., 2020). Government supported in training and finance were critical factors for developing SBs and their sustainability (Dzomonda & Fatoki, 2018). Business owners obtained financial resources from various sources, including family members, friends, inheritance, or grants (Heredia & Fusch, 2020). Government, family, and friends’ support were critical for SBs to grow and develop; the support system helped SRBOs tackle financial and personal problems.

Entrepreneurs built relationships to create a support system that facilitated their growth and development (Mohamad & Chin, 2018). Relationships were critical factors for SRBOs. Entrepreneurs considered planning networking strategies that helped entrepreneurs sustain growth, including friends, families, and nongovernmental and governmental institutions (Mohamad & Chin, 2018). Entrepreneurs created relationships and networking to create a support system and competitive advantage, and SRBOs used a support system to enhance their competitive advantage (Bernard, 2019). Resources were either tangible or intangible and could be the source of competitive advantage (Mandrella et al., 2020). Barney (1991) stated that a RBV was a theory that considered businesses as a bundle of resources, and one of the resources was finance. Entrepreneurs configured internal and external and used their skills and knowledge to access finance and implement their growth and development plan (Battleson et al., 2016; Takahashi et al., 2017). The support system theme aligned with the body of knowledge regarding the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

Application to Professional Practice

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory multiple case study was to explore what strategies some small Ethiopian retail business owners use to succeed in business beyond 3 years. The target population consisted of four small Ethiopian retail business owners who have succeeded in business beyond 3 years in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. I applied a multiple case study to explore and understand what strategies some small Ethiopian retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 3 years. I uncovered six themes by applying NVivo coding system. The six themes were the following: business-centric knowledge, entrepreneurial skills, relationship and networking, innovation and creativity, customer-centric approach, and support system. The findings reflected strategies some SRBOs used to succeed in business beyond 3 years from the sources of interviews, business documents, and observation by applying triangulation analysis. SRBOs needed to devise strategies to succeed and sustain their businesses beyond 3 years in the Ethiopian context.

Based on the three frameworks of RBVs, DCVs, and RVs entrepreneurs strived to possess six strategies to gain profit, expand, grow, and succeed in their retailing business in Ethiopia. A successful SB strategist ought to have experience to start a retailing business to avoid startup failure (Lussier, 1996). The skills of registering, first in first out, practical knowledge of inventory, and customer-oriented service are basic skills in the retailing. SBOs should ask themselves that whether SRBOs like the job, ready to commit even if SRBOs fail. There were times when turnover became so slow, continue conducting a business became a daunting task. Passion and commitment were the requirement for success.

The findings indicated that business knowledge and experience played a significant role in the startup stage and growth stages. Knowledge and experience provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs to succeed (Kurczewska et al., 2020). Mrasi et al. (2018) underlined businesspeople could equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge. Adequate industry business knowledge and skills protect owners, entrepreneurs from failure, and disappointment (Mrasi et al., 2018). A government support system could fill the gap in entrepreneurs' knowledge and skills by providing training that lets businesspeople develop essential business skills and knowledge (Mrasi et al., 2018). Among the skills that required to succeed customer-centric approach in marketing that facilitates networking and innovation (Arruti & Paños-Castro, 2020).

Entrepreneurial skills were fundamental for growth and development (Arruti & Paños-Castro, 2020). Growth without relationships and networking could not be feasible (Bin Yusoff et al., 2019). Knowledge and experience were initial springboards enough for business owners to sustain. The capacity and talent to persevere, taking a risk, and innovative skills and creativity were individuals' competence and expertise that let entrepreneurs grow, expand, and develop (Arruti & Paños-Castro, 2020). The desire to overcome challenges and to win and never give up made entrepreneurs unique (Urbig et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs had the tenacity to challenge and explore the unknown and take risks; education and training play a critical role (Boldureanu et al., 2020). Entrepreneurial skills, innovation and creativity, and business-centric knowledge were critical factors that determined the success of business (Yusoff et al., 2019). A support system including finance and training were important for SBs to thrive and grow (Yusoff et al., 2019).

