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Strategies for Technology Selection in the Retail Sector

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Dare Oke

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Strategies for Technology Selection in the Retail Sector

by

Dare Oke

MBA, Walden University, 2016

BSC, Morgan State University, 2014

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

May 2021

Abstract

Some small retail business owners lack strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages, which is why some small businesses fail.

Grounded in the resource-based theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies small retail business owners use to choose the appropriate technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. The participants comprised seven small retail business owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey who successfully implemented strategies to select the appropriate technology for their organization's success. Data were collected through semistructured interviews and observations of the business owners' technological footprints. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Three themes emerged: (a) customer relationship management, (b) marketing, and (c) process improvement. A key recommendation is for small retail business owners to use social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook as tools for customer relationship management and development. The implications for positive social change include the potential to contribute strategies and knowledge that retailers can use to facilitate communication and consumer transactions. Implementation of these strategies could allow retailers to be more efficient and competitive, boost local economies, and improve customer satisfaction.

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Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral study to my son James, who was born while I was working on the third section of this study. The third section of the study is where the researcher analyzes the gathered data. His birth gave me an unexplainable strength that motivated me to complete my study as planned with my chairperson. I also want to recognize my amazing wife, Andrea, who has been my life source throughout the journey. She is the reason I started the doctoral journey. My wife encouraged me to aim high when I was at a low point in my life, and hence, I embarked on the doctoral journey, which has allowed me to contribute to the body of knowledge. Family is everything, and I genuinely thank God for my fabulous family.

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I want to say a huge thank you to Dr. Rocky Dwyer. I probably would not have gotten this far this quickly without his intervention. I wish he was my one and only chairperson. (I had four.) I say this with all sincerity that he is a real leader. God has endowed him with the gift to lead, and he does it with such an original passion. Dr. Dwyer certainly motivated me to complete my study, and I want to express my sincere gratitude for all his help and support.

I also want to thank Dr. Matthew Knight, my second committee member. Dr. Dwyer needed a team to get me to the finish line, and Dr. Knight was one of the people who made my study completion a reality. Another integral part of the team who got me to study completion is Dr. Peter Anthony, the university research reviewer assigned to my capstone, along with Dr. Susan Davis, the DBA program director. Thank you all for the excellent work you have done with me. I can write endlessly about how you all have made a real impact in my life. Thank you all once again.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses are essential to the economic growth and development of communities. Approximately 55% of jobs overall, and 66% of newly created positions, in the United States are from small businesses (Small Business Administration [SBA], 2014). Therefore, small businesses are crucial to the U.S. economy (Anastasia, 2015). Decker et al. (2014) noted, however, that small businesses have a high failure rate and that business failure within the first 5 years accounts for the loss of approximately 50% of the jobs created. Selection and adoption of technology are two ways that small retail business (SRB) owners can avoid business failure and achieve increased competitiveness (Curry et al., 2017). Some of the technologies that SRB owners can adopt to prevent business failures include computers, software, networking devices, telephone systems, accounting systems, inventory control systems, point of sale (POS) systems, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems (MacKechnie, 2017). The availability of various technologies supports the idea that SRB owners should develop and implement an approach for selecting the appropriate technology to foster competitive advantages. My goal in conducting this study was to better understand the strategies some SRB owners adopt to select the appropriate technology to improve their competitiveness.

Background of the Problem

Although there has been an increase in technology utilization by consumers, some SRB owners still fail to develop a strategy for selecting the appropriate technology to improve their business competitiveness. Curry et al. (2017) indicated that some SRB owners fail to achieve sustainable competitive advantages (SCAs) due to a lack of

investment in updated technology. Competitive advantages occur when business owners enjoy competitive opportunities not afforded to rival business owners (Coyne, 1986). For example, an event planner in the U.S. state of New Jersey might enjoy competitive advantages planning events in the New Jersey area over a Chicago-based event planner planning events in New Jersey. The New Jersey-based event planner might have access to vendors and relationships not afforded to the Chicago-based event planner or puts the Chicago-based event planner at a cost disadvantage. The topic of technology utilization among SRB owners is essential because only a small portion of small business owners invest in technology innovation (Faran & Chaudhry, 2016). Faran and Chaudhry (2016) observed that only 22% of small business owners invested in new technology research to increase competitive advantages. SRBs account for many businesses in the United States (Anastasia, 2015); therefore, it is vital to resolve the high business failure rate among SRBs to maintain economic stability. In conducting this study, I sought to build upon the prior research on SRB owners' technology utilization. The findings of this study may help SRB owners identify strategies they can adopt to improve technology utilization to achieve SCAs.

Problem Statement

Unsuccessful SRB owners sometimes fail to achieve SCAs due to a lack of investment in updated technology (Hussein et al., 2017). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce surveyed 1,000 small business owners and reported that 57% of these businesses struggle to remain competitive due to owners' lack of familiarity with digital tools (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2018). The general business problem is that SRB

owners who do not invest in new technology to achieve SCAs may experience business failures. The specific business problem is that some SRB owners lack strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. The target population for this qualitative multiple case study consisted of seven to 10 SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey who have successfully adopted strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. The implications for positive social change include the potential to identify strategies and knowledge that SRB owners can use to facilitate communication and business transactions leading to gains in efficiency and competitiveness. This study's information may also help to improve consumers' appreciation of SRB owners' products or services and their satisfaction as customers.

Nature of the Study

The three research methods available to researchers are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. I used the qualitative method to explore the what, why, and how of the research problem, which was a lack of knowledge of strategies successful SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs (see Yin, 2018). M. N. K. Saunders et al. (2015) noted that researchers use the quantitative method to generate numerical data through various data collection techniques, such as questionnaires and surveys, which are then statistically analyzed.

The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study because the data gathering and analysis plan did not include the use of numerical data to measure the relationship between variables. The mixed-method approach combines the qualitative and quantitative methods and is used to investigate complex research questions (Taguchi, 2018). Because I did not use the quantitative method, the mixed-method approach was not appropriate. I used the qualitative research method because I could not easily separate the research phenomenon from the research context. The qualitative research method provides a holistic description of the research phenomenon, emphasizing the social settings to understand better the research subject's thoughts and behavior (Cazan 2012). Hence the qualitative research method was best suited for this study.

There are different types of qualitative research designs, such as narrative, phenomenological, ethnographic, and case study design. Researchers use narrative designs to explore people's life experiences through written or spoken accounts of these individuals (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The narrative research design was not appropriate for this study because the data gathering efforts did not include exploring the participants' life experiences. Focusing on the participant's life experiences involves understanding the participant's life encounters. Hence the narrative research design was not appropriate for this study because the focus of this study was understanding the strategies successful business owners use to select the right technology to achieve SCA. Waters (2016) stated that the phenomenological design goal is to understand the meaning of an experience, behavior, or narrative. Phenomenological researchers explore the meanings of the participants' lived experiences related to the phenomenon under study. I

did not explore the meanings of lived experiences; therefore, a phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study. Cunliffe (2010) indicated that the ethnographic research design includes embedded researchers who live among their research subjects to observe and account for their shared beliefs, behavior rituals, language, and interactions. The ethnographic design was inappropriate for this study because I did explore beliefs, rituals, languages, and interactions of participants as part of my research design. Instead, I focused on how several small business owners developed or executed their technology selection strategy to achieve SCAs.

Saunders et al. (2015) described the case study design as an in-depth review of a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting. Gustafson (2017) stated that the difference between a single case study and a multiple case study is that in the latter, the researcher studies numerous cases to understand the differences and similarities between each case. Yin (2018) also noted that when researchers use multiple case studies, they can analyze within and across various situations. A single case study design did not fit the purpose of this study because it limits the potential to gather data from multiple sources. The qualitative multiple case study design was ideal for this research study because I interviewed various SRB owners to understand the strategies business owners used to select the appropriate technology to increase their businesses' competitiveness.

Research Question

What strategies do SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs?

Interview Questions

1. How receptive are you to utilizing technology in your daily business operations?
2. What strategies do you use to mitigate the impact of outdated technology on your retail organizations' competitiveness?
3. How do you determine if your current or updated technology helps create value to achieve SCAs?
4. How does your technology help differentiate your products or service from competitors' products or services?
5. How does your technology or technology strategy help your business evolve as the market changes?
6. How do you limit your competitors' ability to enjoy the advantages your technology strategy provides?
7. What other information would you like to share in this interview?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the resource-based theory (RBT). Barney developed the RBT in 1991. The RBT is a managerial framework that allows individuals to identify the strategic resources capable of delivering competitive advantages (Edwards et al., 2015). Business owners can apply RBT concepts strategically to their organizational goals to achieve SCAs. Edwards et al. (2015) reported that the RBT's fundamental constructs are value, rareness, imitability, and organizational nonsubstitutable resources (VRIO). Edwards et al. noted that a firm's resources are valuable because the business owner can use those resources to build strategies that take

advantage of opportunities and defend against threats. A firm's offering is rare when the firm's products or services are significantly different from competitors' offerings.

Edwards et al. stated that some resources might be difficult to imitate due to constant evolution and legal restrictions. In addition, Edwards et al. asserted that a resource is nonsubstitutable when competitors cannot find other ways to enjoy the advantages that a resource provides. SRB owners can consider each construct of the RBT when selecting the technology that may help their business achieve SCAs. Therefore, I used the RBT as a potential lens to explore how SRB owners use the RBT constructs to aid the selection of the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.

Operational Definitions

Business strategy: A set of procedures or strategies that sets a business up for success (Li et al., 2014).

Competitive advantage: A firm's achievement of higher profits in the market over the competitors (Dyer et al., 2017).

Resource-based theory: A firm's resources and capabilities, such as the physical, human, financial, tangible, and intangible assets used to develop business strategies (Balashova & Gromova, 2016).

Resources: The inputs that help an organization's daily operation (Amit & Schoemaker, 2012).

Small business: An independently owned or operated business with 500 or fewer employees (Hayes et al., 2015).

Sustainable competitive advantages: An integrated set of actions that affords business owners better competitive opportunities than their competition (Coyne, 1986).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following are a few identified assumptions, limitations, and delimitations to clarify and establish the study's central focus and parameters. The delineations may help future researchers understand the areas not covered by this qualitative multiple research study and may be worthy of future research. I also define the boundaries of this qualitative research study and explore how future studies can explain how SRB owners can use technology to improve business processes and achieve SCAs.

Assumptions

This study includes some assumptions to establish and ensure the research's quality. Roy and Pacuit (2013) defined assumptions as uncorroborated notions that the researcher believes to be true. The following are the assumptions of this study: (a) the participants will provide honest responses to the interview questions, (b) the participants will remain focused on the research topic and will reveal relevant information, and (c) the SRB owners will be knowledgeable about the information technology activities in their organization. The assumptions positively affected my interaction with the participants. I went into each interview assuming I had the ideal participant capable of providing valuable data in a focused, truthful, and relevant way. Hence the participants and I developed a good rapport that facilitated useful data gathering.

Limitations

I limited the study in some areas to ensure study credibility and transferability. Kirkwood and Price (2013) described limitations as the potential weaknesses or gaps of a research study. The following are the limitations of this study: (a) the scope of the study was limited to gathering information only from successful SRB owners in the New Jersey area and did not include unsuccessful SRB owners as participants, and (b) the study sample size was limited to seven participants to ensure data saturation. Restricting the sample size to a few SRB owners in New Jersey may impact the transferability of the research conclusions. Robinson (2014) noted that a study's result might vary based on the sample size. However, by focusing on a few SRB owners, I was able to gather reliable data to understand their technology selection process. I also analyzed the potential benefits or costs of the technology selection process concerning the businesses' competitiveness.

Delimitations

To focus data-gathering efforts and better elicit valuable information, I imposed some delimitations on the study. Gijo et al. (2014) stated that delimitations are boundaries or limits that a researcher includes in their study. The following are the delimitations of this study: (a) the participants were selected from the New Jersey area, and (b) the scope of the study was limited to seven to 10 SRB owners in the New Jersey area. I continued to recruit and interview participants until I reached achieving data saturation. The large concentration of SRBs in the New Jersey area led to the decision to focus on New Jersey SRB owners. Limiting the number of businesses in the study may

have restricted my ability to create more themes due to excluding other SRBs, large retail companies, and government retail agencies locally, nationally, and internationally.

Significance of the Study

The study's findings may be of significance to SRB owners in the New Jersey area who struggle to operate a competitive business because they lack strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. My intention in conducting the study was to create information that SRB owners can use to develop strategies to incorporate technology into their business operations to achieve SCAs. Technology is becoming undeniably vital to how transactions occur worldwide (Curry et al., 2017). Therefore, SRB owners may need to adequately evaluate, select, and deploy essential technological solutions to achieve SCAs. One useful approach involves the management of organizational resources. Theotokis et al. (2008) emphasized that the growing trend of new technology in the retail sector provides business owners the opportunity to create innovative customer support solutions.

Contribution to Business Practice

The study findings' beneficial ramifications include the potential to contribute to SRB owners' understanding of how to develop strategies for adopting technology that may help them maintain SCAs over a long duration. The study may help SRB owners in the New Jersey area understand the importance of assessing outdated technology's impact on their business venture's success. This study's findings may prompt more SRB owners to develop strategies for selecting new technologies to improve their competitiveness. Faran and Chaudhry (2016) determined that only 22% of retail business

owners invested in learning new technology and innovation through their research and development. SRB owners may use findings from this qualitative multiple case study to develop a strategy to identify, select, and implement new technology based on practices associated with the RBT. Knowing the impact that technology may have on a company's success can help SRB owners plan towards achieving SCAs.

Implications for Social Change

This study may provide information that SRB owners can use to build a healthier and more prosperous retail industry. Agnihotri (2016) stated that business owners' focus should be on innovative solutions that may help their firms achieve SCAs. This study's findings could positively contribute strategies and knowledge that retailers can use to facilitate communication and consumer transactions. Implementation of these strategies could allow retailers to be more efficient and competitive, which could boost local economies. Insights about small business competitiveness could aid the growth and development of business entrepreneurs and companies. Potential benefits for consumers include a greater appreciation of SRB owners' products or services and improved customer satisfaction.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Researchers gather information from dissertations and published peer-reviewed articles to understand and explore the research phenomenon during the literature review. A literature review is an effort of authors to bridge the knowledge gap (Pejić-Bach & Cerpa, 2019). The goal of conducting a literature review is to provide the audience with information about the participant's views, the critical areas of debate, and the unresolved

research questions (Pejić-Bach & Cerpa, 2019). In composing the literature review for this study, I sought to (a) evaluate the body of knowledge on the topic, (b) identify gaps and potential biases, and (c) add to the collection of knowledge regarding the research topic. The literature review also includes an overview of the study's conceptual framework, the RBT. The information in the literature review furthers understanding of the strategies SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.

Literature Review Organization

The literature review consists of the following 26 sections and subsections:

- the resource-based theory
- the end of SCAs
- modern-day SCAs
- short-term and long-term competitive advantages
- global SCAs
- the goal of RBT
- knowledge management (KM) for SCAs
- learning in KM
- strategy creation after KM learning
- capabilities for achieving SCAs
- resources for achieving SCAs
- capabilities from a resource exchange perspective
- dynamic capabilities
- the three aspects of dynamic capabilities

- best resources for achieving SCAs
- importance of small businesses
- impact of small businesses on the economy
- small business technology
- small business retail technology
- small business CRM technology
- CRM background
- CRM support functions and capabilities
- CRM study constructs and RBT constructs
- CRM and market turbulence versus technology turbulence
- CRM technology
- CRM study summary

The sources used in the literature review section were mainly peer-reviewed articles retrieved from ABI/INFORM Complete, Sage, ResearchGate, Business Source Complete/Premier ProQuest databases, Emerald, and Management Journals. I also used Walden University's online library to find Walden dissertations and search for peer-reviewed articles. The literature review contained 81 references, with 62 references published within the past 5 years, representing 77%, and 77 from scholarly peer-reviewed sources, representing 93%.

The Resource-Based Theory

The RBT helps business owners understand what and how organizational resources impact the potential to achieve SCAs. The theory maintains that the

achievement of SCAs occurs when resources conform with the VRIO framework (Gutiérrez-Martínez & Duhamel, 2019). SRB owners are looking for competitive advantage sources that are difficult for rivals to achieve (Shamnot, 2014). Gutiérrez-Martínez and Duhamel (2019) noted that resources are valuable when they enable small business owners to exploit external opportunities or minimize external threats. Gutiérrez-Martínez and Duhamel stated that resources that originate from the external environment are usually not helpful in creating competitive advantages because competitors are likely to access the same resource. Resources that a few competing companies control are imperfectly imitable when the means to develop or obtain those resources are costly (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). When resources are valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate, exploiting the resources can result in competitive advantages. However, Gutiérrez-Martínez and Duhamel asserted that business owners should possess the infrastructure to realize the resources' full competitive potential.

