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Small Business Hair Salon Owners Effective Marketing Strategies

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Tammy Lorraine Riley

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Small Business Hair Salon Owners Effective Marketing Strategies

by

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MS, Webster University, 2003

BS, University of South Carolina, 1988

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2021

Abstract

The hair salon industry is one of the largest employers in the United States; however, only 80% of small business hair salon owners survive longer than five years. Small business salon owners who fail to implement effective marketing strategies are at a higher risk of failure. Grounded in Porter's five forces model, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore marketing strategies small business hair salon owners use to sustain their business beyond five years. The participants comprised five small business hair salon owners in Jacksonville, Florida, who effectively used marketing strategies to sustain their business beyond five years. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, company websites, and internal company documents. Yin's five-step data analysis process was used to analyze the data. Three themes emerged: customer loyalty, word-of-mouth, and social media. A key recommendation for small hair salon owners is to develop customer loyalty, implement effective marketing strategies, and promote the business through social media and word of mouth marketing strategies to sustain profits and maintain a competitive advantage. The implications for positive social change include the potential for increasing employment opportunities and generating revenues and contributions to both state and local economies.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, my beloved husband, Jimmy Riley Sr. (Mr. Wonderful), my awesome parents, all my siblings and my grandmother Mary Louise Rodgers, all my cousins, aunts and uncle, nieces and nephews, and the Riley family. Lastly, to my godparents Dr. James and Mary Pope, and Gwendolyn Paschall for their incredible love and support. Additionally, to my heavenly angels who are looking down from heaven and smiling Larry O'neal Cooper (dad), Shawn Gardner (brother), Dr. Emmanuel and Lillian Pope, Linda Stroman (best friend), Michelle Brandon, Sadie Dais, Elder Samuel Hemingway, Elder Kenneth Pope, and Mary Ann Riley. At an early age, my parents paved the way for my siblings and me to obtain a good education and to serve God. Obtaining a good education and a desire to better ourselves were my parents' main desires in life for us. I am grateful for all life's lessons and rewards. Most of all, God has provided me the strength and grace needed to complete this doctoral journey, and I am so grateful. The Lord has been so faithful and gracious towards me. He has allowed me to be crowned with the highest academic achievements and I give God all the glory.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses are a source of U.S. economic growth (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014), and small start-ups have been viewed as the backbone to the U.S. economy (Criscuolo et al., 2014). Small business owners hire half of all workers in private sectors in the United States (Small Business Administration [SBA], 2018). However, small businesses continually face internal and external forces that can impact their success. In particular, effective marketing strategies and competition impact the success of small businesses (Mutoko, 2015). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the marketing strategies that small hair salon owners, in Jacksonville, Florida use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Background of the Problem

Small businesses' survival rate continues to be high within the United States (SBA, 2018). Despite the increase in small start-ups, 30% of small businesses fail within the first 2 years (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). The rate of small business failures is exceptionally high in the beauty industry (Loboda & Lopaciuk, 2013). Researchers have suggested that one way for small business owners to counteract the high failure rate is to develop effective marketing strategies (Astebro et al., 2014; Baierle et al., 2020). Therefore, this study focused on effective marketing strategies that small business salon owners use to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years.

Problem Statement

The survival rate of businesses might decrease if business leaders lack effective marketing skills (Essig, 2014; Sauer, 2017). Approximately 80% of small businesses

survive the first year; however, the survival rate declines to between 45% and 51% after 5 years (SBA, 2018). The general business problem is that some small business owners who are unable to create an effective marketing strategy may not successfully sustain their business. The specific business problem is that some small business salon owners lack effective marketing strategies needed to sustain their businesses for more than 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective marketing strategies that small business hair salon owners use to sustain their business for more than 5 years. The targeted population consisted of five small business hair salon owners in Florida who successfully implemented marketing strategies and sustained their businesses beyond 5 years. The results from this study could lead to positive social change by providing strategies for small business salon owners to sustain their business for more than 5 years by promoting operational efficiency, increasing jobs, and generating revenues and contributions to state and local economies.

Nature of the Study

There are three types of research methodologies to aid researchers qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2018). Using a qualitative research method allows the researcher to focus on the broad context of an organization and business problem with flexibility (Yin, 2018). Therefore, I chose a qualitative method to explore the marketing strategies that small business hair salon owners use to sustain their business for more than 5 years. In contrast, researchers incorporate quantitative methods when comparing

similarities among variables by testing and calculating numerical data through statistical tools (Cronin, 2014). Researchers use a mixed method to address more complicated research questions and develop a deeper theoretical understanding including both quantitative and qualitative methods (Saunders et al., 2015). A quantitative or mixed methodology was not suitable for this research because to address the specific business problem, I did not need to test one or more hypotheses about variables' relationship or groups' differences.