Implications for Social Change

Two-third of businesses fail within 2 to 3 years at an alarmingly high rate (Lemessa et al., 2018; Woldehanna et al., 2018). The reason businesses fail at a high proportion is government policies and strategies (Amhaa & Woldehanna, 2016). Policies and systems are one of the main factors that let businesses fall and stagnate and encourage SRBOs to join and stay in informal economic activities (Amhaa & Woldehanna, 2016). Researchers explore SB survival and growth in a meaningful context (Hall et al., 2019). The exploration and discoveries of themes let leaders understand what strategies to use and implement in the context (Hall et al., 2019). The study findings in the Ethiopian context provide policymakers, government, nongovernment institutions' leaders, international organizations, including USAID, insight and may enable and streamline their resources with new strategies, policies, and assistance programs. Policymakers, governmental, and nongovernmental institutions' leaders may use the findings to help SBOs by devising strategies to reduce businesses' failure rate in Ethiopia. Effective strategies help SBOs play significant roles in the national economy to alleviate economic poverty and unemployment (Bushe, 2019; Dewi et al., 2018).

Most business owners often lack basic business-centric knowledge and entrepreneurial skills, and the lack of business knowledge and entrepreneurial skills are the cause of failure (Bushe, 2019). The identified strategies enable SBOs where to focus and strategize to succeed. Startup entrepreneurs who want to create businesses strive to have knowledge and experience to grow and prevent business failure within 2 to 3 years (Lussier, 1996). The implications for social change may be those SRBOs may know the challenges graduates may face and concentrate on the six strategies to succeed. The minimization of business failure may create more trade opportunities, contribute to poverty alleviation, and expand and promote the social, community, and individual economic wellbeing of the society (Dewi et al., 2018). The growth of businesses enables SRBOs to generate new income for their communities that support families, generate tax, and expand amenity programs (Dewi et al., 2018).

The implication for social change is to promote the advancement and the creation of employment opportunities (Dewi et al., 2018). SRBOs may use the six main strategies to overcome business problems, learn, and cultivate skills to achieve profitability and sustainability. The social change is to support economic growth, contribute to the mitigation of poverty, and expand the welfare and income of people in SBs (Dewi et al., 2018). The reduced failure may give hope and inspire many individuals to try and find their way. In Ethiopia, leaders may gain insights into the knowledge gap in identifying strategies and devise new training programs that may help the business community to thrive.

Recommendations for Action

The study's findings indicate that business-centric knowledge is the cornerstone of business success (Lussier, 1996). Without business-centric knowledge, the road to failure is open and inevitable (Lussier, 1996). Entrepreneurs identify their interest and passion in the business and commit themselves to that end. Passion and commitment are tools for success: Enhance performance (Mohamad & Chin, 2018), enable making a conscious decision (Yarima & Hashim, 2018), improve, create, and innovate ways to entice customers (Coda et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs are ready to learn and communicate with potential clients and customers (Sánchez-Báez et al., 2018). SRBOs learn from their failure and perceive challenges, including loss, as a learning opportunity (Asenge et al., 2018). If entrepreneurs acquire business knowledge and want, like, and are committed to their job and have passion, then the knowledge and the entrepreneurial skills let them communicate with customers and clients. Communication provides them with insights into what customers need and open new opportunities to act. Business knowledge and entrepreneurial skills enable SRBOs to create relationships and network with customers and clients. Relationships and networking let SRBOs gain access to more up-to-date information that creates chances for economic relationships, access market information, and achieve competitive advantage (Abbas et al., 2019; Lu, Tang, et al., 2020). Information and knowledge acquired through networks and relationships let SRBOs identify a gap in practices. A gap in practices provides them with insights for improvement that enable SRBOs to create and innovate new services and products. Innovation and creativity let entrepreneurs achieve sustainable advantage.

SRBOs know and understand SRBOs create and innovate to meet the needs and wants of their customers. The center of their business is customer, and SRBOs improve their services and products to retain and expand their businesses. SRBOs are not alone in their struggles to grow and develop and need support from families, friends, and governmental and nongovernmental institutions. Good relationships enhance SRBOs' chance of survival, growth, expansion, and development. The beneficiaries of this study are SRBOs. SRBOs benefited from the six strategies to survive, grow, and expand. Nascent entrepreneurs who want to run their business and university students may give nascent entrepreneurs an insight into how to start a business and grow. The other stakeholders are organizations that are committed to helping SBs to grow and develop. The Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and other international organizations have networks to disseminate the findings through the local communities' channels.