Organizational resources should have the VRIO attributes to support the firm's SCAs objectives. The VRIO model includes a firm's ability to gain competitive advantages through physical, human, and organizational support (Almada & Borges, 2018). Specific resources might be more important for achieving SCAs compared to other resources. Vargas-Hernández and Francia (2019) indicated that human resources are as the most significant factor for business owners seeking to realize competitive advantages. Therefore, managers should know how different resources affect achieving SCAs. Practices based on the RBT support managers in identifying which resources and skills may or may not be sources of SCAs (Machado et al., 2017).

There are some questions business owners might consider when determining which resources are critical for their organization to achieve SCAs. As Machado et al. (2017) noted, these questions include the following: Does a small number of competitors control the resources?; Is there a cost disadvantage for companies that do not have such resources?; and Do the company's policies and procedures support the exploitation of valuable, scarce, and costly-to-imitate resources?

In prior studies, researchers identified organizational resources as essential to a firm's success. However, it was not until the 1980s that the RBT of the firm began to take shape (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Machado et al. (2017) described the *resource-based view*, a term often used interchangeably with *RBT*, as a perspective that explains business owners' strategic behavior through their organizations. Machado et al. based their assumptions on the idea that the selection, acquisition, and disposition of resources can result in competitive advantages. Machado et al. also stated that the growth of unique skills or processes that are challenging to imitate could result in competitive advantages over competitors and differentiation from competitors. Similarly, Gutiérrez-Martínez and Duhamel (2019) argued that organizational leadership tends to be more competitive when they exploit strengths and overcome weaknesses through practices based on the VRIO framework.

The RBT became prevalent in the early 1990s during the technological revolution. Barney developed the RBT in 1991. An idea that existed before the RBT was the concept of industry-level factors being the determinant of each firm's profit potential (Porter, 1979). Barney (1991) was one of many authors who helped develop the RBT into what it

is today. Barney and a few other scholars asserted that organizational leadership achieves a better result by developing rare, hard to imitate, and valuable skills and resources.

Barney developed the framework of the core tenets and essential attributes of resources and competitive advantages. Although the market environment has evolved significantly since 1991, the RBT concept has maintained its relevance. Kozlenkova et al. (2014) noted that research on the application or invocation of the RBT in marketing practices has increased by 500% in the last decade.

The End of Sustainable Competitive Advantages

Various researchers have argued that achieving SCAs in any highly competitive market environment is impossible. For example, Sigalas and Papadakis (2018) emphasized that a firm's ability to achieve competitive advantages does not necessarily mean the firm will experience superior performance. Bashir and Verma (2017) argued that in the current technologically advanced society, the assumptions about the strategies underlying the theory of competitive advantage are obsolete. Day (2014) asserted that the concept of RBT helping to achieve SCAs is no longer applicable. Day further endorsed the antiquity of the idea that SCAs occur when resources conform with the VRIO framework. Day presented a distinct idea of the RBT leading to the achievement of SCAs when some resources such as brands and customer relationships are nurtured in all environments to ensure that the corporate brand maintains relevance.

Business owners should continually review and re-strategize resources to ensure progress towards the organizational goal of achieving SCAs. Day (2014) stated that establishing a firm's strategy for SCAs is irrelevant for most companies today. Bashir and

Instead of focusing on exploiting value from competitive advantages, companies should emphasize the innovative ability to create and reconfigure value in business processes (Verma, 2017). Similarly, Day described SCAs as short-lived goals that need renewal frequently. In an evolutionary market environment, firm leaders need to continually reconfigure themselves, adapt, and renew advantages (Day, 2014). Furthermore, Day noted that it is through reconfiguration that assets that business entrepreneurs and capabilities evolve from one position to another.

Modern-Day Sustainable Competitive Advantages

The modern-day strategies for achieving SCAs require periodic evaluation of short-term plans to realize competitive advantages that promotes business success and sustainable growth. Machado et al. (2017) held a similar view to Day (2014) about the importance of SCAs. However, Machado et al. analyzed the relationship between the complex concept of sustainability and the criteria that define a project's success. Business owners may need to understand the difference between sustainability and success as they respond to competitive pressure. Machado et al. noted that due to the globalized market in which most firms operate, in which changes happen quickly, technology develops continuously, and consumerism is the new norm, there is increasingly severe competition between organizations. The author further indicated that organizational leaders often need to focus on strategic management to establish a competitive organizational attitude due to heightened competition. A conclusion is that achieving SCAs may depend on how resources are developed and used.

The concept of SCAs is directly related to business owners using their resources so that similar businesses are unable to replicate. Kozlenkova et al. (2014) specified that practices based on the resource-based logic rely on two fundamental assumptions about firm-based resources to explain how they help generate SCAs and why some firms may consistently outperform others. The first assumption by Kozlenkova et al. was that many firms possess different bundles of resources. Kozlenkova et al. determined that resource heterogeneity assumptions imply some firms may be better skilled in accomplishing certain activities because they possess unique resources. The second assumption by Kozlenkova et al. was that the difficulties of trading resources across firms may allow the benefit of the resources persist over time, which may help achieve SCAs.

Achieving SCAs is not limited to how organizational leaders manage and use organizational resources. The main idea of the practices based on the resource-based logic is that leading firms can generate SCAs when they own valuable resources that some firms do not have or find costly or challenging to emulate (Barney & Hesterly, 2012). However, Kozlenkova et al. (2014) reported that with these two assumptions satisfied, not all resources are potential sources of SCAs. Therefore, business owners need to understand the differences between an organization's resources and capabilities.

Short-Term and Long-Term Competitive Advantages

As the research on VRIO practices and firms' achievement of SCAs indicates, organizations' resources and capabilities should be continuously developed in alignment with the core tenets of the VRIO framework to realize the short-term and long-term advantages. Short- and long-term goals on remaining competitive, valuable, or relevant

are especially crucial due to external pressure in a global market environment (Bashir & Verma, 2017). Assensoh-Kodua (2019) noted that the growing turmoil in the external organizational setting or business environment had directed attention to capabilities and resources as the primary source of competitive advantages. Assensoh-Kodua suggested that practices based on the RBT play an essential role and assist organizational leaders in creating, nurturing, and maintaining competitive advantages and knowing the collective resources needed to compete favorably in a globalized and highly competitive market.

Global Sustainable Competitive Advantages

Globalization and the advent of technology have reconfigured the market space and intensified the impact of competitive forces on business owners' success. Bashir and Verma (2017) and Day (2014) mainly argued against the idea that firms can only achieve SCAs when organizational resources follow VRIO practices. In other words, Bashir and Verma and Day did not appear to believe in the idea of attaining SCAs or resources helping an organization to remain competitive over a long period. Instead, they concluded that resources need to evolve continuously and create value for an organization to be competitive over a short period. Although debatable, this argument is significant when thinking about competition from a global perspective. Some critical questions may be as follows: How can business owners achieve SCAs in a worldwide market where it is easy to imitate and acquire resources? and How can businesses achieve SCAs when satisfaction may be relatively affordable from competitors due to the availability of technology and other external forces?

The effects of globalization impact businesses everywhere. Therefore, SRB owners should realize that they compete with local, physically established companies and virtual global organizations. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) asserted that the advent of technology might have fostered globalization, which has forced firms to constantly innovate better ways to thrive and survive in a more competitive environment. The author's idea is similar to Bashir and Verma's (2017) and Day's (2014) argument in favor of constant and continuous innovation to achieve competitive advantages. Globalization is arguably one of the leading phenomena in recent years that have impacted society, business life, and the economy in multiple ways.

Globalization impacts both small and large business owners around the world. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) emphasized that globalization has brought in more competition among industry players. For example, a local barber in a small community might suddenly have a high demand for a particular hairstyle because the hairstyle is a social trend that started from another country. Suppose the barber is up to date because of social media or other sources. In that case, the barber can take early advantage of the trend locally by marketing the ability to provide the haircut at affordable rates. However, no barber locally or globally can achieve SCAs by giving the haircut service to customers because other barbers may quickly acquire the skill, and the trend is bound to efface with time. Assensoh-Kodua noted that organizational leaders should learn to design better sustainable strategies to outsmart their competitors and thrive in the market. The author also reported that competition might impact various aspects of the business on a macroeconomic level, ranging from the target market, price, and cost of service or

product to technology adaptation. Therefore, the experience of what works and the development of knowledge is essential for achieving competitive advantages.

The Goals of Using Resource-Based Theory Practices

Achieving SCAs might require constant changes in firm resources to operate optimally and achieve business goals. The goal of using the RBT practices is to achieve SCAs (Gutiérrez-Martínez & Duhamel, 2019). Hanfan et al. (2019) agreed that competitive advantages exist when a firm in an industry can leverage its skills and abilities to achieve success in a way other firms cannot, distinguishing a company from its competitors. For business owners to achieve SCAs, they may need to create and manage policies and strategies to leverage existing resources. Achieving SCAs requires organizational leaders to embed resources and capabilities through appropriate control systems and human resources policies and practices (Gutiérrez-Martínez & Duhamel, 2019).

Making constant changes to optimize firm resources requires proficient business management skills. Gutiérrez-Martínez and Duhamel (2019) asserted that based on the RBT propositions, business owners achieve SCAs when they effectively manage resources. Godwin-Opara (2016) indicated that small business owners could realize competitive advantages by leveraging valuable resources. Resources are useful if they help small business owners implement strategies that lower costs or increase revenues (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Suppose a firm is to achieve SCAs in the market environment; in that case, business owners may need to develop strategies that ensure resources are continually improving to take advantage of opportunities when available.

Knowledge Management for Sustainable Competitive Advantages

For business owners to manage their resources to support achieving SCAs, they must have business knowledge and must be able to apply it effectively. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) defined knowledge as what business entrepreneurs understand about strategies, concepts, ideas, theories, procedures, and practices. Practices based on KM strategies can help an organization's human resources align strategically with the concept of RBT, which could lead to achieving SCAs. Arraya and Porfirio (2017) noted that human resources encompasses the ability to integrate, develop, and reconfigure internal and external capabilities. When resources are scarce, an organization's human resources may be vital for competitiveness (Greer et al., 2015). Knowledge gathering and management refer to the internal and external forces that can lead to competitive advantages.

External factors could also impact the quality of business knowledge. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) identified globalization, politics, legislation, and global economic pressure as examples of factors in the external business environment that affect how businesses perform. Therefore, business owners need to understand their external environment and leverage such knowledge to achieve SCAs. An organization's capabilities may primarily depend on the firm's ability to blend core skills creatively within and outside the firm. How organizational leaders use the information gathered internally and externally is by definition KM. In conclusion, when a business owner operates a successful KM procedure, it facilitates process improvement that can aid the firm's competitiveness.

Business owners should develop a plan to improve business knowledge quality and availability. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) argued that business owners might need to have

a KM strategy to improve their organization's human resources capabilities to achieve SCAs. Garg et al. (2018) described knowledge as what individuals know and how they use what they know. Creating intellectual business owners that are more flexible than their competitors is the main idea of developing and implementing business strategies based on the RBT (Jardón et al., 2018). Similarly, Laihonen and Mäntylä (2018) stated that a holistic KM strategy promotes the use of performance information by providing a systematic management framework for gathering and utilizing the information, which could help organizations achieve competitive advantages. Business owners should not consider knowledge as something that business entrepreneurs have but rather as something they can acquire over time (Blackler, 1995). Additionally, Assensoh-Kodua said that hiring and developing a talented workforce and extending an organization's skills base may be ways business owners can achieve SCAs. Some methods of strengthening a team's capacity and effectiveness include sharing ideas and experiences, constructing group identity, and understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and individual strengths and weaknesses (Arraya and Porfirio, 2017). Hence, small business owners might achieve SCAs when they share and build on information about their technology selection strategy within and outside their organization.

Improving the quality of business knowledge might involve practices associated with employee hiring and development within an organization. Since an organization may use knowledge via its human resources to achieve SCAs, most organizations' challenge is to make sure that they can locate, integrate, compensate, and keep the gifted

employees they need (Davis, 2017). Assensoh-Kodua (2019) asserted that knowledge in itself is not what matters to organizational leadership, but how the learning is applied to achieve the strategic objectives for competitive advantages. Therefore, knowledge is a component of the RBT practices that can help coordinate resources following the VRIO standards to generate SCAs.

The use of information communication technology (ICT) may be one of many ways to support an organization's KM system. Just like KM, ICT is a tool that can help refine organizational resources in a way that may help achieve SCAs. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) discussed the possibility of using ICT to transform a firm's goal of attaining competitive advantages, given the plethora of information available to firms nowadays. However, the author also encouraged business owners to consider information technology primarily as a means of communication rather than a substitute for RBT practices to achieve competitive advantages. Assensoh-Kodua asserted that an organization's operational, technical, and practical knowledge could be stored in databases and found in reports, libraries, policy documents, manuals, and presentations. The author also stated that storing and sharing knowledge is an example of how technology can support KM, helping businesses achieve SCAs.

Learning in Knowledge Management

A critical element of KM is learning. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) stipulated that organizational leadership must embark on learning for innovations and competitive advantages when processes occur in organizations, including interaction and networking with internal and external stakeholders. The keyword is learning for competitive

advantage. It is essential to learn how the business environment impacts the potentials for SCAs and how to allocate resources to achieve SCAs. Assensoh-Kodua advocated that learning involves investigating the source of problems, challenging assumptions, beliefs, norms, and decisions making.

Market turbulence is not entirely a negative situation for business owners to encounter because it may lead to learning new things or ways of achieving SCAs. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) explained that a firm might survive and start the journey towards competitiveness when the firm has learned something new about what to achieve while experiencing turbulent events. Assensoh-Kodua further discussed the importance of converting the lesson learned into action by deciding how to react, which may help increase the business activities' competitiveness. Determining how to respond to the lessons learned might be considered a strategy creation process. In other words, Assensoh-Kodua implied that firms need to learn new trends and develop action-oriented strategies to position resources and capabilities to take advantage of changes in market trends. Repeating the learning and action process may help achieve SCAs because resources are continually optimized to satisfy the VRIO ideology of the practices based on the RBT.

Strategy Creation After Knowledge Management Learning

An organization's internal resources are vital to how the firm responds to external and internal pressure that impacts the achievement of SCAs. For organizational leaders to face the ever-evolving trends in the external business environment, as indicated by Ajmera (2017), they should focus efforts on their internal resources and capabilities as

the primary source of strength to survive and gain competitive advantages (de los Santos & Zanca, 2018). Therefore, business owners might need to develop a strategy to achieve SCAs. Rockwell (2019) expressed the importance of creating new strategies based on the RBT practices to balance the exploitation of existing resources and the development of new ones.

Business owners should develop or reconfigure their strategy after learning a new lesson that could lead to achieving SCAs. When organizational leaders have learned from external and internal sources, the next step is to develop a strategy that helps realize financial value. Assensoh-Kodua (2019) contended that organizational leaders must first use their internal resources effectively and develop new resources to remain competitive. Considering the RBT from an internal perspective, the assumption is that most organizational capabilities lead to the path of profitability (Machado et al., 2017). Additionally, a company's competitiveness depends on both the organization's pace and the company's intellectual capital (Machado et al., 2017).

Resources for Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantages

Business owners should identify and classify organizational resources in the right category. The word "resource" refers to something organizational leaders can draw on to accomplish their goals (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Similarly, Ferreira et al. (2018) reported that business entrepreneurs gather resources to accommodate, overcome, or survive threats. Examples of material resources include money or sources related to social status or social support (Ferreira et al., 2018). On that account, Lim et al. (2017)

identified five categories of firm resources: (a) physical resources, (b) financial resources, (c) technological resources, (d) human resources, and (e) organizational resources.

The financial resources impact the business owners' ability to implement strategies to achieve SCAs. Machado et al. (2017) described financial resources as the capital organizational leaders use to produce and shape their strategies. Financial resources could be obtained externally through investors, shareholders, creditors, and banks (Machado et al., 2017). Furthermore, Machado et al. (2017) stated that capital from profit and personal contribution are examples of internal revenue sources. Machado et al. further explained the characteristics of physical resources as the materials used by organizational operations, including machinery and equipment. Physical resources require periodic maintenance to ensure optimal operation. Hence, one of the factors required to achieve SCAs is the periodic maintenance of the physical resources of an organization.

Machado et al. (2017) further asserted that individual resources include tools used to improve personal skills. Business leader could use improved interpersonal skills to lead organizational processes concerning employees and managers at all levels (Machado et al., 2017). Such interpersonal skills may also affect employee morale and motivation, which can help the organization achieve SCAs. Machado et al. theorized that corporate resources are typically involved in the formal or informal systems of planning, controlling, and coordinating organizational business activities. Therefore, to achieve SCAs, small business owners might need to leverage all avenues available to develop and improve individual leadership and management skills.