Qualitative researchers can consider the follow research designs: (a) case study, (b) phenomenology, and (c) ethnography. A multiple case study was appropriate for this research because it is more flexible to use. Researchers may use a multiple case study to answer the *what*, *how*, and *why* questions and obtain details and perspectives concerning a repetitive specific situation across more than a single case (Yin, 2018). Additionally, the use of a multiple case study can allow the researcher to analyze the similarities and difference between cases and provide the literature with strong and reliable findings as well as determine whether the findings are valuable. The use of a single case study can allow the researcher to study a person or specific group (Yin, 2018), but I used a multiple case study to interview multiple salon owners and comprehend the strategies that small business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years (Reich, 2015; Yin, 2018). A phenomenological design was not appropriate because summarizing the meaning of experiences of small business hair salon owners was not the intent of this study (see Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Further an ethnographic study was not appropriate

because the purpose of this research was not to reveal the common elements of culture related to small business hair salon owners (see Letourneau, 2015; Reich, 2015).

Research Question

What effective marketing strategies do small business salon owners use to sustain their businesses for more than 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What effective marketing strategies have you used to sustain your business for more than 5 years?
2. How did you implement the marketing strategies?
3. What were the key barriers you encountered while implementing strategies to sustain your business?
4. How did you address the key barriers encountered when implementing strategies to sustain your business operations?
5. How did you measure the effectiveness of these strategies?
6. What, if any, additional measures did you take to ensure that the marketing strategies met their specific target audience?
7. What information can you share that was not already covered about strategies you used to sustain your business for more than 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I chose for this research study is Porter's five forces of strategy for competitive theory (Porter, 1986). Porter (1986) used this model to enhance organizational strategies and describe business sustainability processes (Menon & Yao,

2017). Porter's conceptual framework for strategic planning has three generic competitive strategies: (a) cost leadership, (b) differentiation, and (c) focus (Tanwar, 2013). Porter's competitive strategy theory has a key component that provides leaders of organizations with the ability to create more profits and develop competitive and effective strategies (Tanwar, 2013). Some small and large businesses may rely on competitive strategies to provide support to its businesses (Salavou, 2015). Therefore, the competitive strategy of Porter's five forces is the model that small business owners might use to help start and sustain their business. Using Porter's five forces, business owners can understand and resolve the issues that might impact profitability and thus create strategies that will allow them to become successful. In this study, I used Porter's five forces to explore strategies that small business hair salon owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years of starting operations.

Operational Definitions

Bench marketing: Bench marketing is a measurement tool that business leaders use to analyze the firm's progress of its objective and goals (Danis, 2015).

Business sustainability: Business sustainability is a multilevel approach of creating ways to maintain the survival rate of the business to create profits (Lee & Hu, 2018).

Competitive advantage: Competitive advantage is an advantage a business has over its rivals. This advantage may allow business owners to create solutions to innovations and develop new markets (Zheng et al., 2015).

Competitive strategy: Competitive strategy is a clearly defined plan business

leaders use to become more competitive. The goal of the leaders is to be successful against its competitors (Sharma & Lijuan, 2014).

Marketing strategy: Marketing strategy is one that an organizational leader can use to enable the organization's sustainability and has a continual effect on its competitive advantage (Morgan et al., 2018).

Small business: Small businesses are those with fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are the ideas that the researcher considers as true without any evidence (Jiang, 2014; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). There is a risk associated with assumptions that these can lead to inaccurate results (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). The first assumption was that participants provided thoughtful and honest feedback during the open-ended interview questions. The second assumption was that the small business owners considered themselves successful, had a strategy to maintain a competitive advantage, and were willing to share this plan.

Limitations

Limitations represent the potential weaknesses or issues, beyond the researcher's control, that can affect the trustworthiness of the findings in the research (Yin, 2018). The two main limitations of qualitative research include potential researcher bias and time constraint for collecting information from the participants (Horga et al., 2014). A

potential limitation was my personal bias during the semistructured interviews. To reduce this limitation, I used an interview protocol and member checking.

Delimitations

Delimitations represents boundaries and factors within a researcher's control (Connelly, 2013) and represent the boundaries set for the study (Nelms, 2015). The first delimitation of this study involved the geographical area of the study, Florida. The geographical delimitation was suitable for this study because I did not foresee any state regulations or cultural aspects unique to Florida to affect the subject matter of this study. Small business hair salons are subject to similar laws in other states. The second delimitation was the sample size, which included five small hair salon business owners in Florida. It is vital to have an appropriate sample in a case study such as this because generating details requires reliable resources.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study could be significant to business practice because owners who create small business that survive beyond 5 years are vital for the economic prosperity of any nation and create pathways for generating new businesses (SBA, 2018). The findings of this study could help small business owners comprehend the key operating processes of their businesses. Findings of this study can include information on what strategies business owners create for new and existing firms to achieve sustainability and contribute to the growth of local economies.