Recommendations for Further Research

I applied a qualitative exploratory multiple case study to explore what strategies some small Ethiopian retail business owners used to succeed in business beyond 3 years. The method and the design I chose had limitations and the sample size to extrapolate to another context. Researchers may require using alternative methods and strategies to broaden and deepen the study findings. Using different methods and designs enhances the validity and reliability of a study (Kruth, 2015).

Researchers scarcely conducted research in Ethiopia to identify strategies that could help business owners to succeed. I recommend researchers to explore and investigate in more regions of Ethiopia. The other research area that researchers warranted to explore is why SRBOs prefer to stay and not grow to ensure continuity. I suggest furthering research on the advantages and disadvantages of traditional rotating credit-saving associations' allowances (Ikuib) on SB growth. One of the main growth factors indicated in the study was that without Ikuib SRBOs could not imagine survival, expansion, and growth.

Reflections

The DBA experience was unique. The learning environment was second to none. The process enriched me with many perspectives and gained knowledge and enhanced my personal growth. Through time I gained advanced knowledge, theories, and practices. The DBA process was a knowledge and practice vetting process, and I also learned how to mitigate bias in the research and many personal experience cases.

The experience that I had let me think about contributing to alleviating the challenges that SBOs face. I wanted the doctoral education to equip me with theories, views, perspectives, and practices and contribute to practical solutions. The courses I took were very enlightening and provided me with insights into business practices and theories. DBA instructors let me discuss and share insights from reading and practices. The doctoral courses were second to none.

The first two and half years of a doctoral program, as was my expectations, was steady progress and moved forward. Moreover, as the class was virtual, online, communications were mostly text-based. Text-based communication enabled me to refine thoughts, support views with evidence, share, and discuss ideas and practices in the forum. I loved the knowledge acquisition processes and dissemination. The educational process was very stimulating, that let me overcome many challenges. Students and instructors with various backgrounds educated me on responding to different outlooks and acknowledging their academic, personal, social, political, and spiritual significance and differences, and learning, accepting, and recognizing individuals' contributions. Instructors' and students' personal and intellectual contributions were exceedingly high significant; in the process, I grew in many skills, including academic writing and critical thinking. Professionals who worked in the Walden support system applied a customer-centric approach that enriched my experience, and I had the best experience and received outstanding customer service that helped me achieve my goal.

The second phase, the capstone stage, was what I expected not. I had some challenging experiences with my first chair. The experience was personal, and I wanted to change my chair and submitted the form following my advisor's advice. After much to-and-fro, Walden University administration assigned me, my second-choice mentor. From that onward, I did not want any heated arguments with my chairs. That was the lesson I learned.

In most cases, I thought, time was unidirectional that I could not retrieve it, and development was a spiral. I experienced a feeling of stuck with no immediate path having its psychological toll, uncertainty. I always appreciated the Hegelian dialectical process of thought that arises from simple to complex, spiral, incomplete, imperfect, and still in progress: A resolution emerged from thesis and antithesis that provided me new solutions and perspectives. One of the solutions is on an impediment. The impediment was stuck. My Hegelian thought process and insights from peers gave me overwhelmingly fresh perspectives. I developed much appreciation for Glassier Choice Theory.

Obtaining final IRB approval was a bit challenging. I had to go to Ethiopia to collect data and needed site approval. However, securing travel documents was problematic, and I had to go through many bureaucratic networks and people. I had to present my case through local community radio. With community leaders' help and interventions, I could travel to Ethiopia, and I quarantined for fifteen days under twenty-four-hour surveillance. I could obtain site approval.

I was always thinking about the avoidance of harm and informed consent. There were political uprising and civil unrest, and I had to be more concerned about my participants and not endanger myself in turmoil. I shared potential participants' fear and concerns. Obtaining consent from potential participants was difficult. Potential participants feared the political atmosphere and tax-related issues were concerns for the participants to engage in the interviews. I tried to establish rapport with the interviewees. I had to agree with their sentiments.

The recognition that every human being has a bias and individuals create bias through preconceived ideas and strong emotions provided me with insights into dealing with prejudice and preconceived notions. The awareness that I have preconceived ideas and bias let me start mitigating bias, because bias is a preconceived judgment. I was ready to assess and engage in an honest critique, evaluation of unconscious decisions. I tried to see contradictions in my emotions and attitudes. I was trying to reassess my beliefs and convictions to provide myself self-understanding of new experiences.