The management of intangible resources may affect how business leaders use tangible resources to achieve SCAs. El Ebrashi (2018) reported that intangible resources such as human capital, formal and informal relations, organizational culture, knowledge, reputation, skills, and competencies are essential for gaining competitive advantages. Although an organization's external resources can aid the achievement of SCAs, Barney (1991) chose to focus on how the internal resources of an organization can help achieve SCAs. Similarly, Bhat and Darzi (2018) stated that other theorists and scholars had emphasized the importance of leveraging scarce resources to create and maintain value for a firm's customers. Since an organization's internal resources might be harder to replicate or imitate (Barney, 1991), Machado et al. (2017) noted that based on the RBT practices and the VRIO ideology, resources for attaining competitive advantages might exist within the organization.

Capabilities for Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantages

Organizational capabilities are the firm's propensity to achieve specific goals based on tangible and intangible resources internally and externally located. Capabilities are generally information-based, tangible, or intangible processes that may allow a firm to deploy its resources more efficiently and enhance those resources' productivity (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Therefore, Furnival et al. (2018) described improvement capability as a firm's ability to deliberately and methodically use development approaches, methods, and practices, to modify processes and products/services to produce improved performance. If a resource is valuable, rare, and imperfectly imitable, the exchange should be organized and managed in a way that allows for the exploitation

of the resource's potential (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Hence, Kozlenkova et al. (2014) noted that inadequate skills, processes, and policies could undermine the potential profit from the exchange of valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate resources. Similarly, Barney (2002) pointed out that the organization's capabilities are a subset of its resources, helping to complete and control other resources.

How a business owner strategically configures and deploys organizational resources indicates the organization's resource capabilities. Barney (1991) described resources as anything that has an enabling capacity. Factors that have enabling ability could be internally or externally located and may help businesses achieve SCAs. Barney indicated that a firm is said to have competitive advantages when implementing value-creating strategies that differ from other competitors. Barney further asserted that a firm might experience competitive advantages by implementing strategies that prevent competitors' potential profit duplication. On that account, Barney stated that top firms could generally protect their competitive advantages if their resources are treasured, unusual, matchless, and nonsubstitutable.

Capabilities From a Resource Exchange Perspective

The exchange of a firms' VRIO resources can help determine the firms' capabilities that may help achieve SCAs. Peteraf and Barney (2003) described RBT at the exchange level of analysis as a natural business evolution that attempts to explain the variation in profitability rates as a factor of different analysis levels. The different analysis levels include the industry level, the business group level, and the business level or firm level (Peteraf & Barney, 2003). Similarly, Kozlenkova et al. (2014) described the

exchange level of analysis as the process of understanding the differences in firm performance based on how the firms exchange resources with other firms operating in the same marketplace. The industry level, firm-level, or exchange level of variables are different ways to view the exchange level of analysis (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). The exchange level of analysis is an important concept to understand when considering how to combine resources to help achieve SCAs.

At the exchange level, organizational RBT practices help business owners understand the tradeoffs that may occur when specific resources are optimized. Kozlenkova et al. (2014) presented a perspective that evaluates the use of RBT practices at the exchange level of analysis. Additionally, Kozlenkova et al. assessed practices associated with VRIO resources to determine how they can help generate SCAs at the exchange level. Therefore, Kozlenkova et al. also evaluated practices associated with the VRIO resources to identify and describe any required adaptations. It appears valid for researchers to use RBT practices at the exchange level of analysis because using RBT methods at the exchange level satisfies the assumptions and parallels present in understanding the resource-based logic developed and tested at the firm level (Kozlenkova et al. 2014). For firms to use practices associated with the RBT at an exchange level to achieve SCAs, they may need to make changes and leverage resources that other firms do not have or cannot imitate.

Dynamic Capabilities

Firm owners' capacity to understand and quickly adjust to their fast-changing markets may ultimately depend on their adaptive capabilities. Day (2014) argued in favor

of a firm's resources' dynamic capabilities helping to achieve SCAs in a way that conforms to the practices associated with the VRIO resources. The author stated that dynamic capabilities are factors that business owners may use to create, adjust, and keep relevant stocks of skills. Likewise, Kozlenkova et al. (2014) reported that dynamic capabilities are a category of resources that may enable organizational fitness and help shape the environment advantageously.

Business owners should understand how to configure resources to achieve SCAs dynamically. Day (2014) listed three ways that dynamic capabilities can help business owners achieve SCAs. The first point Day conveyed was that an organization's dynamic capabilities could help business owners sense organizational threats or opportunities. Second, Day reported that dynamic capabilities could help business owners respond to changes by combining and transforming available resources. Additionally, Day asserted that organizational resources could be combined or modified in new and different ways to help achieve SCAs. Business owners may have to make changes as needed to support their organization's dynamic capabilities. Furthermore, Day noted that dynamic capabilities could also help business owners identify and add new resources through alliance partnerships or acquisitions. Finally, dynamic capabilities could help business owners select the organizational configuration and business model for delivering economic value to customers (Day, 2014). Similarly, dynamic capabilities could help business owners capture economic profits (Teece, 2009).

The business owner might have to accommodate flexibility in the decision-making protocol to manage an organization's dynamic capabilities correctly. Day (2014)

stated that a dynamic capability is not an impromptu solution to a problem, but a repeatable and deeply embedded set of skills and knowledge exercised through processes. Similarly, de los Santos and Zanca (2018) addressed the need for an environmental analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) due to the external environment's turbulence. Hence, a complete understanding of the sources of a firm's competitive advantages might require the analysis of its internal strengths and weaknesses, which is similar to the RBT ideology (Assensoh-Kodua, 2019). Additionally, companies can gain competitive advantages by obtaining and sustaining valuable strategic resources and developing competencies and capabilities (Batko, 2017).

When business owners are flexible and focused on their dynamic capabilities, they can learn new operating ways to achieve SCAs. Lee and Yoo (2019) listed IBM as an example of an organization that used their dynamic capabilities to learn better ways of serving their customers' needs. IBM used its existing technology competencies to transform from a product-oriented company to a customer-solutions oriented company (Lee and Yoo, 2019). Similarly, Ling Florence et al. (2018) noted that resource management's task is to improve and fully exploit substantial resources to meet customer needs and increase returns on investment. In the example provided, IBM's management deployed its human resources to connect with its end users. Day (2014) specified that dynamic capabilities might emphasize internal efficiency improvements and short-term cost reductions. When trying to improve internal efficiencies, which are the resources of an organization, Teece (2009) emphasized the importance of defining managerial traits, management systems, and organizational designs. Improving internal efficiencies may

keep the organization alert to opportunities and threats, enabling the firm to execute on new opportunities and continuously strive to achieve their best.

In addition to dynamic capabilities, organizational leaders also need adaptive skills for their resources to meet the VRIO standard and thereby generate SCAs. Day (2014) asserted that the world is changing quickly; therefore, continually adding to one's skill set is highly essential. The propensity for the dynamic capabilities approaches to start the strategy quest from the inside-out inherently limits the firm's ability to anticipate rapid market shifts (Day, 2014). Therefore, Day indicated that the dynamic capabilities approach to begin the inside-out strategy quest could also temporarily limit the gain of competitive advantages when business owners identify opportunities sooner than rivals. Additionally, Day recommended that organizational leaders need to use adaptive capabilities to augment and enhance their dynamic skills by making changes from the outside-in. The combined use of dynamic and adaptive capabilities could enable a firm to adjust more quickly to fast-changing markets (Day, 2014).

The Three Aspects of Dynamic Capabilities. When business owners are focused on the organization's dynamic capabilities, the owners might achieve competitive advantages that can be sustainable when constantly restructured to achieve optimal results. Day (2014) proposed three aspects of adaptive capabilities that can help a firm adjust more quickly to fast-changing markets. The first is vigilant market learning. Day stated that attentive market learning enhances deep market insights with a warning system to anticipate market changes and unmet surface needs. The second suggestion offered by Day for quick adjustment to changing market trends is adaptive market

experimentation. The author described adaptive market experimentation as continuously learning from planned experiments. Adaptive market experimentation can support learning new ways to achieve SCAs.

Business owners need to have a process of identifying market changes to make the required adjustment. Day (2014) finally suggested open marketing as a way for firms to respond quickly to fast-changing markets. Open marketing occurs when firms forge relationships with partners, closely monitoring and adjusting to market changes (Day, 2014). Examples of such market changes include new media and social networking technologies. Day speculated that organizations with a dynamic ability to reconfigure both tangible and intangible resources might be better positioned to enjoy the benefit of their adaptive capabilities.

Best Resources for Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantages

The internal structure and process of an organization are essential to the firm's ability to achieve SCAs. Arbi et al. (2017) emphasized that competitive advantages might originate primarily from firm resources and employee skills. Furthermore, competitive advantages might occur secondarily from the market or industry sector in which a group of organizations operates (Arbi et al., 2017). Although organizational intangible resources such as the product brand are essential to acquire SCAs, Machado et al. (2017) noted that given the fact businesses with more employees typically have more significant revenue; human resources might be essential to achieving SCAs.

Maintaining and updating an organization's physical resources could also impact the potential to achieve SCAs. The physical resources of an organization may be

significant for achieving SCAs (Machado et al., 2017). The study results showed the physical resources were more notable for achieving SCAs because the participants valued the connection between the ethics and respect and code of conduct and ethics of the organization, which might impact the customer service in the organization. Machado et al. (2017) conveyed that when the physical resources are optimized, the quality of products and services offered in comparison to competitors increases.

Another factor relevant to achieving SCAs is the business's technology adoption strategies. Machado et al. (2017) reported that the question addressing employees' technical knowledge yielded the lowest result for achieving SCAs than questions about ethics and respect to members, concerns for the environment, product quality, and equipment. Therefore, employee technical competencies and efficacy sometimes impact a management's technology adoption plans. Based on the survey results, Machado et al. concluded that the organizational resources relevant to SCAs are the physical resources, human resources, and, finally, the capital resources hierarchically. Oliveira (2001) noted that using corporate resources accurately may minimize problems and maximize opportunities.

Importance of Small Businesses

Small businesses provide more than half of the U.S. jobs representing half of the U.S. economic output. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Statistics of U.S. Businesses contended that in 2012, at least 23 million businesses without employees existed in the United States (SBA, 2012). The data also indicated that as of 2012, close to 6 million firms existed with fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2012). Additionally, Wille et al.

(2017) noted that the data above represents at least 99% of all private-sector businesses in the United States. Furthermore, small businesses employed nearly 50% of the United States workforce and paid approximately 50% of all wages in 2013 (Wille et al., 2017).

Impact of Small Businesses on the Economy

Small businesses are essential to the growth of the economy. Krol (2017) asserted that these businesses play an essential role in job creation, which may be a predictor of economic performance. Krol reported that some of the characteristics of uncertainty in the economy come from reducing small business employment, investment, and expansion. Similarly, Perret et al. (2017) reported that family-owned businesses, mostly small businesses, are the backbone of the U.S. economy. There are approximately 55% of jobs in the United States that fall into the category, and 66% of newly created positions are from the sector (SBA, 2014).

Small businesses account for many businesses in several states across the United States. Barclay (2019) noted that about 98% of all New York businesses fall in the small business category. Furthermore, there are approximately 451,000 such businesses across the state of New York, and more than half of New York's workforce earns a paycheck from small companies. Barclay stated that goods and services provided by small business owners in New York range from a cup of coffee to technical support to manufacturing, and collectively, small businesses have a significant impact on the economy. When small businesses in local environments succeed, such communities may grow economically (Barclay, 2019). Therefore, promoting small businesses may be a way to ensure growth in local communities, at the state as well as national level.

With all the above facts and statistics, it is clear that small businesses are indeed the U.S. economy's backbone. Therefore, if the economy is to grow, then more small businesses must survive. My aim in conducting this qualitative multiple case study was to consider the strategies for technology selection to understand the strategies SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. Achieving SCAs is essential because the failure rate of small businesses in the United States is high. SBA statistics indicate that 20% of small businesses fail within the first two years, and 50% fail within 5 years. Snider and Davies (2017) asserted that small businesses are vital to economic growth, and their success is essential. However, the number of successful small companies is declining in the United States (SBA, 2014).

Small businesses account for a large portion of business failure. In the United States, the small business sector represents 99.7% of all businesses and accounts for 60% of net new jobs, with 75% of small companies being self-employed (SBA, 2014). The SBA data revealed that while the number of small business start-ups each year is almost 500,000, less than half survive 5 years or more. Nwabueze (2019) noted that typically, small business start-ups in the United States fail within the first 5 years.

Small Business Technology

It is essential to understand how small business owners use technology to achieve SCAs because many firms are small businesses and these businesses have a high business failure rate. According to the U.S. SBA's 2014 Office of Advocacy, 99.7% of all U.S. firms are small businesses. Powell et al. (2018) stated that the size and economic power of small businesses across the globe warrant investigation. The U.S. SBA (2014)

classified small businesses as organizations with 500 or fewer employees. Some small businesses are competing against corporate giants such as Nestle, Siemens, Unilever, and Tesco.

Most small business owners are less enthusiastic about adopting new technology, which may negatively impact the organization's dynamic capabilities. Because small businesses are the backbone of the U.S. economy, research into the adaptation of technology by the owners of these businesses is crucial (Hettihewa & Wright, 2018). Most small business owners are slow adopters of technology and use unreliable and easy strategies for making decisions with limited access to relevant information (SBA, 2014). Therefore, some small business managers shoulder the customer relationship management systems' responsibility, often without the requisite expertise to do so (Fuller, 1996).

Small Business Retail Technology

Several factors impact business owners' willingness to adopt technology to achieve SCAs. Arvie and Tanaamah (2019) noted that introducing new technologies in an organization might be problematic for managers and business specialists alike. Therefore, Arvie and Tanaamah listed five factors that may influence technology adaptation: (a) external variables, (b) perceived usefulness, (c) perceived ease of use, (d) attitude towards using, and (e) behavioral intention to use. Achieving sustainable operational success might be through using a contingency approach where firms use multiples strategies to overcome the barriers to technology adoption (Okumus et al. 2017). Additionally, Okumus et al. (2017) stated that some SRB owners do not have a good plan

for technology adoption and implementation to generate SCAs because the business owners are afraid to invest in technology. Some of the reasons some SRB owners are afraid to invest in technology include the fear of business failure and low investment returns (Okumus et al., 2017). Additionally, Okumus et al. identified some of the barriers to technology investments might be internal, such as management style, employee perception, cost and customer behavior, or external such as lack of investors and market trends.

One of the reasons some small business owners and employees fail to adopt technology is that they might not be willing to try new advanced ways of getting the job done. Lewis and Loker (2014) conducted a quantitative experimental study to identify the variables relevant for the acceptance of advanced technology by apparel retail employees and recommend management strategies for effective technology integration in retail stores. Therefore, Lewis and Loker introduced current and past retail employees to three different retail technologies: (a) 3D body scanners, (b) product configurators, and (3) social networking in a laboratory setting.

The employees filled out questionnaires after their encounter with the three different retail technologies to determine the usefulness, enjoyment, ease of use, task importance, technology self-efficacy, and user intent. The research results of Lewis and Loker's (2014) study showed the participants considered the value of technology as an essential determinant of usage intent for all three types of technology. The results also showed that enjoyment was a relevant factor in the 3D body scanner's usage intent. Finally, employees who had high self-efficacy scores mostly also had higher ratings for

the perception of each technology's usefulness. The results suggested that technologically confident employees, managers, or business owners would most likely be willing to adopt new technology to advance productivity. Hence, If employees have low self-esteem or do not like a particular technology, such employees could negatively impact the adoption and implementation of new technologies in an organization.

Besides considering how employees could impact technology innovation and adoption by retail business owners, customers may also be critical stakeholders to consider when thinking about new technology adoption. One of the apparent technologies most consumers have encountered at some supermarkets and some department stores is self-scanning technology (SST). Elliott et al. (2013) conducted a study focused on what drives consumers to use self-scanning devices. One may assume many retail business owners will continue to adopt SST because it allows for a standardized interaction with consumers. Adopting SST may also increase productivity and efficiency, and it may increase customer satisfaction through newer, quicker, and advanced channels. However, if customers would rather have a store representative assist them with the check-out process than using the SST, investment in such technologies would not only be a waste but could potentially lead to business failure.

Business owners should consider certain factors before developing a technology adoption strategy to achieve SCAs. Elliott et al. (2013) provided some factors that managers and business leaders may consider when deciding which technology to adopt, such as (a) the consumer's mindset, (b) technology readiness (TR), and (c) the impact on efficiency and productivity. The appeal of SST comes from the potential of eliminating

service representatives, which gives the retail business owner hopes of greater cost efficiencies, enhanced service quality, and attraction of new customers over in-person services (Elliott et al., 2013).