Contribution to Business Practice

In this qualitative study, I explored strategies that might be useful to small businesses owners when implementing effective marketing strategies to ensure business sustainability beyond 5 years. The results of this study may assist with improving the marketing strategies of small businesses and negative influences that may impact the survival rate of salons. The findings may help provide information for small business owners to overcome hindrances to the firm's success and develop useful tools to maintain a competitive edge (Miles, 2013). Success is one of the focuses of the small business owners' innovation process, and the leaders are responsible for the outcome of the strategic planning process (Menon & Yao, 2017). This study's findings might be beneficial to leaders of small businesses developing and implementing marketing strategies for increasing the business' sustainability.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may contribute multiple factors for positive social change. Business failure can influence the economy at the national, state, and local level of government (Miles, 2013). Businesses that fail to survive beyond 5 years may contribute to unemployment, loss of family income, and prevent positive social change (Miles, 2013). The findings of this study may lead to positive social change by increasing jobs and revenue, which could promote operational efficiency and contribution benefiting both state and local economies. Increased employment opportunities could benefit society with the creation of more small businesses and influence a stronger economy in general (Dimitrieska, 2016).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this study, I explored the different marketing strategies used by small business hair salon owners to sustain their businesses for more than 5 years. I included an extensive analysis of the literature related to Porter's five forces model and the key concepts identified in this theory. The purpose of this literature was to assess, summarize, and analyze as well as compare alternative opposing theories. The research question for this study is as follows: What effective marketing strategies do small business salon owners use to sustain their businesses for more than 5 years? I selected Porter's five forces model as the main conceptual framework for this study, which I explore in addition to competitive strategy and the systems theory in this section. Further, I review the literature regarding successful marketing strategies.

Search Strategy

I reviewed several diverse sources including web-based resources, books, and peer-reviewed journal articles that relate to the research topic. This study contains 160 articles out of which 153 (92%) of the articles are peer-reviewed, and 168 (95%) articles were published within the last 5 years of completing my study. Resources used in a study should include peer-reviewed articles published within 5 years of completing the study because outdated material has little values to small business owners or excelling managers (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The literature review subsection contains 75 peer-reviewed, full-text articles, out of which 68 (91%) were published between 2015 and 2019. I collected full-text peer-reviewed journal articles solely from Walden University Online Library database, (a) ABI/INFORM Collection (b) Business and Management

database, (c) Business Market Research, (d) Business Source Complete, (e) Google Scholar, and (f) government databases, including SBA. I searched with the following keywords and phrases: *Porter's five forces model, cosmetology history, small business, small business marketing, sustainability, small business success, and small business failure.*

The purpose of this literature was to summarize and assess the academic level of the research study. I explored the effective marketing strategies small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The literature review has been outlined into the following five main subject categories (a) Porter's five forces model, (b) competitive strategy theory, (c) opposing conceptual frameworks, (d) small businesses, and (e) small business marketing.

Porter's Five Forces Model

Porter (1980) developed the five forces framework to determine the level of sustainability and profitability within an industry. Porter examined industry specific external forces to determine why some businesses succeed and some fail. Porter found that the success or failure of businesses were influenced by several elements interacting with each other. The five forces structural elements included (a) threat of new entrants, (b) threat of substitution, (c) buyer power, (d) supplier power, and (e) competitive rivalry (Porter, 1980).

Porter's five forces model is an easily used analytically tool and does not require technical training. The model can be useful to someone knowledgeable of the organization with strong research skills. Porter's five forces model is similar to the

analysis of strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) because firm leaders can determine the level of competition in a market and how external forces can affect the firm's performance (Saunders et al., 2015). Porter's five forces model was applicable for analyzing firms operating in an industry that requires external situational analysis to maintain a competitive edge such as the hair salon industry. Additionally, Porter's five forces model served as an accurate assessment tool to uncover weaknesses in an industry and help small business owners, including small business hair salon owners, achieve long-term profitability and sustainability.

The Threat of New Entrants

New entrants into a market can be intimidating to business owners because they bring new products and services that can affect profits. However, new entrants face barriers such as restrictive licensing or governmental policies, economies of scale, switching to high cost, and large capital investments (Porter, 1991). Even business leaders who may not view the threat of new entrants as barriers may be encouraged to provide better quality products and services (Porter, 1991). Business leaders who take advantage of the threat of new entrants may be able to promote and attract business (Grigore, 2014). Thus, new business owners face many challenges and must use strategies to overcome high barriers to entry such as lowering prices and offering better products and services (Grigore, 2014; Porter, 1980).