I lost some dear near family members at these times. The process took me much time, and I did not have any regrets for the time passed. Walden professors, experts, instructors, mentors, and chairs equipped me with the knowledge and insights that I can make a difference in the life of many that I want to serve.

Conclusion

The primary research question was what strategies do SBOs use to succeed beyond 3 years. All participants are successful and decided to try to create and expand their businesses. The participants relied on their prior business knowledge and experience, and entrepreneurial skills. SRBOs apply their knowledge and expertise, and entrepreneurial skills with grit, perseverance, and faith to develop and grow their business by providing quality services and products to their customers. Nascent entrepreneurs who want to open a new business should know that a business's survival within two to three years is significantly based on entrepreneurs' knowledge and experience and the commitment and dedication to stay in and run the business.

Ethiopia is a developing country, and the population of the country is over a hundred million. The economy is still agrarian. The influx from rural to the cities is increasing daily. The need for SB growth is critical. Research indicates that bad strategies are one of the leading causes of stagnation and failure of SBs. Leaders in all sectors should strive to understand that to grow and develop and contribute to Ethiopian society and communities' betterment, leaders can base strategies based on evidence to address the underlying problem and solve challenges. Based on the findings, leaders can design six approaches: business-centric knowledge, entrepreneurial skills, innovation and creativity, relationships and networking, customer-centric approach, and support system.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Samson Gebrehiwot

Participant: Coded Identification.

1. First, I will contact the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce (AACC) to gain access to their directory. I will select from the AACC directory eight small business owners who meet the criteria.

Pilot Test

2. I will also choose two for a plot test. I will go to SRBOs offices or homes and will talk to SRBOs in private. The cultural setting requires individuals to introduce themselves by first and middle names and let SRBOs to introduce themselves. I will explain about the purpose of my research and informed consent for pilot participants. I will obtain permission to audio record SRBOs. I will ask SRBOs interview questions in order of 1 to 11. I will take notes and raise follow up questions for further clarification. I will ask SRBOs if they have any questions. I will thank SRBOs and give SRBOs a thank you postcard and t-shirt. I will refine my interview questions. Will contact and update my mentor.

Interview

3. I will talk with SBOs and facilitate quiet and private areas. The cultural setting requires individuals to introduce themselves by first and middle names. I will introduce myself to

members as a doctoral student from Walden University in U.S.A. I will also let SRBOs introduce themselves. I will thank participants for their willingness to participate in the study and will explain the aim, purpose of my research, and the approximate time required for the interview.

4. I will inform members the need for informed consent for the protection of their privacy. The choice participants have if participants are not willing to continue to participate at any time. I will read and explain SRBOs the content of the consent form in detail. I will let participants sign and will give SRBOs with a copy of the signed consent.

5. I will obtain permission to record their interviews. I will start with interview questions in the order of 1to 11. I will take notes and raise follow up questions for further clarification.

6. I will ask participants if they have any questions. When I complete the interview, I will thank and turn off the digital recorder.

Observation

7. I will remind the date and time of my observation of small business owners in about a week.

8. I will stand or sit where I can properly hear and observe SBOs.

9.I will describe how SBOs express themselves and write down what I observe about the SBOs in the workplace.

10. I will thank SBOs for letting me have the opportunity to visit and observe.

Member Checking

11. After I transcribe and interpret the data I gathered, I will go to their home/workplace and give SRBOs the transcribed and interpreted data. I will let participants review and confirm within a period of fifteen days.

12. I will thank SRBOs for deciding to come for the follow up questions.

13. I will register the time, date, place, and participant code.

14. I will turn on the recording device. I will let participants ask; I will answer questions based on the review.

15. I will also ask participants whether I missed information through the interpretation.

16. I will thank SRBOs for being part of the study and turn off the recording device.

17. I will present SRBOs a thank you postcard and t-shirt.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The following open-ended semistructured interview questions may provide answers to the research question.

1. What financial strategies did you use to invest and start your business?
2. What are the business skills very critical to your achievement?
3. What experiences assisted you to be a business owner?
4. How are you financing your business to grow, expand, and sustain?
5. Why and how did you use marketing strategies?
6. How do you sustain your profit?
7. How did you overcome your obstacles?
8. How do you describe your successes?
9. What family, social, or government supports helped you to start, grow, and sustain?
10. Why and how did you use the planning procedures during the first 3 years?
11. What do you advise to new business owners what types of skills and strategies to use to be successful?