An online method was used to collect data to evaluate 1,079 participant's perception of the intent of use, perceived fun, and perceived reliability about technology readiness when using SST. The results of Elliott et al.'s (2013) study showed that technology readiness impacted perceived enjoyment and perceived reliability but not the intent of use. Additionally, the survey result showed that technology readiness might appeal to the fun and reliability mindset of customers but not necessarily result in the customer using the technology. Elliott et al. expressed concern that some customers might be uncertain about using a new technology even though the technology might be appealing. The limitation of Elliott et al.'s study includes gathering data from a single case; therefore, the study's generalizability is questionable. Similarly, another limitation of Elliott et al. study is that the results were associated with a sole determinant. For example, the determinant of perceived fun and SST reliability was only technology readiness. Although the research result of the Elliott et al. study was not generalizable, the results indicate that business owners need to understand their stakeholders before investing in new technology.

Small Business Customer Relationship Management Technology

There are different types of technology businesses can use to achieve SCAs. Some of the resources and practices used in small businesses include computers, software, networking devices, telephone systems, accounting systems, inventory control

systems, and CRM systems (MacKechnie, 2017). Powell et al. (2018) examined CRM technology's use for organizational support capabilities by using an environmental contingency perspective. The main idea of the environmental contingency theory is to encourage flexible business responses to changes in the business environment as they arise (Turulja & Bajgoric, 2016).

Business owners might need to welcome flexible decision making to achieve competitive advantages. Turulja and Bajgoric (2016) noted two assumptions about the environmental contingency theory, there is no best strategy or structure for an organization to be competitive, and there is no strategy or structure equally effective under different environmental conditions. Powell et al. (2018) used a questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 276 small business CRM managers over a wide range of industries. The moderators used to determine the connection between technology use in CRM support capabilities and customer commitment were market offerings and market turbulence variables (Powell et al., 2018). Additionally, Powell et al. emphasized that using the contingency approach helps the business community discover practices based on the RBT that can lead to SCAs depending on the fit of the resources to the firm's environmental characteristics.

CRM technology is a growing trend in the marketplace. CRM technology is essential because many business owners are adopting the technology to achieve increased profitability (Powell et al., 2018). The rate of CRM technology adoption rose by over 51% in 2011 (Computer Economics, 2012). The increase in the adoption rate of CRM technology does not necessarily mean businesses using CRM technology experience a

successful business venture. Lindgreen et al. (2006) argued that although there has been a significant increase in CRM technologies' organizational expenses, the success of CRM technology is still unclear. The argument remains relevant today.

Background of Customer Relationship Management

Business owners should understand that no system is perfect, and every situation requires a customized response. Powell et al. (2018) used the contingency theory perspective to investigate the influence of technology utilization in CRM support capabilities on consumer relationships and firm performance. Lamptey and Singh (2018) agreed with other scholars that no structure or strategy is a perfect fit, which is the contingency perspective theory's premise. Business owners need internal and external environmental data to design and implement their unique business strategy (Eker & Eker, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for organizational leaders to understand the strengths and weaknesses of resources and capabilities to develop an effective strategy to achieve SCAs within their business environment.

When the business owner is willing to make decisions based on their situations, the organization may grow its capabilities and skills. Sachitra and Chong (2018) noted that capabilities such as learning capabilities, investment capabilities, process capabilities, and technical capabilities help business owners control, configure, and deploy resources for competitiveness. Based on the RBT concept, firms should be diverse regarding their utilization of their resources and capabilities (Sachitra & Chong, 2018). Maggon and Chaudhry (2018) emphasized that one essential business tool that could help managers deal with competitive forces is a CRM technology. However, Powell et al.

(2018) argued that the broad adoption of CRM technology has not proportionately increased the SCAs of small businesses.

CRM technology may be necessary for SRB owners. Ruivo et al. (2017) asserted that the CRM system adoption has exploded in the enterprise environment in recent years. CRM technology utilization annual data showed total revenue of \$16.1 billion in 2011 and increased annually by approximately \$2-\$3 billion (Statista, 2018). The Statista (2018) information also revealed that since 2015, the revenue generated from CRM technology was \$26.29 billion. Therefore, CRM technology may be one of many retail business technologies that can help firms produce the revenue needed to achieve SCAs. However, if CRM technology adoption is a growing trend with small businesses, there is a question of why these businesses are still having a problem attaining SCAs. Powell et al.(2018) identified CRM integration with business processes as one of the reasons why some small businesses are still unable to achieve SCAs despite the growing trend of using CRM technology. The high investments and generally poor results associated with CRM systems warrant further research into these practices.

Customer Relationship Management Support Functions and Capabilities

Business owners can use the capabilities of CRM technology to support competitiveness. Bai (2018) stated that the capabilities of CRM could help businesses reduce sales costs, develop new products, and expand sales channels and scope. CRM helps to provide a scientific basis for firms to establish producing strategies and development plans to achieve their business goals (Bai, 2018). Additionally, Bai noted that CRM is a process of gathering customer information, processing customer

information, and delivering quality service to customers. CRM may help build a bridge between the company and its customers (Bai 2018).

The CRM mechanism has two main categories. Neirotti et al. (2018) classified the CRM mechanism into internal and external programs. Internally, CRM can help with business structure, culture, and KM. Externally, CRM can help with the interaction between a business and its customers, e.g., information sharing and customer engagement. CRM might help some firms obtain detailed information about customers, which business owners can use to adjust business offerings to meet customers' needs better than the competition. (AlHarbi et al., 2016).

Most business owners adopt the CRM technology to help the organizational efforts of achieving SCAs and responding to changes in ways consistent with the RBT and the VRIO model. Trif et al. (2019) reported that CRM dimensions such as tactical, strategic, and operational dimensions influence customer satisfaction and market efficiency. Open innovation, social marketing, public relations, sales, and social customer service are some of CRM technology functions (Sigala, 2018). Similarly, Kim and Wang (2019) reported that CRM capabilities should include gathering, organizing, and integrating information from customers to build customer relationships and improve organizational financial performance. Organizational culture reflects and impacts CRM's three components: the people, the processes, and the technology (Rahimi, 2017). Bhat and Darzi listed service capability, customer orientation capability, and personnel capabilities as the three capacity functions of CRM technology. CRM service capabilities involve using technology to meet the customer's needs by personalizing and maintaining

an exceptional quality of products/services (Bhat & Darzi, 2018). Similarly, Skorska (2018) described services as actions that create or add value through knowledge creation, accumulation, and diffusion to satisfy customer needs.

An essential aspect of CRM technology is helping business owners develop valuable relationships with their consumers. Bhat and Darzi (2018) noted that customer orientation leads to long-lasting customer relationships that support competitiveness. Organizational culture reflects and impacts CRM's three components: the people, the processes, and the technology (Rahimi, 2017). Therefore, customer orientation positively impacts organizational marketing and financial performance and can be considered one of the dominating factors of CRM capability (Bhat & Darzi, 2018). Human resource capability is a factor dependent on the employees' skills and competencies to create value for the organization. Lim et al. (2017) reported that human resources actions positively impact organizational goals, eventually becoming sources of competitive advantages. Therefore, business owners can develop the human resources of their organization to help nurture valuable relationships with customers that are crucial to achieving SCAs.

Customer Relationship Management Study Constructs and Resource-Based View

Constructs

When business owners use CRM technology effectively, they might notice a positive growth in their business's customer relationship performance. Sheth (2017) and Lipiäinen (2015) found evidence that might positively link a company's CRM technical capability to customer relationship performance. Therefore, Powell et al. (2018) hypothesized that the use of technology in firms' CRM support capabilities is positively

associated with their relational performance. Powell et al. used customer commitment as an indicator of relational performance. Customer commitment is an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship with a company (Van Tonder & de Beer, 2018). Similarly, Powell et al. inferred that customer commitment is a factor that can keep an organization competitive. For example, van Tonder and de Beer affirmed that a merchant's brand could compel customers to stay with the merchant even during turbulent times.

The value component of the VRIO practices may lead to customer commitment in the long run. One of the reasons for acquiring CRM technology is the ability to customize solutions for customers, resulting in long-term loyal customers. When the organization's offerings are not customizable, the organization provides a standard offering, which makes the firm less competitive because anyone can offer such products or services (Powell et al., 2018). Providing standard or customizable products or services is also related to the imitability construct of the VRIO framework's practices.

The number of small businesses in the United States justifies the need to study and protect them from larger organizations' undue pressure. These businesses are essential to study because they should be more competitive due to the potential to be more innovative (Powell et al., 2018). Xuhua et al. (2019) stated that small business owners tend to achieve better cost reductions than big organizations. Therefore, these owners have many opportunities to demonstrate innovativeness (Hogg, 2011). CRM technology may support the sale of goods and services. Powell et al. (2018) noted that although salespeople often support machine-based CRM capabilities, the value of the human-based CRM support capabilities is essential and has become an expectation to

some degree with business-to-business customers. Therefore, human resources are required to some extent for CRM technology to help attain the desired result, which in most cases, is achieving SCAs.

Technology should be adjusted depending on the relationship between an organization and its customers. In business to human customers, Powell et al. (2018) asserted that the human resources' extra effort goes a long way and helps get the customer commitment needed to achieve SCAs. Therefore, business to human customers requires less technology to generate SCAs (Powell et al., 2018). Additionally, Powell et al. argued that the type of customers determines the extent of technology or CRM technology needed to achieve SCAs. Business customers require more technology than individual customers (Powell et al., 2018).

Customer Relationship Management and Market Turbulence Versus Technology Turbulence

CRM technology can also help business owners adapt and respond positively to market and technology turbulence. Dost et al. (2019) described market turbulence as the changes in customers' composition and their preferences, demands, price/cost structures, and competitors' composition. The focus of market turbulence is the customer's stability in a given market (Powell et al., 2018). Hence, Powell et al. reported that market turbulence ultimately influences CRM due to the focus on consumers and customers. Powell et al. hypothesized that stakeholders' dynamism in turbulent markets might impact the relationship between CRM support capabilities and customer commitment.

The authors added that humans could adjust to the market without reprogramming or scaling disruptions, unlike information technology systems (Powell et al., 2018).

When humans and technology complement each other, the VRIO practices of the RBT can be satisfied, which may help SRB owners achieve SCAs. Although human resources can better control market turbulence, another disturbance to consider is technological turbulence. Given that we live in a highly technologically advanced global society, technological turbulence's focus is relevant to small businesses. Ma et al. (2018) described technological turbulence as the changes in technological products and services that cause uncertainty in an industry. Market turbulence and technological turbulence might influence organizational support capabilities and organizational performance (Reichstein, 2019). Therefore, small business owners might need to invest in their human resources to achieve or remain competitive during market or technological turbulence.

Customer Relationship Management Technology

Researchers have studied CRM technology and how it aids in achieving SCAs. Powell et al. (2018) collected data through a targeted, online survey of managers who had an adequate knowledge level of the company's CRM practices. Two hundred and seventy-six participants who fit the small business definition of 500 or fewer employees provided data for the study. Powell et al. used the firm's market share, return on investment, and profitability as the determinants of the firm's performance or dependent variables. The independent variables used for Powell's study were data analysis support, E-service support, marketing support, data integration and access, and sales support. Powell et al. identified customer commitment as a moderating variable of the study.

CRM may help business owners grow customer commitment and loyalty to their brand. Powell et al. (2018) considered and tested different ideas about the value CRM technology may provide to business owners. Additionally, Powell et al. examined how the extent of technology used in CRM support capabilities may be positively associated with customer commitment. Furthermore, Powell et al. also tested the different technology levels required for customized versus standard offerings. Powell et al. further considered the relationship between technology and customer type, i.e., business versus individual consumer. Finally, Powell et al. researched the level of technology used in the turbulent market and the relationship between customers' commitment and technological turbulence to determine CRM technology's value to business owners.

Knowing that technology should be scaled to fit the relationship between a firm and its customers, it is essential to understand how technology adoption may impact customer commitment. Powell et al.'s (2018) test results showed that CRM technology might not help increase customer commitment. The results possibly indicated the need for a higher level of technology for standard offerings than customizable offerings based on customer commitment levels. Customizable offerings required more human connection when compared to noncustomizable offerings. The results supported the idea that less technology leads to more significant customer commitment when dealing with individual customers. However, the reverse is the case when dealing with business customers. The results of Powell et al.'s study indicated that less technology is related to customer commitment in turbulent market due to the need for flexibility and agility. However, Powell et al.'s study showed that more significant technology led to a higher

customer commitment for marketing. All the other variables in Powell et al.'s study showed that less technology led to tremendous success. Finally, the results of Powell et al.'s study showed less that technology led to more significant customer commitment except with sales support.

Summary

The adoption of CRM technology does not automatically help business owners achieve SCAs. In some situations, business owners might be better off bypassing CRM technology to connect with their consumers. The results of Powell et al.'s (2018) study indicated that customer commitment was not positively related to firms utilizing technology on some occasions. In some cases, CRM technology proved valuable in achieving SCAs, and in other cases, it did not. Powell et al. provided an example of data analysis support and sales support capabilities that can be performed effectively with or without CRM technology use.

Depending on the business goals or strategies, CRM technology may or may not be a good fit. Powell et al. (2018) presented a scenario where technology utilization can be positively related to customer commitment as in the case of marketing support or negatively related, as in the case of sales support and data analysis support. In the case of market turbulence, CRM technology might be less effective for service-oriented businesses. However, in the case of technological turbulence, CRM might be useful for an organization's marketing initiatives. Therefore, CRM or other technology types are not a one size fit all solution. Each business needs to determine what technology level will help it achieve SCAs.

Transition

In Section 1 of this qualitative research study, I covered (a) the foundation and the background for the study, (b) the research problem, the purpose statement, the nature of the study, the overarching research question, the interview questions, and the conceptual framework, (c) operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study, and (d) the significance of the study and a detailed review of the academic literature. I focused on the RBT concept and how it may facilitate SCAs for small business/SRB owners. In Section 2 of this qualitative research study, I cover (a) the role of the researcher, the participant selection process, and the research methodology and design; (b) the population and sampling plan, the ethical research considerations, the data collection instruments, techniques, and organization; and (c) the data analysis process and the research reliability and validity. In Section 3, I finalize the study by covering the purpose statement, the presentation of study findings, the application to professional practice, and the implications for positive social change, the recommendations for actions, the suggestions for future research, my reflections, and the study conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

Unsuccessful SRB owners sometimes fail to achieve SCAs due to a lack of investment in updated technology (Hussein et al., 2017). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce (2018) surveyed 1,000 SB owners and reported that 57% of these businesses struggle to remain competitive due to a lack of familiarity with digital tools. Digital tools are electronic devices that can either be hardware such as computer systems or software such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. Although there has been an increase in technology utilization by consumers, some SRB owners still fail to develop a strategy for selecting the appropriate technology to improve their business competitiveness. The failure to establish a technology selection strategy is partly due to a lack of knowledge regarding the factors to consider when considering what technologies to select to aid SCAs (Curry et al., 2017).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. The target population for this qualitative multiple case study consisted of seven to 10 SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey area who have successfully adopted strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. The implications for positive social change include the potential to strengthen local economies and aid the growth and development of business entrepreneurs and companies. This study's information may also help struggling SRB owners learn appropriate technology selection strategies to help achieve

SCAs. When SRB owners achieve SCAs, they may be able to build a healthier and more prosperous retail industry, where they can operate efficiently and competitively.

Role of the Researcher

I performed the role of the data collector, interpreter, and analyzer in this study. Data collection is an essential component of a research project; the researcher performs a vital role in collecting and converting the raw data into useful information, Reddy and Kannamani (2018) noted. When the data are collected and analyzed, the researcher can make certain conclusions. In designing the study, I made key choices about the data sources and data collection procedures. Twining et al. (2016) noted that the chosen data collection instrument, such as interviews, questionnaires, and other instruments, impacts the quality of the data collected for a study. To gather data, I conducted semistructured interviews with SRB owners and observed and reviewed their businesses' technology footprints. Hofstra et al. (2019) stated that when a study includes an interview protocol, it improves the validity and reliability of data collection. Therefore, my study included the use of an interview protocol to enhance the data collection quality.

Interview protocols can help researchers remain consistent and focused on interview questions when conducting multiple case studies. Castillo-Montoya (2016) emphasized that an interview protocol might increase data gathered quality. Castillo-Montoya also emphasized that the feedback received from an interview protocol evaluation might increase the reliability and validity of the chosen research instrument. I observed the participating organizations' web presence and visited the participants' business location to gather more relevant data and triangulated information. Hofstra et al.

(2019) noted that researchers use an observation protocol to structure thoughts and impressions to triangulate and improve the collected data's quality.