Small business salon owners face barriers to new entry from government policies and requirements to attain licenses from state and industry regulators (Grigore, 2014; Porter, 2008). According to the state board regulations, the cosmetology and barber

industry that employs individuals in the profession must have a license (McLaughlin et al., 2018). Full-service salon owners must employ licensed individuals who have completed the necessary hours required by the state in which they are licensed (McLaughlin et al., 2018). New businesses owners who do not implement the proper training and skill may be at risk of sustainability and lose any competitive advantage against their rivals (Kamboj & Rahman, 2017).

The Threat of Substitution

Threat of substitution exists in industries where there are similar products and services that offer the same benefits at the same price (Porter, 1980; Sutherland, 2014). When prices are high consumers will switch to substitute products and services (Porter, 1980; Sutherland, 2014). The threat of substitution is high in the salon hair industry and can impact potential customers for existing hair salon owners (Porter, 1980). Customers easily switch from one hair stylist to another (Kim & Laffranchini, 2019). Customers who have a good rapport with their hair stylist may provide some insight into the issues that they are experiencing before finding a new hair stylist (Loots & Grobler, 2014). However, some customers may leave without informing their stylist of any problems they are experiencing. Providing excellent customer relationship skills can help small business hair salon owners overcome threats from their competitors.

Buyer Power

When consumers have knowledge, are cautious about prices, or purchase a large quantity of products then the buying power is high (Sutherland, 2014). Buyers may affect an industry by (a) lowering prices, hence reducing profitability; (b) challenging

competitors against each other; and (c) requesting more services and better products (Grigore, 2014; Porter, 1980). The buying power of the consumers can increase when (a) clients are sensitive to the retailer's prices, (b) sellers do not have a variety of products, and (c) consumers are knowledgeable about suppliers and their costs (Grigore, 2014; Porter, 1980).

Small business hair salon owners provide services to a wide range of individuals. Small business hair salon owners who implement the buyer power strategy can base their revenue on products and services provided to their customers. Customers who receive a good price for services and develop a good customer relationship can help small business owners maintain a stable income (Kim & Jae-Eun, 2014; Punwatkar & Manoj, 2014). Therefore, small business owners can buy better products from their supplies based on the customer needs. Buyer power is a vital component for small business hair salon owners.

Supplier Power

Suppliers can manipulate a market by lowering the quality or availability of the purchased products or by raising prices (Porter, 1980). It is important that suppliers are available and can provide services and raw material to consumers because they play a major role in the business competitive advantage (Porter, 2008; Sutherland, 2014). Supplier power increases when (a) the buyer is satisfied with the purchase, (b) buyers have high switching costs, and (c) few options exist for the buyer (Porter, 1980; Sutherland, 2014). Thus, small business owners should invest in several suppliers to help maintain a competitive edge.

Fifty-one percent of small business owners fail to succeed beyond 5 years in the hair industry (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). The hair salon industry is a competitive market, and competition is increasing at a high rate (Iwata et al., 2019). However, small salon businesses sometimes fail at high rates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Powerful suppliers can contribute to small business failures because they can affect the hair salon owner's profitability by changing the quality, availability, and price of supplies (Pick & Eisend, 2014; Wandfluh et al., 2016).

Competitive Rivalry

Businesses in industries that exhibit a high degree of rivalry may result in lower profits due to price competition, as cutting prices can lower profits (Porter, 1980). In the hair salon industry, competitive rivalry means that hair salon owners must continue to be aware of their competitors' products and services to maintain a competitive advantage. Conversely, if the small business owners become apathetic and resist newly emerging products and services, they are likely to lose customers to their rivals (Pick & Eisend, 2014). A further detriment to competitive rivalry may be a decline in the quality and quantity of stylists as they leave to find better opportunities within the industry (Pick & Eisend, 2014). However, competitive rivalry may encourage business owners to embrace the new changes by enhancing their products and services to help promote their sustainability (Porter, 2008). Additionally, by implementing the five forces, firms' leaders can identify the problems affecting their profits and tenure (Porter, 2008).

Competitive Strategy

Business leaders, particularly small business leaders, should consider strategies to

maintain a competitive advantage, which is another significant focus of Porter's model. Porter's five forces model may provide support to business leaders when assessing their organization's growth and profits within the industry, which are important to success (Lillestol et al., 2015). Business leaders should consider offering better products and services against their rivals (Teti et al., 2014). Additionally, businesses owners who implement Porter's five forces model sustain against their competitors while attracting new customers (Porter, 2008). Business owners who can provide the needed products and services may sustain against its competitors (Mahnken, 2014; Stefanovska, 2014). Business owners who brand themselves may be able to generate profits, maintain and attract customers, and increase business sustainability (Grigore, 2014). Porter (2008) suggested that business owners should choose at least one of three key elements to sustain against its competitors: (a) cost leadership, (b) differentiation, and (c) focus, or a combination of these. Business owners who fail to choose at least one key element may become unstable and fail (Porter, 2008).