I explored how the SRB owners use technology; therefore, there was flexibility in the interview protocol and process to accommodate the participants. The interview process was convenient for the participants by offering both virtual and in-person interview sessions. The study's purpose was expressed in simple terms in both written and oral form to ensure that participants understand the reason for the research and the potential benefits. I adhered to the interview protocol to gather relevant data. The interview session included a review of the interview consent form to provide an overview of the research to participants and ensure the participant's willingness to contribute and abide by the protocol. The consent form enhanced the participants' understanding of what the study was about and how the data gathering process was to unfold.

Interview protocols can help researchers gather relevant data and ask helpful follow-up questions. Yeong et al. (2018) stated that a reliable interview protocol is key to obtaining valuable interview data. The interview protocol for this study aligned with the interview and research questions and allowed for inquiry-based conversations. I followed the interview protocol in posing questions to participants and engaging in relevant follow-up conversations. Ma et al. (2018) noted that including a feedback stage to gather more data or information strengthens the interview process; therefore, I included a feedback stage into the data gathering process to enhance the quality of the data collected. The interviews were semistructured. During the interview process, I gathered

short descriptive words or themes that I used in the study's coding phase, an approach suggested by Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009).

I selected study participants from the New Jersey area business community, an area that has a healthy rivalry among business owners. The U.S. state of New Jersey is a diverse community where immigrants and U.S.-born individuals own small businesses. Perry (2019) noted that U.S.-born individuals own 53% of New Jersey's main street businesses while immigrants own 50% of household business. Some of the small businesses listed include dry cleaning stores, grocery stores, gas stations, transportation services, nail salons, restaurants, computer services centers, etc. (Perry, 2019). There is significant traffic in and out of the New Jersey business area, mainly due to the train stations facilitating people's movement throughout the New Jersey business.

Researcher's Ethics

Ensuring confidentiality was important to this study's success. Turcotte-Tremblay and Mc Sween-Cadieux (2018) noted that researchers must create and adopt strategies that help them respect participants' privacy. Additionally, researchers need to assure confidentiality while effectively publishing sensitive results (Turcotte-Tremblay & Mc Sween-Cadieux, 2018). Similarly, Corbin and Strauss (2015) asserted that the researcher's ethical responsibility is to guarantee and protect the research process's integrity. The *Belmont Report* outlines a principled analytical framework to guide the ethical process of using human subjects. The core constructs of The Belmont report include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The main

idea of The Belmont report is to treat people with respect, limit the potential of harm, and be fair to all persons.

I complied with Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards regarding research participants. Walden University IRB standard includes submitting an IRB form A, form C, and a list of documents the student will use to engage with the research participants. Once the student has submitted all the documents required by the IRB and answered all the IRB official's follow-up questions, the student receives an IRB approval number for a specific timeframe. I mitigated bias during the data gathering and data sorting stages by keeping an open mind, asking open-ended questions to facilitate dialogue, and allowing for a better understanding of the participant's responses. Member checking and data triangulation are other actions that I took to limit bias by sticking to the facts, protecting the participants, and abiding by The *Belmont Report* principles and protocols when dealing with human subjects.

Furthermore, I provided participants with a copy of the summarized interview responses for review and approval. I alone have access to the interview data for confidentiality reasons. I transferred all data to a password-protected external hard drive, which I will maintain for 5 years after the study's official completion date. After that, I will destroy the data. I used the purposeful sampling method to select participants for the research. Using the purposeful sampling method helped eliminate participants identified as vulnerable according to The *Belmont Report* guidelines for conducting ethical research (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and

Behavioral Research, 1979). By using alpha codes such as Participant A, B, C, and so forth in the study, the participant identities remained confidential.

After receiving IRB approval and having the participants sign or acknowledge the informed consent form, I began the data collection process. The study process included conducting detailed interviews, taking notes and recordings, and conducting extensive research based on an established protocol to facilitate data gathering. When gathering data, Clark et al. emphasized the importance of moral risk assessment, especially when handling digital data. Digital data are the information generated and stored in any computerized environment that can potentially be transmitted or transferred to other locations for various reasons (Clark et al., 2018). Therefore, I assessed the risk associated with using digital tools and made provision for my data storage solution to include a 2nd level authentication password protocol. The 2nd level authentication password protocol includes entering the harddrive password, receiving a pin on my mobile device, and entering the pin to gain full access to the hard drive.

Strategies for Avoiding Bias

Extracting themes from gathered data and triangulating the coded data requires an unbiased open-minded approach. Bias leads to data misrepresentation and invalid results, which may occur during the data assessment stage (Healy & Devane, 2011). I reduced biases by ensuring that participants were selected using purposeful sampling and met specific inclusionary criteria. Iivari (2018) defined member checking as having participants review, validate, and approve the research data or interpretations. Researchers use member checking as an effective method of minimizing bias (Iivari,

2018). This study's member checking process included restating participants' responses to validate my interpretations of the participant's responses during and after the interview.

Whitmore et al. (2019) defined data triangulation as a means of using multiple data sources and approaches to improve the study credibility and validity. The author implied that researchers triangulate data to reduce bias and increase study validity. Some of the data gathering sources for this study included interviews, observations, and the review of archival records to triangulate data and enhance research reliability.

I engaged the research participants during the interview process to understand how they use technology to achieve SCAs. The interview process conformed to the interview protocol, and follow-up questions were asked to ensure clarity and gather additional information. Yin (2018) noted that researchers use an interview protocol to retain focus on the research problem and avoid irrelevant data accumulation. I started the interview by providing an overview of the study and reviewing the interview plans while facilitating dialogue to promote an open environment that allows for relevant data gathering. Participants were encouraged to ask questions at any point during or after the interview session. I continued interviewing participants until I achieved data saturation. I conducted member checking at a later date suitable for the participant to confirm my interpretations of their comments and minimize misrepresentations or biases.

Participants

I used several conditions to qualify SRB owners to participate in this research. The participant had to (a) be a SRB owner in the U.S. state of New Jersey, (b) have successfully used technology to achieve competitive advantages, and (c) have leadership

skills or manage the business decisions. New Jersey has approximately 861,373 small businesses, representing 99.6% of the state's total businesses (SBA, 2018). Small business owners hired 49.8% of the state's private workforce in 2015 (SBA, 2018).

This study may help SRB owners in the New Jersey area capitalize on technology to grow their business locally, statewide, and nationally. I used the URL <https://businessfinder.nj.com> to help locate and solicit SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey to participate in this study. I first contacted potential participants by sending out an email invitation letter and consent form to solicit interest in the research study. The informed consent form included a section where the participants verified their best communication method. SRB owner who expressed interest in participating in the study received a follow-up call or email to make proper arrangements to interview at a place and time best suited for the participant.

I aimed to develop a good rapport with the participants and remained sensitive to their interview needs. Brown and Danaher (2019) listed the principles of connectivity, humanness, and empathy as the guiding framework for maximizing semistructured interview research practices' ethical and methodological advantages. Dialogical relations with participants were crucial for building effective and respectful rapport and reciprocal relationships (Brown & Dabahr, 2019). To develop effective communication with the participants, I set clear expectations and facilitated dialogue by asking nonpersonal questions. Brown and Danaher listed relationship development and storytelling as strategies to integrate the participant's context with the researcher's questions.

When selecting research participants, one of the factors I considered was the participant's familiarity with the research study. G. Joubert et al. (2019) indicated the importance of examining the participant's educational and leadership background and the participant's motivation to participate in the research. The participants' familiarity with research studies or prior experience contributing to research studies made some participants more desirable for this study. However, familiarity with research studies or previous experience participating in research studies was not a criterion for selecting a participant. The educational and leadership background was relevant when deciding which SRB owner qualified to participate in the study. The SRB owners demonstrated that they make business decisions that impact their business's success and profitability. Another critical factor in the participant selection process was the SRB owner's location. I delimited the participants' selection to businesses in the U.S. state of New Jersey.

Finally, the SRB owners selected had experience using technology to support their business's success. The SRB owners had to be familiar with the research problem. Yin (2018) advised researchers to select contributors that are familiar with the research question. When the participant is familiar with the research question, they can provide relevant data the researcher can use to make certain conclusions about the research problem. Participants who met the inclusion criteria were selected to participate in this study.

Research Method and Design

The qualitative case study research method may help researchers gather valuable answers to their research questions and explore the research problem in its natural

environment. After determining the research method, most researchers select the research design to ensure the research problem and research questions are coordinated effectively (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Researchers use a multiple case study design to address a broader range of historical and behavioral issues (Yin, 2018). Similarly, Dubois and Gadde (2002) stated that using the multiple case study design can help researchers use various sources of data to increase the credibility of their research findings instead of using a single case study. The qualitative method was suitable for this study in exploring the strategies that some SRB owners adopt to improve technology utilization, helping achieve competitive advantages in the U.S. state of New Jersey.

Research Method

The goal of conducting interviews with the participants was to understand how certain behaviors helped them achieve SCAs. The primary purpose of using the qualitative research method is to understand human behavior (House, 2018). Understanding human behavior involves gathering personal information, which can gradually evolve into hypotheses through interpretive findings of repeated patterns (House, 2018). Furthermore, House (2018) indicated that the fundamental purpose of using the quantitative research method is to explain human behavior through the development of generalizable regularities and rules. Hence, certain aspects of the quantitative research objective are isolated and controlled to measure and explain specific behaviors (House, 2018). A research method involving data measurement and control was not appropriate since the research goal was to gain insights and understanding of the research subjects.

I used the qualitative method of study because it was best suited to achieve research goals and objectives. Cazan (2012) stated that the qualitative method of study is suitable when it is difficult to separate the research phenomenon from its context. Furthermore, Cazan noted that the qualitative research method provides a holistic description of the research phenomenon, emphasizing the social settings to understand better the research subject's thoughts and behavior. The qualitative research design is a customizable research approach that supports studying the research phenomenon within its natural environment (Nebojša, 2015). I used the qualitative method to help me understand each participants' unique business environment and how they selected technology to achieve SCAs.

Researchers are not limited to using standard questions or data collection tools when using the qualitative method. The data does not always need to be manipulated or controlled when using a qualitative research method because that may contradict the goal of understanding the research subject in its natural state. Researchers using quantitative methods are more likely to use data manipulation because the goal is not to understand but to explain how the research subject behaves based on certain conditions or variables (Nebojša, 2015). Therefore, the quantitative method was not appropriate for this research study's purpose and goal.

The mixed-method approach combines the benefits of both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, some dimensions of the quantitative and qualitative research methods are mutually exclusive (Nebojša, 2015). Therefore, researchers should avoid starting a study with both the subjective/qualitative and

objective/quantitative research methods at the same time (Nebojša 2015). Utilizing the mixed methodology requires extensive experience and time, especially for data processing, putting researchers who use the method at disadvantages (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Similarly, Manolova et al. (2012) noted that the qualitative research method could help researchers understand the small business owners' primary motivation, which may foster a better understanding of why some SRB owners find it challenging to achieve SCAs. Hence, the qualitative research method was best suited for my research study.

Research Design

I used a qualitative multiple case study design for this research. Saunders et al. (2018) noted that when the data is saturated, there are no new themes or information detected in the data gathered or analyzed. Hence, further data collection and analysis are unnecessary. Additional data gathering is considered pointless after the point of data saturation since collecting additional data would not add any new themes to the data analysis process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The research process achieves data saturation when interviewing additional SRB owners produces repetitive information, and no new themes or information emerges. Ejimabo (2015) described a case study as an analysis of persons, situations, decisions, periods, projects, systems, institutions, or other systems examined holistically by one or more methods. Research communities often criticized the single case study methodology arguing the methodology is incapable of providing a generalizing conclusion (Tellis, 1997). Furthermore, research communities usually prefer a multiple case study to a single case study design due to the potential to establish research credibility and improve the research quality (Tellis, 1997).

Additionally, Tellis asserted that having numerous cases often strengthens a study because it increases confidence and reliability in the research results and conclusions when themes replicate.

Other qualitative designs considered for this study included ethnographic, narrative, and phenomenological research designs. Hou et al. (2013) indicated that researchers use a phenomenological design when exploring participants' lived experiences as it pertains to the world. This study focused on how SRB owners developed strategies for the technology selection to achieve SCAs and not participants' lived experiences as they influence the world. Therefore, I used a case study method and not the phenomenological approach. Baxter and Jack (2008) noted that there are multiple possible data collection methods when conducting a case study design, such as documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observations, and participant observation.

I did not use the ethnographic research design for this study. Ejimabo (2015) noted that researchers use an ethnographic research design to systemically gather data about groups' social life, cultural relations of communities, and other settings. The ethnographic design did not apply to my research because my focus was not on culture or people. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) stated that researchers use narrative designs to explore people's life experiences either through written or spoken accounts provided by the individuals. My study's goal was not to explore the participant's lived experiences; hence, the narrative research design was not appropriate for this study.

The semistructured interview method was a good fit for this study. Noor (2008) emphasized that a semistructured interview allows the researcher to be flexible in approaching each research participant while still focusing on the same data collection area. My goal was to interview Seven to 10 SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey until I have achieved data saturation. To ensure this study reached data saturation, I gathered data from sources such as semistructured interviews, online observations, and the review of the participants digital footprints to achieve data saturation and to triangulate the information collected from all sources.

I used the multiple case study for this research. Yin (1981) indicated that case studies might be descriptive or explanatory. The multiple case study approach was appropriate for this study because researchers can use it to provide evidence through repeated observations (Yin, 2018). Using a multiple case study approach may help the business community in the U.S. state of New Jersey know the strategies other SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. (Yin, 2018) stated that when a case study contains more than a single case, the result is a multiple case study. Numerous SRB owners in New Jersey have achieved SCAs because of their technology selection and implementation processes. Therefore, a multiple case study was an excellent fit to help understand if the lack of technology selection strategies could contribute to why some SRB owners in New Jersey are not achieving SCAs.

I gathered data until the point of data saturation. When no new themes develop from additional case studies, the researcher has achieved data saturation (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). To support the case study with multiple data sources, I gathered data from the SRB's online activities to corroborate the data collected during the interviews.

Population and Sampling

I used purposeful sampling to solicit potential participants to contribute to this study. This study's target population consisted of seven to 10 SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey who have successfully adopted strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. Harati et al. (2019) stated that researchers use a purposeful sampling method to select individuals who may have valuable information about the interview subject. Similarly, Sharafizad (2018) noted that researchers carefully select individuals from the target population who have experienced cases similar to the research phenomenon when using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling might lead to snowball sampling where participants from the purposeful sampling suggest other participants that may be of value to the study (Sharafizad, 2018).

Participants were SRB owners located in the U.S. state of New Jersey and were business leaders or business decision-makers who have successfully used technology to improve the competitiveness of their business. Grant et al. (2019) stressed the importance of following a plan or procedure for the participant selection process to avoid unethical selection procedures. I used a password-protected external hard drive and safe to store participants' interview data for safekeeping for 5 years before destroying the device and the data.

While conducting the semistructured interviews with SRB owners, additional data-gathering efforts stopped when such efforts no longer yielded new information.

Fusch and Ness (2015) explained how the failure to reach data saturation negatively impacted some studies' quality, validity, and reliability. Interviewing at least ten participants should generate relevant data for a research study (Hart & Warren, 2013). Therefore, the target sample size to interview for this study was seven to 10 participants. After interviewing the first seven participants, I began analyzing the data because I had reached data saturation. I started corroborating information gathered from online observation and the review of the SRB's technology footprints for data triangulation and saturation.

Business owners might increase sales and achieve SCAs when they develop and implement a technology selection strategy. Small businesses have the potential of increasing sales by up to 30% when they adopt new technologies and techniques of business operation (Ismail et al., 2018). Additionally, Armstrong and Yongqiang (2017) noted that governments are looking to small businesses to boost economic growth in the regional area. With government tax breaks and financial investments, SRB owners have the potential to demonstrate how they adopt technology to achieve SCAs. Interviewing SRB owners who have used technology to achieve business goals may help other SRB owners understand how to attain business objectives through technology-driven business strategies.

I conducted 4 zoom virtual interviews and 3 face-to-face interviews conveniently, comfortably, and confidentially so that the study participants could speak freely without restraint. Sivell et al. (2019) asserted that it is important for interviewers to select a comfortable interviewing environment to make it easy to address sensitive and open-

ended questions. Hence, I made the zoom platform available to accommodate participants who could not talk face-to-face. Croix et al. (2018) indicated that the interview quality depends on how comfortable the interviewee feels. Building rapport is another crucial element of creating a relaxed interview environment (Croix et al. 2018). Therefore, Croix et al. suggested that building a comfortable interview environment may require the interviewer to discover the needs of the participants, display respect, be observant, and listen.

Ethical Research

The Belmont Report addresses the importance of seeking informed consent when planning the data gathering process (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Getting informed consent from participants reflects the principle of respect and protection of vulnerable groups or individuals (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Similarly, Icy et al. (2019) indicated that getting informed consent portrays a balanced assessment of risks and harm as understood in *The Belmont Report*. I used the purposeful sampling method to select the sample size of seven to 10 participants who have used technology to achieve SCAs in the U.S. state of New Jersey. The informed consent form presentation occurred at the interview time to provide a brief description of the research problem and the study's nature. The consent form also included details about the risk-aversion protocols, confidentiality statement, purpose of the study, participant expectations, the right to withdraw, and data storage commitments (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015). The informed consent form followed the Walden University

IRB requirements, which requires students to include the background of the topic, the research procedures, the research questions, the voluntary nature of the study, the inclusion criteria, and a list of other requirements.

IRB plays a vital role in the research process. Phillips et al. (2017) asserted that the primary mission of the IRB is to oversee research at an organization based on federal guidelines to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects partaking in the study. I received the Walden University IRB approval number 09-15-20-0557734 before commencing data gathering activities, which included collecting data using face-to-face and virtually via Zoom or a phone call session adhering to the interview protocol. Potter (2018) stated that face-to-face interviews facilitate relationship building and productive partnerships. Additionally, Potter noted that researchers use an interview data gathering method to observe the participant in a professional setting to better understand the research phenomenon.

I did not offer participants any form of compensation for their contributions to this research. Research participants had the right to withdraw from participating in the research by notifying me either in person, by phone, email, or any other communication form. Participant's personal information, including the business's name or other identifiable information, was not recorded in this research study. I used alpha codes such as Participant A, B, C, etc., to distinguish between different participants. Data collected for this study were converted and transferred to electronic forms and stored on a password-protected external hard drive for storage for 5 years. The primary form of the data collected that were not directly transferrable to an external hard drive, such as papers

or voice-recordings, will remain secured in a password-protected safe for 5 years before destroying the data.

Data Collection Instruments

I was responsible for all the data collection efforts. I conducted semistructured interviews with participants who have successfully used technology to impact their sustainability in the U.S state of New Jersey positively. Y. T. Joubert and Swart (2019) noted that in a qualitative study, the researchers are the primary instrument of gathering and analyzing data. Humans serve as instruments for guiding and shaping the data collection process (Postholm & Skrøvset, 2013). I conducted 3 face-to-face and 4 virtual interviews using the zoom application with the selected participants. With the participants' permission, the conversations that transpired during the interview sessions were recorded and transcribed for data analysis and protection purposes. Rasipuram and Dinesh (2018) indicated that a face-to-face meeting gives the researcher more context because the verbal and nonverbal cues are extracted and used to draw analysis. Furthermore, participants are better communicators in a face-to-face interview setting (Rasipuram & Dinesh, 2018). Similarly, Tsang (2014) stated that semistructured interviews allow for interactive data collection, which helps researchers understand how participants respond to different circumstances in their natural environments. In addition to using a semistructured interview to collect data, I analyzed the organization's technological activities such as social media posts or smart device technology interface to support the interview session's information.

During the triangulation process, the secondary data included the participants' technological activities, such as the participants' internet presence and reviews. A qualitative study is crucial to support data from multiple sources for data triangulation (Yin, 2018). During the interview process, I adhered to the interview protocol and maintained flexibility to allow the emergence of unexpected information and results while ensuring consistency to enhance the research study's quality.

The interview protocol included seven open-ended interview questions focused on the business owner's perception, strategies, adoption, and technology utilization. I asked follow-up questions during the interview process to understand better what technology the participants have used in the past and how such actions led to better competitiveness. Wijnhoven and Brinkhuis (2015) indicated that researchers use interview data in conjunction with organizational archival data to conclude the research phenomenon. I reviewed the firm's online presence to support the interview session's information.

Finally, I assessed and evaluated the organization's online presence concerning customer relationships to determine their technology utilization effectiveness. The information gathered from the interviews, organizational digital reviews, and observations were organized in themes to triangulate and analyze the data gathered. The data-gathering stage began after receiving IRB approval. I implemented member checking by verifying my interpretations of the participant's responses to the interview questions accurately represented the participant's view during and after the interview to preserve the data quality and limit bias in the study. Santos et al. (2017) explained member checking as a stage in which the researcher compares their understanding and

interpretation of analyzed data with the participants' view to enhance data accuracy. Therefore, I used all the data collected from primary and secondary data sources to understand and create meaningful expressions about how the SRB owners used technology to achieve SCAs.

Data Collection Technique

As the primary data collection instrument, I was responsible for determining this study's data collection technique. The primary data gathering method for this qualitative multiple case study design was the semistructured interview. Alshenqeeti (2014) stated some of the advantages of using a semistructured interview technique include more comprehensive answers and a structured answering format, allowing for a high return rate on data collection. Some of the disadvantages of the semistructured interview technique include the potential for subconscious bias and the likelihood of contradictory responses (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Hence, I kept an open mind and asked open-ended questions to focus on collecting data rather than influencing the participant's responses.

Secondary data sources included reviewing the participant's technology footprints and processes. Additionally, I evaluated the organization's online presence to support and better understand the interview data collected. Using a semistructured interview helps participants provide a vivid description of their feelings, experiences, and views about a topic's significance (Azungah, 2018). Similarly, Godwin (2019) stated that a semistructured interview setting permits the flexibility to ask questions that may help understand the research phenomenon. Therefore, I performed 4 zoom and 3 face-to-face semistructured interviews.

I contacted 40 SRB owners and secured seven participants to contribute to the study's data-gathering efforts. The participants in this study were SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey who had successfully used technology to achieve SCAs. An email that included an informed consent form that described the research intent, the participants' rights, and the security measures for data gathering was sent out to potential participants to solicit participation in this study after receiving IRB approval. The participants that expressed interest in the study by responding or signing the informed consent form received a follow-up email or follow-up call to pick an interview time that worked for them. The participant and I determined a time and place or method that was best suited for the participant to commence data-gathering efforts.

Before starting the interview, I obtained consent from the participant to audio record the entire interview and then transcribed the data for member checking activities. Godwin (2019) stated that a face-to-face interview provided the opportunity to understand the participants and experience with the research phenomenon in a way mere observation of the participants cannot. I also used a face-to-face interview method to observe the participant's nonverbal language to express themselves. During the interview process, I took detailed notes to help me determine follow-up questions and help remember crucial points. Note-taking helps focus attention, aid the memorizing and recalling process, and enhances output (Di Vesta & Gray, 1972).

The responses to the interview questions helped provide insight into the SRB owners' comfort level using technology to achieve a competitive edge. The interview questions also covered how the business owners have demonstrated their willingness to

use technology to create SCAs. I used open-ended questions to probe into what strategies the SRB owners use when updating or selecting the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.

After conducting the interview session with all seven participants, I used my observation protocol to review some of the participants' technology footprints to validate and triangulate the data. I created a summary of the interview data after reviewing the interview transcript and emailed each participant's summary. After sending the interview summary, I created a follow-up member checking session to ensure the interview summary truly reflected the participant's views and thoughts about each question asked. The data analysis session involved uploading all collected data into NVivo for coding and data interpretation purposes. Each participant was assigned an alpha code, such as Participant A, B, C, through participant G.

Data Organization Technique

I coded the data gathered to support the data analysis process. Williams and Moser (2019) described coding in a qualitative study as a process that allows the collected data to be organized, categorized, and thematically arranged. Coding provides a structured platform for developing meaning or conclusions (Moser, 2019). I used the coding method to organize the data gathered into themes and then triangulated the data collected from multiple sources to draw conclusions. Mertens et al. (2017) discussed how researchers sometimes wrongly assume data software can help them quickly retrieve data conclusions without preliminary work. Hence, I took my time to understand the summarized data that I imported into Nvivo for data analysis. Mertens et al. emphasized

that there is no right approach to extracting data as long as the researchers organize, structure, and analyze data to become familiar with it.

I took several steps to organize the data gathered, including running a query for the frequently used word, identifying themes, gathering context about themes from participant's responses, and developing meaning expressions from the contextualized themes. Williams and Moser (2019) indicated that the first step of data organization is open coding, where the author identifies separate concepts and themes for categorization. The second stage is axial coding, where the researcher further lines up and classify themes after open coding has been completed (Williams & Moser, 2019). During axial coding, the researcher should: (a) understand the analytic method used in refining and categorizing data, (b) continuously compare and analyze emergent themes, and (c) scrutinize each textual line of the interview to deeply engage with the text (Williams & Moser, 2019).

The goal of collecting data is to understand how SRB owners select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. The final step of data organization is selective coding, where the researcher chooses and integrates categorized data from axial coding into consistent and meaningful expressions (Williams & Moser, 2019). I gathered and analyzed the data to create themes and triangulate information collected from multiple sources to develop meaningful expressions while also keeping a journal to become familiar with the data gathered and the emerging ideas to create useful interpretations. The electronic data collected were transferred to a secured external hard drive that is password-protected for safekeeping for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy the data. The

participants' names and identities were masked and replaced with alpha characters such as Participants A, B, and C to protect the participants' confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The data set for this qualitative research study included the information gathered from the semistructured interviews, member checking sessions, my detailed notes, and the observation of the participant's technology footprints. I imported all the collected data into the NVivo software and used the keyword-in-context (KWIC) process to analyze the data set and create themes. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011) described KWIC as a data analysis method that helps increase understanding by adding context to specific keywords. It is essential to add multiple words around a keyword to provide some context and enhance the keyword's understanding (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The authors also noted that using the KWIC method with too few words can create a loss of content around the keyword.

The first step in the data analysis process included importing the data set into NVivo. I then created a query for the frequently used words to develop themes and populate the themes with some context to understand the participant's view on the theme. I also analyzed the observation data regarding the themes. Finally, I created meaningful expressions based on each participant's responses to the themes created. The participant's responses to each theme were further broken down into sub-themes to help understand the research results.

I analyzed the data to understand how SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey develop their technology selection strategy to achieve SCAs. Zikmund et al.

(2013) described the data analysis process as a stage where the researcher applies reasoning to comprehend and interpret the data that has been gathered and organized. Data analysis is a method of exploring collected data to discover or determine associations and patterns to support and present findings (Chamber, 2018). Similarly, Giyarsih and Muh (2018) stated that data analysis does not start when data accumulation has ended. Instead, data analysis begins when the researcher commences data gathering and continues until study completion (Giyarsih & Muh, 2018). Furthermore, data triangulation is crucial to examine the gathered data's reliability and validity (Giyarsih & Muh, 2018). Hence, to establish study credibility, I triangulated the primary data with the secondary data sources.

In this qualitative multiple case study, I used a software coding method in conjunction with data triangulation to analyze the data gathered about SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey, who have developed strategies to use technology to achieve SCAs successfully. The three principles of data triangulation provided by (Yin, 2018) are: (a) amass data from multiple sources, (b) develop a database to sort through gathered data, and (c) keep a chain of evidence to map back to the conclusions. Smith (2018) indicated that data triangulation helps the contextual understanding of the research phenomenon. The data gathering process included using multiple data sources such as case study interviews, observations, and review of organizational online presences. I also kept detailed notes to track and analyze data for each data accumulation source continually.

I recorded each interview with an audio recorder and transcribed using NVivo software, and then reviewed, coded, and stored the data on a password-protected external hard drive for safekeeping. NVivo software helped increase data processing accuracy and aided the coding and data triangulation efforts. Zamawe (2015) explained that the manual process of recording and transcribing data could be a daunting and time-wasting endeavor for researchers to undertake. Additionally, researchers might inaccurately transcribe the data or misinterpret the raw sound files. After gathering the data and coding, data sorting activities began. The participants' identities were not compromised; instead, codes such as Participant A, B, C, etc., replaced participant and firm names. Alford and Page (2015) stated that NVivo software supports multiple functions such as coding, querying, and reporting. I used NVivo software version 13 mainly to transcribe and code the data gathered.

The next step in the data analysis process was to organize the data gathered and identify themes. The data organization and theme creation stages were vital because they facilitated data triangulation. The data collected were coded and organized using short phrases to represent each point (Gibson et al., 2019). The detailed notes collected while gathering data to identify and create emergent themes also helped at the data analysis stage. Aslam et al. (2020) inferred that meaningful themes might gradually evolve into higher-order themes, leading to data triangulation and help draw conclusions.

The final stage of analyzing the data was interpreting the data. Sirivanichkul et al. (2018) defined data interpretation as a process of extracting meaning from gathered data into an understandable language for the audience to comprehend. Data interpretation is a

stage that requires extra caution to avoid bias or misrepresentation of the data collected.

Some of the steps that I executed to interpret the data included: (a) reviewing the gathered to analyze further and verify themes, (b) sharing the interview text with research participant for member checking and to confirm accuracy, and (c) interpreting the data into more straightforward sentences that can be easily understood.

Reliability and Validity

I used the concepts of reliability and validity to establish the authenticity and reproducibility of the study analysis. Researchers use the concept of reliability to focus on variance while using validity to concentrate on possible biases (Bishop & Boyle, 2019). Similarly, Jordan (2018) noted that researchers use the concept of validity to concentrate on the accuracy of data appropriately gathered, reflecting the research phenomenon. Hence, the idea of reliability in a research study addresses the reproducibility of the research instruments' data conclusions (Hammersley, 1987; Yin, 2018). Grossoehme (2014) expressed the importance of researchers establishing the reliability and validity of their study to provide for the findings' correctness. Additionally, researchers establish the reliability and validity of their research to prove their research's dependability, thoroughness, and quality (Grossoehme, 2014). Enhancing the validity and reliability of this study was essential to ensure that SRB owners can use this study's information to develop strategies to achieve SCAs. Therefore, minimizing bias and accurately representing the participant's view were keys to maintaining this study's integrity. Data triangulation also helped establish the reliability and validity of the research results and conclusions.

Reliability

It was essential to establish this study's reliability to add to the body of knowledge of achieving SCAs. Luamba (2019) noted that the concept of reliability addresses enhancing the dependability in research. Dependability refers to the features of a system that validates one's reliance on the idea of conducting a dependable study (Mahfoud et al, 2018). Similarly, Shenton (2004) indicated that a qualitative study's dependability might be achieved by accurately documenting the processes undertaken while conducting the research. Furthermore, Shenton reported that a step-by-step documentation of undertaken processes would help ensure that the researcher adheres to reliable research methods. Documentation would ensure that the researcher provides in-depth information for potential data replication purposes.

The focus on study dependability helps ensure information gathered from the study are reliable and valid. Lemon and Hayes (2020) stated that researchers use the concept of dependability to emphasize the uniqueness of the research findings to a specific time and place. The idea of dependability highlights the conclusions and explanations are traceable to the data (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). Therefore, data triangulation can help ensure the gathered data is dependable and trustworthy (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). To ensure this study's reliability and dependability, I adhered to the data-gathering protocols and abided by the Walden University IRB standards and requirements which includes getting an IRB approval number prior to gathering research data from participants.

This study's research process included rigid data gathering and data presentation strategies to ensure that the data results were accurately analyzed and reported. Member checking was one of the strategies that help ensure research dependability. Using the member checking strategy ensured the accurate representation of participants' opinions by restating responses and providing interview summaries. Participants received a copy of the interview summary to validate and approve the proper representation of their views and opinions. The member checking strategy helped ensure that the research data was replicable and dependable. I stored the electronic data gathered on a password-protected external hard drive and safe, which I will maintain for 5 years before destroying all the data traces. Nonelectronic data collected were locked up in a password-protected safe, and will be destroyed after 5 years.

Validity

I used the concept of data validity to establish the correctness and accuracy of the data, as expressed by the participants. The validity concept confirmed the data measured what I expected it to measure. Lawrence (2015) asserted that researchers create and ensure their study is valid by ensuring that the tools, processes, and data used for the study are appropriate. Data triangulation is another way researchers can establish research study validity (Elo et al. 2014). Similarly, FitzPatrick (2019) noted that the concept of research validity refers to threats that might impact the research conclusions' correctness. Participant selection is a critical risk in establishing validity in research (Kenny, 2019). Hence, Kenny noted the possibility of selecting participants who are a poor fit because of various factors such as location, education, among other factors.

I adhered to my interview protocol to establish research validity. FitzPatrick (2019) stated that research validity evaluates the research questions, process, and design to ensure the accuracy of the research results and conclusions. Researchers should identify areas of personal biases in their study (Matthes & Ball, 2019). Hence, I asked the participants follow-up questions about other factors supporting their business achieving SCAs besides technology. Some of the validity issues identified by Daniel (2019) include inconsistent data gathering method or the failure to develop a protocol or standard while conducting a qualitative study. Therefore, I ensured that I adhered to my interview and observation protocol to avoid inconsistencies that might jeopardize the study's validity. The objective of considering the validity of a study is to ensure the findings' correctness derived from the research process and data (Kenny, 2019). Therefore, another step taken to ensure study validity was to ensure my data gathering efforts reached the data saturation point.