Cost Leadership Strategy

Business leaders incorporate cost leadership strategies by selling a large volume of goods at lower prices. Business owners implementing this strategy could maintain their profits and expand market shares (De Melo & Guerra Leone, 2015; Kyengo et al., 2016; Porter, 1980). In some industries business leaders use the cost leadership strategy as a barrier to entry for new entrants due to thin profit margins (Ensari, 2016). Business owners who fail to incorporate the cost leadership strategy could impact the company's profits and sustainability (Kapto & Njeru, 2014). To increase profits and sustain business

beyond 5 years, small business owners, including hair salon owners, should manage and minimize costs.

Differentiation Strategy

Business leaders may adopt differentiation strategies to develop a niche by selling products and offering services that are beneficial to their customers (De Melo & Guerra Leone, 2015; Kyengo et al., 2016). Business owners who include the differentiation strategy could attract loyal customers, promote customer satisfaction, and create new markets to attract buyers by offering lower prices or specialized services (De Melo & Guerra Leone, 2015; Ibrahim, 2015; Kyengo et al., 2016). Small business owners of hair salons who implement differentiation strategies by offering better product services and prices that are highly valuable to clients may increase their profits and sustain their business for a longer period.

Focus Strategy

The focus strategy is a marketing tool used by business leaders to provide specific products and services that satisfy the needs of their consumers (Kyengo et al., 2016). Firm leaders may incorporate this strategy to compete against their rivals by developing expertise about the goods and services they offer (De Melo & Guerra Leone, 2015; Kyengo et al., 2016). New firm leaders may find it difficult to compete against incumbent firms that incorporate the focus strategy (Ibrahim, 2015; Morgan, 2015). Business leaders who incorporate the focus strategy could generate new markets (De Melo & Guerra Leone, 2015; Ibrahim, 2015; Kyengo et al., 2016), which means they will need to continue developing new skills to maintain a competitive advantage. Small business

owners, including small business owners of hair salon, can meet the demands of the market by influencing the consumers' perception by offering more brand products than their competitors. Therefore, business owners can use Porter's five forces model to develop strategies to (a) compete against rivals, (b) sustain their business, (c) attract new customers, and (d) develop new markets (Dimitrieska, 2016; Safari et al., 2016).

Porter's Five Forces Model

There are several criticisms to Porter's five forces model. For example, Dobbs (2014) stated that Porter's model was best suited for simple markets and can be easily analyzed. Guggenheim (2016) opposed Porter's five model by assuming that it is difficult to examine the reality of businesses due to the ever-changing transitions within markets and there is no perfect market. For example, markets are government regulated, and different information exists between market investors. Government can have a large impact on Porter's five forces model, both favorably and unfavorably, which limits the use of the model (Dobbs, 2014; Guggenheim, 2016). Additionally, critics suggest that Porter's five forces model may not be supportive in certain industries because the model lacks depth and does not provide enough strategies to overcome challenges with the introduction of new markets (Guggenheim, 2016; Prasad & Warriar, 2016).

Nevertheless, the opposing views has not altered Porter's five forces model. Strategic planners rely on Porter's five forces model to examine industry structure and the main components of an organization's profitability and success (Bagnoli & Giachetti, 2015; Senff et al., 2016). Moreover, business leaders who incorporate Porter's five forces model can (a) carefully analyze the external and internal forces of the industry, (b)

forecast profitability before entering the market, and (c) create effective strategies to maintain a competitive advantage (Suwardy & Ratnatunga, 2014).

Opposing Conceptual Framework

System Base Theory

The system theory was introduced by von Bertalanffy in 1950 (Belinfanti & Stout, 2018). The system theory can serve as a guide to researchers and business leaders to understand the nature of complex systems in nature, science, and the environment. The system theory can help describe groups that are working together to produce a result (Lakhan, 1989). The system theory is one of the most widely used theories in management and focuses on the environment of a system and its interactions (Belinfanti & Stout, 2018).

The system theory focuses on the arrangement of and relations between parts that connect them into a whole (Lakhan, 1989). The benefits of the system approach in management includes (a) concentrating on the end results, (b) providing a plan of action, (c) developing coordination and specialized activities, and (d) freeing management of some daily management duties (Yaşar, 2017). Business leaders who incorporate the system theory may gain a better insight of the inputs and outputs of the organization (Ackoff, 1994; Kim & Jae-Eun, 2014). Additionally, the systems theory can help leaders focus on inputs and outputs and the interaction of each component (Adams et al., 2014; Kim & Jae-Eun, 2014). Leaders may be able to analyze the inputs of what enters the system from the outside, and leaders can analyze the outputs based on the inputs entering the environment from the system. The system theory was not the conceptual framework

chosen for this study because the framework is not useful to firms when analyzing new entrants and the level of competition in the salon industry.

Cosmetology Industry

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study is to explore the effective marketing strategies small business hair salon owners use to increase profitability and financial sustainability for more than 5 years. The central research question for the study is: What effective marketing strategies do small business hair salon owners use to sustain beyond 5 years? The cosmetology industry has experienced many changes (Madnani & Khan, 2013). The evolution of the hair industry has gone from simple shampoo and roller sets to increasing hair growth, stimulating the scalp, and ending hair damage (Trueb, 2005). Owners of hair salons provide various products from the hair care industry (Madnani & Khan, 2013). Small business owners provide innovative hair products such as shampoos and conditioners for different hair types, such as oily, dry, and damaged hair conditions (Madnani & Khan, 2013). Some of the featured hair products that are still used include the straightening comb, rollers, hair spray, gels and mousses, and curling irons (Norlien et al., 2017).

The hair industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry (Madnani & Khan, 2013). The cosmetology industry has an important role in an individual's physical appearance and self-esteem (Trueb, 2005). Some services consumers seek from hair salon stylists are to look younger and have healthy hair (Madnani & Khan, 2013). The hair care industry has created innovative products to meet the needs of the consumers. Some of these innovative products include dyes that can reverse gray, products that regain hair loss, and options to

increase hair growth (Madnani & Khan, 2013).

During the early 1900s, researchers noted that the beauty industry was dominated by minority woman (Madnani & Khan, 2013). The hair industry was one of the most profitable industries during the 1900s (Jones, 2012). Hair salons were one of the few industries where there were significant education and economic opportunities for women (Hoff, 2012). Additionally, the hair salon is a place of business and considered an important social meeting place (Ahlers-Schmidt et al., 2014). Therefore, for small businesses in the hair industry to sustain, they must establish loyal customers and offer a variety of products and services at competitive prices (Mwangi & Bwisa, 2013). Small business owners including small business hair salon owner's sustainability is important because they influence the economic growth, entrepreneurship, and productivity by keeping money close to home and supporting the communities and neighborhoods (Amirbekova, 2016).

Small Business

Small businesses consist of 500 or fewer employees and are independently operated (Hayes et al., 2015). Small businesses are vital to the U.S economy and represent 99.9% of total U.S. firms (SBA, 2018). Small business is a significant contributor to decreasing poverty and creating jobs, and economic development for the economy (Memili et al., 2015; World Bank, 2016). The resources required to operate some small businesses may be limited due to government regulations and policies and geographic locations (Alkner & Hiebl, 2015). However, small businesses, including small business hair salon owners, are the backbone of U.S. economic growth.

Small businesses have a major impact on boosting the economy by expanding to other nations (Dal Bianco et al., 2017). According to the SBA (2016), small business makes up 99.9% of employer firms in the United States, but only 50% survive beyond 5 years. Therefore, without small businesses, including small business hair salon owners' impact, U.S. economic growth would decline, and ultimately have a negative impact on the economy.

Some small businesses fail due to the threat of larger firms and lack of money and resources (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014). Leaders may determine the amount of financial and nonfinancial gains based on the current resources to sustain against its competitors (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). However, most businesses fail in the first few years. Therefore, small businesses including small business hair salon owners should understand the importance of increasing business profits to remain successful in the economy (Halabí & Lussier, 2014).

Researchers showed that small business success is dependent on the investment of capital, financing, resources, and time spent developing the business (Sarmiento et al., 2016). Business owners who fail to invest financially and are unable to obtain the necessary resources may not sustain beyond 5 years. Therefore, small businesses including small business hair salon owners should seek to maintain a competitive advantage by implementing a strategic plan to invest money, time, and seek available resources (Winnard et al., 2014).

Small business leaders face challenges while trying to maintain sustainability (Gupta, 2017). Sustainability is vital to small businesses economic growth and

performance (Aragon-Correa et al., 2017). Krauss (2017) posited that a sustainable business includes innovations, profits, long-term growth, and a competitive edge against its competitors. Small business sustainability refers to a business that can sustain regardless of environmental or internal changes and market threats (Pantelica et al., 2016). A firm is sustainable if it can support the needs of the stakeholders while adhering to strategies that increase profits and investments (Pantelica et al., 2016). Small business owners including small business hair salon owners should consider creating marketing strategies that will impact their market to increase their chances of survival and profits.

Small Business Success

Small businesses are being created every day. Some will succeed, but some will fail. Some small businesses become successful due to their ability to obtain resources and capital, and vision (Christensen et al., 2014). Leaders play a vital role in the firm's success (Binder et al., 2016). Small business leaders including small business hair salon owners are solely responsible for the success of their business.