Credibility

I adhered to my participant inclusion and exclusion criteria to establish research credibility. Yin (2018) noted that research credibility is a lens to the research phenomenon through the study participants' view. When establishing research credibility, Aladhadh et al. (2019) indicated that the source of the data gathered and the data collection location could impact the data's credibility. Hence, it is useful to have a set of criteria for participant selection and ensuring the place and method of data gathering are comfortable for the participant.

I used purposeful sampling to select research participants and ensured the chosen interview method was convenient for the participants. Some researchers use member checking and data triangulation to establish a study's credibility. Candela (2019) explained that member checking in qualitative research typically serves to maintain research validity. Member checking is a method of ensuring an accurate portrayal of the participants' views (Candela, 2019). Additionally, Candela stated that a crucial aspect of data triangulation is conducting member checking with participants. Member checking could help researchers limit personal biases (Noble & Smith, 2015). Whitmore et al. (2019) described data triangulation as using multiple data sources to enhance the research quality. The research data gathering process entailed collecting data from different sources such as interviews, technology footprints, and observing the participant's online presence. I triangulated the data collected by exploring the information gathered from multiple data sources to understand the strategies the participants used to select the right technology to achieve SCAs. This study's data sources included semistructured interviews, detailed notes, and an observation of the participant's technology footprints.

Transferability

I used the concept of transferability to establish reliable results. Sinclair et al. (2018) indicated that the trustworthiness of research findings is dependent on the likelihood to recreate the research finding with the same or similar participants. Transferability in qualitative studies addresses the possibility of generalizing study findings across different settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2018). Although most qualitative research findings are typically not generalizable, some aspects should be reliable to

other participants within or outside the study population. Piskur et al. (2017) emphasized that researchers enable transferability to ensure research findings are useful to others exploring the same or similar phenomenon.

Researchers should provide well-detailed information about the participant selection and data gathering process to help future researchers and the business community. I included a copy of the interview and observation protocols as Appendices A and B, respectively. Matamonasa-Bennett (2015) asserted that researchers establish transferability by including sufficient details about the research process. Providing detailed information about the research process helps future researchers verify and determine the research findings' replicability.

Confirmability

I used the confirmability concept to limit bias or any factor that can compromise the accuracy of the data gathered. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that confirmability addresses the study findings' fairness in terms of clarity and the gathered data interpretations. Researchers use confirmability to limit research bias and validate the research finding to represent the participant's view (Cope, 2014). Researchers should scrutinize the analysis's documentation (Solli & Hvalvik, 2019). I ensured research confirmability by thoroughly reviewing the data gathered and the results. The data gathering process included detailed note-keeping to become familiar and evaluate the data continuously.

I implemented member checking by repeating participant answers to validate responses during the interview, and confirming the proper representation of the

participant's views, by providing participants with a copy of the interview summary after the data gathering stage was completed. Providing participants with the summarized interview data allowed the participants to ensure the responses truly reflect their views and opinions. Providing participants with transcribed interview data also established the credibility and confirmability of this study. Finally, I triangulated data by using the information gathered from interviewing, reviewing public records, and reviewing the online presence to confirm that the emerging themes were valid and credible.

Data Saturation

I gathered data until the point of data saturation. Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2018) noted that the conventional definition of data saturation is when new data do not add further insights into the research phenomenon. However, some researchers do not gain further insight due to methodological issues rather than data gathering continuance (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2018). Although exhaustive research is not possible, I ensured the participants selected were the best fit for the research phenomenon by ensuring they met the study's inclusion criteria. By using multiple data sources, such as conducting interviews and observing the technology footprints, I generated new information that led to data saturation. Finally, I reviewed the business technology utilization process and online presence to corroborate the data collected from other sources. The interview data collection process included seven participants, and when no new themes emerged, which was the point of data saturation, data gathering stopped. Yin (2018) stated that researchers attain data saturation when no new ideas develop about the research phenomenon from further data gathering efforts.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included the purpose statement, the researcher's role, the participant selection process, and details about the research methodology and design. I further expounded on the population and sampling plan method, ethical research considerations, data collection instruments, techniques, and organizations. There were explanations of the data analysis process and a discussion regarding the research reliability and validity process, which concluded Section 2. I focused on ensuring the research findings were credible, confirmable, and transferable while discussing the research validity and reliability. Section 3 includes the purpose statement, presentation of findings, applications to professional practice, and implications for social change. I also make recommendations for actions and share recommendations for future research, reflect on my doctoral study journey, and conclude the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. The data-gathering efforts for this study included conducting semistructured interviews with seven participants who (a) owned a SRB in the New Jersey area, (b) performed in a leadership capacity, (c) were 20 years old or older, and (d) spoke English. Three of the interview sessions occurred in a face-to-face setting, and four interviews took place virtually via the Zoom video conference platform. Secondary data gathering included reviewing publicly available company technology footprints on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and other web-based platforms. I conducted a member checking session with each participant to clarify, update, and confirm the research data summary. The three themes that emerged during data analysis process are as follows: (a) customer relationship management, (b) marketing, and (c) process improvement. The themes encompass factors that may affect how SRB owners select the appropriate technology to achieve SCA. All of the participants reported that they use technology daily to achieve SCAs.

Presentation of the Findings

The presentation of findings section includes some technology platforms used by the participants. Table 1 provides a list of all the technology discussed during interviews.

Table 1*Technology Platforms Identified During the Interview Sessions*

Technology platform	Word count	Weighted percentage (%)
Facebook	39	10.2
Instagram	39	10.2
Website	19	5.0
Google Review	16	4.2
Honeybook	11	2.8
Database	8	2.1
Aquity	7	1.8
Cellphone	5	1.3
The Cut	4	1.0
Yelp	4	1.0
Google Calendar	3	0.8
CRM	3	0.8
Email	3	0.8

The first column in Table 1 contains a list of the technology platforms that were mentioned during interviews. The second column represents the total number of times the participants discussed or mentioned the technology platform during the interview sessions. The final column in Table 1 is a weighted percentage of references made to each technology platform compared against the entire data collected.

The overarching research question used as a guide for this study was as follows: What strategies do SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs? The information gathered from the research participants confirms Duhamel's (2019) theory that SCAs are achievable when resources meet the VRIO definition. The participants' responses also confirmed that the VRIO framework is essential to selecting the right technology to help achieve SCAs. Hence, the RBT VRIO component, the conceptual framework for this study, is a relevant theory to consider when SRB owners develop strategies for choosing the right technology to achieve SCAs.

The participants' responses also confirmed that the VRIO framework is an essential concept SRB owners can use when developing strategies for selecting the right technology to help achieve SCAs. Hence, this study's RBT VRIO conceptual framework is relevant to consider when SRB owners develop strategies for choosing the right technology to achieve SCAs. Each participant considered how their technology was valuable, rare, imitable, and organized to help them exploit opportunities internally and externally from an organizational perspective. For example, four participants considered their technology valuable because it helped them create satisfied repeat customers. Five participants considered their technology solution rare because their competitors could not get the same reward by replicating their products or services.

The data gathered and analyzed reinforce the idea in the literature that SCAs require periodic evaluation and modification to maintain relevance to survive market or technological turbulence (Bashir & Verma, 2017). SRB owners should consider periodically evaluating how effective the technology is to the firm's CRM, marketing,

and process improvement initiatives. This study's findings apply to the professional practice of how SRB owners develop strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.

I conducted three face-to-face and four virtual semistructured interviews using the Zoom application with seven SRB owners in the New Jersey area to understand the strategy used to choose the right technology to achieve SCAs. I developed a rapport with the participants by using an interview protocol (see Appendix A). I asked open-ended questions to understand the strategies participants used to select the right technology to help their business achieve SCAs. The duration of each interview session was approximately 60-120 minutes.

All the participants confirmed that technology plays a crucial role in their operational success. The participants provided examples of the difficulties they encountered before using specific technology solutions. These examples further understanding of the strategies the SRB owners use to select the right technology to achieve SCAs. The three themes that emerged from the data gathering efforts revealed some of the factors SRB owners consider before choosing the right technology for their business. These were (a) customer relationship management, (b) marketing, and (c) process improvement.

Theme 1: Customer Relationship Management

Kim and Wang (2019) defined CRM as a firm's ability to integrate and convert social media networking activities to desired sales revenue and customer-relationship outcomes. All of the participants in this study identified different aspects of CRM that

their technology helps them manage and improve. Some of the CRM components that the participants identified as essential determinants of their technology selection are as follows: (a) convenience, (b) relationship development and management, and (c) customer information storage.

Convenience

Convenience is a factor that SRB owners should include in their strategies to select the right technology to achieve SCAs. Participant F indicated that they use Aquity scheduling because it is a convenient solution that works for their customers. When customers want to connect with Participant F, using Aquity scheduling helps facilitate easy and convenient interactions. Additionally, Participant F is able to provide their package offerings to their clients to select an option and make payments on the same platform. Similarly, Participant B mentioned convenience as one of their technology platform's benefits because having a website helps them respond quickly from their phone to website visitors' questions. Participant C uses The Cut application to manage appointments daily with their customers. Similar to Participant B, Participant C operates The Cuts application from their phone, making booking appointments easy for the Participant and their customers. The appointment scheduler via The Cut helps Participant C avoid double-booking customers, and it also allows the participant to take breaks, which aids operating effectively. Participant D noted the ease of using the Clover POS system which has a phone application that allows users to gather business statistics in real-time and make effective decisions.

Similarly, Participant E referenced the ease and simplicity that paperless technology such as email and social media direct messaging systems offer in managing all the stages involved in providing services to their customers. Participant E noted that paperless platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and their website, allow them to collaborate better and more efficiently with their customers. All the participants' feedback confirms that convenience is an essential factor to consider when selecting technology to help achieve SCAs. SRB owners should consider how convenient their technology is for both the customers and the business manager.

Relationship Development and Management

Most SRB owners generate sales by building and managing relationships with people in their local and extended community. Technology platforms may provide business owners access to more people, helping them develop more connections and more significant sales. Participant A stated that they use social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram to manage their interactions with customers and build relationships essential to their success. Similarly, Participant C noted that using The Cuts application to schedule appointments helps them deliver prompt services with their best efforts. Furthermore, Participant C's customers often have a great experience, which helps build useful Google Reviews that help attract new customers and aids achieving SCAs.

Participant B indicated that using their technology platforms, such as their website, Instagram, and Facebook accounts, allows them to interact with inquirers and quickly solve their concerns, which is instrumental to their success strategy. Furthermore,

Participant B emphasized that they use their Facebook and Instagram business pages to connect inquirers to business owners to provide solutions to their requests or inquiries. As part of my observation protocol, I tested Participant B's website interactive modal screen. The interactive screen allows website visitors to ask Participant B questions about their services and solutions. I received a message back from Participant B in less than 5 minutes. I disclosed to Participant B that I was conducting a test of their technology's effectiveness in supporting customer interactions and inquirers. Participant B noted that they received the message on their phone, making it easy to respond quickly and build relationship seamlessly.

Participant D indicated that they have many people attentive to their posts on Instagram; hence, they use the tool to interact and manage customer relationships. Participant D noted that internet-based review platforms such as Google Review could be challenging to business owners because people often provide a review when they have a terrible experience. However, most people do not review when they have a good or an okay experience. Participant D stressed the importance of managing their Google Review platform because it also helps build a relationship with old, current, prospective, and unhappy customers.

Participant G stated that their business stays competitive because of word-of-mouth outreach. People typically spread the word about business solutions that met their expectations. Hence participant G noted that word-of-mouth outreach is only possible because they foster excellent relationships with their clients to meet their needs. When word-of-mouth and technology are combined, participant G noted that their company is

more competitive and able to provide relevant and valuable goods and services to their customers. Participant G further indicated that word of mouth sometimes spreads faster than technology. Hence, Managing Google Reviews, interacting on Facebook or Instagram, collecting consumer feedback, developing an interactive modal screen, building word-of-mouth outreach, etc., are ways the SRB owners interviewed developed and managed relationships with people outside their immediate reach. Therefore, SRB owners might achieve SCAs by selecting technology that helps them grow and manage relationships with people within and outside their community.

Customer Information Storage

Storing customer information such as customer name, email address, purchase details, etc., helps SRB owners gather data that they can use to make decisions about their business. Participant A noted that their best practice is to store information about the people they have connected with for follow-up purposes. Participant A indicated that they have a high Facebook rating because they follow up with old and new customers, which is evidence of the value created via their technology platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Similarly, Participant B noted that a database is attached to their website for storing customer and client information. Participant B stated that they use the customer and client data to provide leads to business owners who subscribe to their services. Additionally, Participant B also indicated that they use the customer and client data for follow-up purposes, which sometimes leads to renewed sales or referrals. Participant G noted that they still use an old POS system; however, when they are ready to switch to a

new system, they would purchase a system that helps them save customer information for follow-up and marketing purposes. **Therefore**, when SRB owners are developing strategies for technology selection to achieve SCAs, they should consider how the technology helps them keep a record of customer information for follow-up and customer relationship purposes.

Theme 2: Marketing

Marketing was another concept that all the participants identified as a factor to consider for selecting or using technology to achieve SCAs. The participants discussed how they used their technology for one or more of the following marketing purposes: (a) create awareness, (b) generate new or prospective sales leads, and (c) differentiate offering. The participants agreed that using technology for one or more marketing purposes could lead to SCAs. Therefore, other business owners should consider developing a strategy for using technology to market their products and services to aid achieving SCAs.

Create Awareness

Creating awareness about SRB owners' products or services may help boost sales and generate repeat customers. Participant A noted that they are always looking for ways to invest and grow their business. Additionally, Participant A indicated that they love using technology daily because technology has helped them grow their business. Hence, Participant A stated that technology platforms like Facebook and Instagram help create awareness about their products or services. Furthermore, Participant A noted that old systems like using fliers to create awareness had made way for newer methods available

via social media platforms. With social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, business owners have access to a broader base of potential customers to showcase their craft.

Participant B noted that they use their website to showcase other vendors' works within their network to create awareness about their business. Additionally, Participant C stated that they use Facebook to show their work's progression and remind people they are still around. Participant C also called out Google Review as a platform they use to generate and maintain sales for their business's competitiveness. Similarly, Participant D recounted that they had to find a way to reach out to their target market after setting up their restaurant business. Hence, participant D invested time and resources into Facebook and Instagram marketing. Participant D also noted that they use social media platforms to track their business reach. Additionally, Participant D indicated that they invest in Instagram promotions to increase their business network and brand awareness.

Participant E listed social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook as platforms that help them market their business and create an online portfolio of their works to attract people looking to get similar services. For that reason, Participant E indicated that they do target marketing via Facebook and Instagram to reach specific audiences and showcase their portfolio. Similarly, Participant G indicated that their strategy for switching from old to new technology is to advertise on platforms their customers use frequently. Additionally, Participant G noted that they consider what platform can help them reach a bigger audience. Participant G gave an example of newspaper ads as an old method of advertising their business. However, because most

people are more on their phones even when searching for news, participant G had to retire newspaper ads and move to digital advertising platforms via on social media and other digital avenues. All the participants above confirmed that they use technology to create business awareness. Hence, SRB owners should review some technologies' potential to help build business awareness when developing their technology selection strategies to achieve SCAs.

Generate New or Prospective Sales Leads

Some participants discussed how their technology platforms provided a marketing tool that helped generate sales leads and attract former or new customers. For example, Participant A stated that they wasted no time getting familiar with the different social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram; using the social media to market and generate new customers. Participant A also noted that COVID-19 pandemic affected their business negatively. Therefore, social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook provided an avenue for Participant A to create awareness about their operational safety steps, motivating customers to patronize their business. Similarly, Participant G used the COVID-19 crisis as an example of how their technology has helped them evolve. Participant G noted that they used Amazon and eBay platforms more during the COVID-19 shutdown, which helped their business continue operating despite the lockdown that forced companies like theirs to close temporarily.

Participant B noted that Facebook is undoubtedly another powerful channel to connect with vendors and potential clients. Participant B also stated that their daily Facebook postings surely help generate leads for their vendors or subscribers while also

engaging their Facebook platform followers. Hence, Participant B indicated that the contents they post on Facebook and Instagram platforms are marketing tools they use to attract similar-minded people to their Facebook platform and potentially convert to their customers. Participant C expressed a similar view by stating that they use The Cut application to help potential clients in other states and regions know about their barbering business and possibly book an appointment with them when the customers are in their city. The participants' feedback indicates that the technology they use helps them generate sales leads essential to their success. Other SRB owners should consider the sales-generating potential as a factor necessary for selecting the right technology to achieve SCAs.

Differentiate Offerings

Two of the participants interviewed offer the same type of services and operate their businesses side-by-side. However, both business owners noted that they achieve SCAs because they successfully differentiate and brand their business. Participant D noted that appearance matters; therefore, they use Instagram to present their dishes to their target audience, which boosts the business image and brand, and helps differentiate their business. Similarly, Participant F stated that because people review their business via their marketer's Facebook, Instagram, and Website platforms and share feedback about their experiences, they can retain former and attract new ones. Differentiation helps business owners separate themselves from competitors and improve competitive advantages.

Participant A indicated that the more they invested their time, effort, and money on platforms like Facebook, the more they benefited from the exposure that helped improve their business's competitiveness. Furthermore, Participant A stated that using Facebook and Instagram allows them to differentiate themselves while attracting former and new customers as a trendsetter in the hair coloring style business. Similarly, Participant C noted that The Cut application enables them post pictures of their recent customers' haircuts, which helps differentiate their company from competitors. Participant E also emphasized that they have been able to showcase their portfolio online with technology such as Facebook and Instagram, distinguishing their business image and brand from competitors.

Participant F noted that they have a subscription with a marketer who helps showcase their brand on different platforms. Participant G indicated that they try to stay current with the products and services they offer and advertise as much as possible to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In conclusion, all the participant agreed that one of the advantages of marketing is that it helps with product or service differentiation. Therefore, SRB owners should consider technology that allows them to differentiate themselves as part of the strategy for selecting the right technology solution to aid SCAs.

Theme 3: Process Improvement

The participants reflected on how the technology they use has led to process improvements such as better business tools and solutions, better customer-focused processes, increased revenue, and more cost savings. Hence, another strategy SRB

owners could add to their technology selection process is to consider how the technology could lead to process improvements. Participant F stated that although they considered cost when thinking about moving from old to new or different technology, process improvement was still crucial in the decision-making process. Participant F indicated that Honeybook was a cheaper and more effective solution that made working with their clients easier. Using Honeybook allowed participant F to present all their packages offering and enable their customer to sign a contractual agreement and make payments on the same platform. The old technology Participant F used could not support all the listed functionalities on one platform. Participant F could only share package details but not take payment or sign/edit contracts via the same avenue.

Similarly, Participant B indicated that having a large following on Instagram has helped them stay updated and evolve as changes occur, which is crucial to achieving SCAs. Participants A, D, E, and G noted that one of the factors vital to achieving SCAs is the statistical data on Instagram and Facebook, which have helped them track customers' views and perceptions and implement some business changes in real-time. Using statistical data to make changes to business processes is another way technology can facilitate process improvement. Additionally, Participant E noted that before the COVID-19 pandemic, they conducted and preferred having face-to-face meetings with their clients. However, technology platforms such as Zoom and Skype have helped them embrace the convenience and enjoy the advantages of conducting virtual meetings. Hence, SRB owners should consider the potential for process improvement when creating a strategy for technology selection to achieve SCAs.

Applications to Professional Practice

This study's findings could be applied to the professional practice of how SRB owners develop strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs. Hussein et al. (2017) noted that unsuccessful SRB owners sometimes fail to achieve SCAs due to a lack of investment in updated technology. The study results provide a lens into the factors successful SRB owners consider when selecting technology to achieve SCAs. This qualitative study could help SRB owners understand the factors to consider when developing strategies to choose the right technology to aid SCAs. The technology selection strategies used by successful SRB owners might help other SRB owners identify improvement areas in their operational procedures.

This study's information may help SRB owners discover some of the technology tools that other business owners use to achieve SCAs. Participant B noted that they invested in their business by attending a training program to develop and grow their business. Additionally, Participant B indicated that the training focused on social media's power.

This study's findings could be applied to professional practices by helping SRB owners understand the factors that successful business owners consider before selecting some technology solutions, such as social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, etc. For example, Participants A, B, E, and G discussed how they gather statistical information from Instagram and Facebook to improve their marketing reach, attract new customers, and generate more significant revenue. Hence, the correlation between the analytical and statical data gathered on Instagram and Facebook platforms helping

improve SRB marketing and leading to increased business revenues applies to the professional practice of how the business communities can enhance their sales revenue and achieve SCAs.

Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook were the primary tools the participants indicated vital for customer relationship management and development. This study's information can also help educate the business community on using specific technology tools and platforms that may aid SCAs. Perhaps some SRB owners never really considered certain functionalities on the same or similar technology platform to achieve their business objectives. Faran and Chaudhry (2016) determined that only 22% of retail business owners invested in learning new technology and innovation through their research and development. The findings from this qualitative multiple case study may help SRB owners develop their strategy to identify, select, and implement new technology based on practices associated with the RBT to achieve SCAs.

Implications for Social Change

This study's findings apply to social change by providing SRB owners with information on what to consider when developing technology selection strategies to help achieve SCAs. The implications for positive social change include the potential to positively contribute strategies and knowledge that retailers can use to facilitate communication and consumer transactions. Implementation of these strategies could allow retailers to be more efficient and competitive, which could boost local economies. Using this study's information may also help consumers appreciate the SRB owners'

products or services and improve economics, customer satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment.

Use of this study could help SRB owners learn how to market their products and services better, which can help consumers quickly identify and connect with SRB owners. Other positive impacts of this study may include helping SRB owners discover how to improve their operational procedures, leading to more efficient SRBs. The study's findings might be used to help local economies expand and improve the morale of stakeholders.

Recommendations for Action

The recommendations of action based on the findings of this study include (a) create social media business accounts on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to build and manage customer relationships; (b) invest time on social media business accounts to showcase products and services; (c) invest in technology solutions that make it easier to do business, e.g., Aquity where customers can select packages and also make payments; and (d) invest in technology solutions that provide statistical information about business performance such as POS system, Facebook, and Instagram accounts.

SRB owners generally should pay attention to the recommendations for action listed above. SRB owners especially who are either struggling or do not necessarily have a strategy for selecting the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs should pay attention to the recommendation of actions. Additionally, business owners who are successful but do not necessarily use the recommendations for action listed above should also pay attention to the above guidelines. Although some business owners might be achieving

competitive advantages without adopting the recommendations for action provided for this study, such business owners should still pay attention to the guidance provided to ensure SCAs.

I will disseminate this study's information to the research participants to provide them with the study's summary and findings. The study information will also be available on ProQuest/UMI dissertation database for review. Finally, I plan to share the information from this study in public speaking with SRB owners in non-profit SRB owner forums to help them understand how they can develop strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on the strategies SRB owners use to select the right technology to achieve SCAs; therefore, I gathered data by interviewing SRB owners in the New Jersey area who were successfully using technology to achieve SCAs. Seven SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey participated in the study, and I gathered and analyzed the interview and observation data to uncover the participant's technology selection strategies. Some of the study's limitations included limiting the study participants to successful SRB owners in the U.S. state of New Jersey and not including unsuccessful SRB owners as participants. I also limited the study sample size to seven participants, which was large enough to achieve data saturation. However, restricting the sample size to a few SRB owners in New Jersey may have limited the research conclusions' transferability, which future researchers will determine based on their research objectives.

Further studies related to improving business practice should investigate the correlation between SRB owners achieving SCAs and using social media for marketing and promotional purposes. Future studies can further explore the level of correlation between using statistical data from Facebook, Instagram, or via POS systems and SRB owners experiencing increased sales revenue and achieving SCAs. Researching how SRB owners use technology to market their business and how they use statistical data to make informed decisions might add insight into the importance of having technology selection strategies to achieve SCAs.

Reflections

When I started my DBA journey, I remember asking myself how my study would make a real difference in business practice. I did my best writing my significance of the study, contribution to business practice, and implications for social change in Section 1 of the doctoral study document based on my ideas of how my study will contribute to the business community. However, I felt something was missing regarding the potential to add to the business and educational community's knowledge body. Once I got to Section 2, several factors began to affect my ability to stay committed to my DBA journey.

Factors beyond my control led to the change of my first chairperson. I got assigned to a second chairperson, who helped me get started on Section 2 of my study. However, I had to drop out of school due to personal life-changing events. After two semesters off, I continued my DBA journey with a third chairperson who helped me fully develop Section 2. However, we encountered some difficulties getting my study approved, which led me to my fourth chairperson assignment after some frustrating

processes. I honestly cannot thank Dr. Dwyer enough for motivating me, pushing me, and encouraging me to complete my capstone despite my previous experiences. My fourth chairperson took over as my new chair midway through an 8-week session and surpassed my expectations with both of us working together with a team of exceptional committee members. I received the approval of my Section 2 document before the end of the 8-week session. My fourth chairperson also got me scheduled for my proposal oral defense, which I passed and was approved to start work on Section 3, all within 4 weeks of having taken over as my new chairperson. I received my IRB approval the first week of my second session with the fourth chairperson's and the committee members' help. I completed data gathering before the end of the second session. I was so shocked with how far I had gotten; it was almost unbelievable.

After two sessions with my new chairperson, I took one session off because my wife was pregnant. However, I promised my new chairperson I would only be out for one session. After taking one session off, I started work on finalizing my document in what would be my third session with the fourth chairperson. Knowing that my wife would soon deliver our baby, my new chairperson encouraged me early to complete my document's final draft before the end of Week 5. Almost like my new chairperson knew my wife's delivery date because 4 weeks into the 8-week session, my wife had our baby boy. As this bundle of joy blessed our home with his presence, I was determined to stick with the plan of finishing my document as planned by Week 5 of the 8-week session.

Suddenly, the missing pieces of my study began to unfold. The information was always available to me; it was the interpretation that I was over-thinking. Technology has

become so advanced that many SRB owners' solutions are simple everyday tools such as Facebook and Instagram. I began to understand the real difference my research could provide to business practice. Some business owners do not fully comprehend how to develop technology strategies to achieve SCAs. Some business owners can learn about using different technology to achieve SCAs by investing in training or research programs. However, Faran and Chaudhry (2016) determined that only 22% of retail business owners invested in learning new technology and innovation through their research and development. One of the participants I interviewed noted that they invested in their business by attending a training program to develop and grow their business. The participant indicated that the training focused on social media's power.

Not all business owners can pay to attend a training program for different reasons. However, my study findings may apply to professional practice by helping SRB owners understand the factors that other business owners consider before selecting some technology solutions, e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Aquity, The Cuts, Glover, etc. For example, four of the participants discussed how they gather statistical information from Instagram and Facebook to improve their marketing reach, attract new customers, and generate more significant revenue. Hence, the correlation between the analytical and statical data gathered on Instagram and Facebook platforms helping improve SRB marketing and leading to increased business revenues applies to the professional practice of how the business communities can enhance their sales revenue and achieve SCAs.

In summary, the journey was not without different forks along the way. However, it was all worth it in the end. I am delighted to contribute to the body of knowledge. I

hope my study helps some struggling SRB owners or even successful business owners develop successful technology selection strategies, propelling them to SCAs.

Conclusion

Several factors can help SRB owners achieve SCAs, such as access to capital resources, financial resources, human resources, technological resources, marketing resources, etc. However, technology is one factor that provides a bridge to other factors. Hence, SRB owners may benefit by understanding the ways technology can impact their business, thus, developing a technology selection strategy that optimizes the intended benefit of adopting specific technology.

This qualitative multiple case study contributes to the research of SRB owners developing technology selection strategies to achieve SCAs. The data gathered and analyzed provided three themes SRB owners can consider when developing technology selection strategies: (a) customer relationship management, (b) marketing, and (c) process improvement. SRB owners may consider how current or future technologies can help them optimize the above-identified themes. The RBT was the conceptual framework that established the foundation of this study. Edwards et al. (2015) reported that the RBT's fundamental constructs are the VRIO framework. The implications for positive social change include the potential to foster local communities' economies by helping SRB owners develop strategies and knowledge beneficial to facilitating customer relationship management and improving business transactions. The business practice significance is that SRB owners must learn the importance of technology and develop strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Specific Business Problem	
The specific business problem is that some SRB owners lack strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.	
Research Question	
What strategies do SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages?	
Primary Research Goals	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand how receptive small business owners are to utilizing technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. 2. To identify the strategies, small business owners use to select the right technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. 3. To understand how business owners keep their technology use up-to-date with market trends and directions. 4. To understand how the technology used by small business owners leads to sustainable competitive advantages. 	
Participant Criteria	
The criteria for participants for the interview include:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small retail business owner in the New Jersey area. 2. Have successfully used technology to achieve competitive advantages over some time. 3. Have leadership skills or manage the business decisions. 	
What you will do	What you will say—script
This column contains what the researcher will be doing in addition to asking the interview questions.	This column contains what you will say to the participant as you proceed through the interview. Note—that one will add probing questions as appropriate.
Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee Remember to show genuine care and concern for the interests of participants.	Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview session. The purpose of this interview is to identify strategies small business owners used to select the appropriate technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. The focus of this study is on how the use of technology plays a vital role in achieving sustainable competitive advantages for business owners

<p>Demonstrate good listening skills</p> <p>Try to keep interview to within 1 hour. Ask for permission to continue or reschedule if interview exceeds 1 hour.</p>	<p>in New Jersey.</p> <p>I would like to inform you that your participation should be voluntary and you have the right to discontinue this interview at any time. In addition, I assure you that I will protect the confidentiality of information you provide, and will only use the information for my doctoral study as indicated. I seek your permission to record this interview for the purpose of effective transcription and assure you that I shall securely keep all audio and written records of this interview.</p> <p>If you agree to participate voluntarily in this study, please sign the informed consent form.</p>
<p>Reminders that you should do during the interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch for nonverbal cues • Paraphrase as needed • Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth data. • Remember that qualitative researchers need deep and rich data. A one sentence short answer to the interview question may provide superficial data at best. • Again, probe, probe, probe. Metaphorically dig deep for rich data. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interview question How receptive are you to utilizing technology in your daily business operations? 2. Interview question What strategies do you use to mitigate the impact of outdated technology on your retail organizations' competitiveness? 3. Interview question How do you determine if your current or updated technology is helping create value to achieve SCAs? 4. Interview question How does your technology help differentiate your products or service from the products or services provided by competitors? 5. Interview question How does your technology or technology strategy help your business evolve as the market changes? 6. Interview question Any other details you would like to share about the research topic?
<p>Wrap up interview thanking participant</p>	<p>We have come to the end of this interview. Once again, thank you for participating in this interview.</p>
<p>Schedule follow-up member checking interview</p>	<p>If it is okay with you, please permit me to contact you in case I need additional information or clarifications. In addition, I would send you a copy of this interview to confirm that I have accurately represented your experiences and opinions, and share the findings of my research with you if you so desire.</p>

Appendix B: Documentary and Observation Protocol

<p>Specific Business Problem</p> <p>The specific business problem is that some SRB owners lack strategies to select the appropriate technology to achieve SCAs.</p>
<p>Research Question</p> <p>What strategies do SRB owners use to select the appropriate technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages?</p>
<p>Primary Research Goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand how receptive small business owners are to utilizing technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. 2. To identify the strategies, small business owners use to select the right technology to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. 3. To understand how business owners keep their technology use up-to-date with market trends and directions. 4. To understand how the technology used by small business owners leads to sustainable competitive advantages.
<p>Types of documents</p> <p>Search public records and online for the following documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Company profit and loss statement is available 2. Company revenue and expenditure statement 3. Company websites, web presences, newsletters, magazines, and blogs 4. Organizational promotional materials 5. Public newspaper and magazine information about company 6. Company awards and certifications
<p>What you will do when collecting documentary evidence.</p> <p>Remember to take the following actions when collecting documentary evidence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask the participant's permission to use public and online information about the company in the study. 2. For printed documents, mask identifies to protect participant's identity 3. Perform a quick check for the authenticity of documents. 4. Clarify any issues about the authenticity of documents with participants. 5. Delete or blot identifying information from copies of documents.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Label documents appropriately for identification, storage, and analysis. 7. Store document in secure password protected vault. 8. Thank participants for sharing documents or giving permission to use documents. 	
<p>Criteria for authenticity/inclusion of documents</p> <p>Check documents for authenticity using the following criteria before including documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the type of document? 2. What is the document's source and author? 3. What is the document date, age, and history? 4. Who is the intended audience of the document? 5. What is the purpose and context of the document? 6. What is the content of the document? 7. Is the document genuine and complete? 	
Select a date to observation the online presence of the business	I will choose a date range to observe how the business owner interacts and engage its customers to drive up business value.
Scheduled dates and times of direct observations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Date/Time: 2. Date/Time: 3. Date/Time: 4. Date/Time:
Observation areas	<p>I will conduct careful observations of the business on social media platforms and search engines.</p> <p>I will observe how the business owner provides solutions that meet the needs and wants of the customers or potential customers.</p> <p>I will observe the online marketing strategy of the business.</p>

	I will observe how the online presence and activities of the business owners impact revenue.
Take notes	I will take notes on the business owner's interaction with its customers virtually.
End of observations and wrap-up	This is the end of direct observations. Information gathered will be corroborated with public records and interview data.