Implementing innovation may lead to organizational change (Cooper et al., 2016). Using innovation, business leaders can attract new business and opportunities (Binder et al., 2016). Muenjohn and McMurray (2016) posited that business leaders who allow the exchange of new ideas are a key factor for small businesses' success. Researchers indicated some key factors to small business success are (a) finding a niche, (b) thinking big, (c) providing differentiated products, (d) planning for success, and (e) listening to stakeholders (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). Business owners who commit to the market, people, and profit are successful (Gyimah et al., 2019). Small business owners including

small business hair salon owners who implement these key factors can maintain a competitive marketing edge against their competitors.

The success of small businesses is vital to the advancement of the economy (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). Thus, small businesses operate within a planned framework. The strategic plan describes the firm's mission to serve its customers and analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the firm (Saunders et al., 2015). Business leaders who implement a meaningful business plan stand a good chance to sustain against competitors (Seidl, 2007). Innovation and a strategic plan could be a road map to the success of small business owners including small business hair salon owners (Hart et al., 2016).

Marketing Strategy

Planning

Small business leaders who wish to maintain a competitive edge against their competitors should implement strategic planning during the planning sessions (Kunle Ade et al., 2017). The strategy should include the balance between three interrelated elements of the organization (a) economic, (b) societal, and (c) environmental (Hansen & Schaltegger, 2016). The sustainability of businesses can have an impact on their environment and promote social change by creating jobs, increasing profits, and generating revenue for the local and federal government (Gyimah et al., 2019). The sustainability of small business can be determined by its profits (Eswarlal & Vallesi, 2014). To avoid failure, small business owners including small business hair salon owners should consider their environment and the economy during the strategic planning process.

Small business leaders are responsible for the success of the organization (Stincelli & Baghurst, 2014). Small business leaders should possess the necessary skills to motivate employees while fulfilling the organization's mission and goals (Lo et al., 2015). Leaders create strategic plans to help increase organization sustainability (Lo et al., 2015). Leaders should gain insight from their stakeholders to help assist with the strategic planning to sustain the success of the organization (Stincelli & Baghurst, 2014). Leaders should develop relationships with employees, shareholders, and business partners to help sustain and achieve community relationships (Gyimah et al., 2019). Leaders are continually exploring ways to guide the organization's goals (Lo et al., 2015).

Leaders of small businesses should implement effective strategies and increase profits to maintain a competitive edge. Kang and Na (2020) stated the sustainability of a business focuses on the needs of the present without relying on the ability of the future generation to meet their needs. However, there still exists a gap between sustainability for products and services due to the demands in markets (Kang & Na, 2020). During the strategic planning process, small business owners including small business hair salon owners may help bridge the gap between tenure and product and services.

Some business leaders implement plans and reach goals to help maintain a competitive edge. The planning method is sometimes described as marketing strategies (Tuan & Venkatesh, 2010). Ibrahim (2015) suggested that business leaders should consider implementing marketing strategies during succession planning regardless of the firm's size. Pophal (2015) maintained that business leaders should place a strong

emphasis on creating marketing strategies to sustain against their competitive rivals, aligning marketing strategies and brand identity. Business leaders must create an effective strategic plan to obtain a successful innovation (Holt & Daspit, 2015).

Business leaders who set goals may maintain their brand and increase profits as well as offer better products and services to maintain a competitive edge (Williams & Williams, 2017). Leaders who plan to gain and sustain a competitive edge need to focus some of their resources and skills on innovation (Dyer et al., 2016). Business leaders during the strategic planning process may be able to offer cost-effective products and services needed for their target market (Lee & Trimi, 2018; Williams & Williams, 2017). Small business leaders including small business hair salon owners should implement a strategic planning process to help sustain their business beyond 5 years.

Research indicates that the survival rate of startups is about 2 years (SBA, 2018). Some contributing factors to small business failure include poor management, lack of capital, financing, marketing mishaps, business plan, and infrastructure issues (Pantelica et al., 2016). Bottenberg et al. (2017) suggested that small business owners should clearly define and understand their market, customer, and the customer buying habits (Hörisch et al., 2014). Small business owners should price their services and products correctly to avoid failure (Carayannis et al., 2015). Small business owners including small business hair salon owners who understand the challenges can develop effective marketing strategies to remain profitable (Omri et al., 2015).

Marketing Plans

In a global market, creating strict marketing plans may not serve a large company

in the same way as a smaller firm. For example, in larger firms, the marketing strategies are larger and may take the organization additional time to achieve their goals (Dyer et al., 2016; Holt & Daspit, 2015). While, in smaller firms, marketing strategies are sometimes achievable much faster which can allow them to maintain a competitive advantage (Ibrahim, 2015; Williams & Williams, 2017). It is vital that small business owners have the right strategies in place, including small business hair salon owners.

Business leaders who create marketing strategies may find it beneficial to help summarize the organization's strengths and weaknesses (Ibrahim, 2015). Organizational leaders developing marketing strategies should analyze all the outcomes and decisions implemented during the strategic planning process (Barbosa et al., 2020). However, some leaders may not be interested in developing marketing strategies. Some leaders may feel that strategic planning is costly and not a good fit for the organization (Barbosa et al., 2020). Small business leaders including small business salon owners should consider developing effective marketing strategies to avoid failure.

Business leaders who create marketing strategies may attract customers and gain better insight into new markets. Developing strategic marketing strategies is an ongoing process (Williams & Williams, 2017). Small business owners including small business hair salon owners should consider offering cost-effective products and services for their target markets to increase profits and maintain a competitive edge. Colombelli et al. (2016); Memili et al. (2015); Ribeiro-Soriano (2017) posited that small businesses have some advantages when creating marketing strategies, unlike large firms due to meaningful incentives, such as personal financial rewards, competitive markets, and less

bureaucracy. Small business owners, including small business hair salon owners, are key instruments in developing and creating new markets.

Leaders within firms are the key drivers in creating marketing strategies (Dyer et al., 2016). Ribeiro-Soriano (2017) posited that some businesses are unable to sustain against their competitors due to leaders failing to develop strategic marketing strategies. Instead, the leaders of the organizations might base their findings on recent experiences and limited information. There are factors leaders should consider during the marketing planning to maintain against their rivals (Chang, 2016; Taneja et al., 2016). Some factors leaders may want to consider include articulating the company's vision, developing the company's mission, collecting, and analyzing market data, sharing the vision with the team members, and analyzing the environments (Peltier & Naidu, 2012). Leaders should explore these factors during quarterly meetings and conduct SWOT analyses to identify leaders' styles and values (Dyer et al., 2016). Small business owners including small business hair salon owners who implement strategic marketing planning processes can generate economic, environmental, and social outcomes.

Personal Recommendations

Studies show that 64% of marketing experts indicated that word-of-mouth is an effective marketing tool (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Marketing experts have suggested that the word-of-mouth marketing strategy is effective because people trust their family and friends more than advertisements (Maria et al., 2019). Some small business hair salon owners may find it difficult to increase profits through walk-in business alone (Onurlubas, 2019). Additionally, customers like to know where to seek great products

and services (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019). Word-of-mouth is a marketing tool some small business salon owner should implement. Using the word-of-mouth technique is one key to building a small business hair salon brand (Bernarto et al., 2020). Some salon owners may also offer promotions such as bring a friend and receive a 10% discount on selected services (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019). Using the word-of-mouth technique may have an impact on small business hair salons by increasing customer loyalty and profits (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019).

Technology and Social Media

Small businesses hair salon owners who practice a customer first philosophy and customer interaction should include the following advertising strategies such as short fast hair videos, websites, blogs, vlogs, and mobile marketing. Sharafizad and Coetzer (2016) posited that social branding, message personalization, segmentation, and subscription are useful marketing strategies that can engage the customer with the product, service, and organization, and lead to customer satisfaction and increased profits. Small business including small business hair salon owners who implement the use of technology and social media are more likely to sustain, attract, and maintain loyal customers, and increase profits.

Technology has an impact on small business success. Taneja et al. (2016) suggested that business leaders who adopt technology are potential candidates for expansion and growth. Parnell (2015) suggested that small business owners implement automation processes to conduct payroll, keep track of money, and market their firms through social media. Additionally, the use of technology in small businesses including

small hair salon business owners allows leaders to market their business using the Internet and social media (Graham-Hyde, 2014).

Organizations use different media or channels to convey important information about the organization's products and services (Chan & Walker, 2015). The goal is to create advertising effects such as brand awareness and customer and product loyalty to increase profits (Chan & Walker, 2015). Kamboj and Rahman (2017) suggested that businesses can attract more customers using media such as direct email. Due to the increases in technology, some business owners agree that the Internet is a vital tool of communication and advertising when introducing products and services to consumers (Chan & Walker, 2015). Using technology small businesses including small business hair salon owners may attract more customers.

The internet is a multifaceted instrument for business development (Parnell, 2015). Business leaders use the Internet to advertise products and services and distribute and receive payments for products and services. Further, some organizational leaders explore the use of social media and social networks to increase their brand awareness and reach their prospective clients. Researchers indicate that the use of social media has a major impact on the company's communication strategies (Chan & Walker, 2015; Parnell, 2015). Some organizations have seen the importance of including the Internet in their communication strategies (Graham-Hyde, 2014). Some companies have benefited from the use of social media such as cost-effectiveness. Researchers suggest that the use of social media messages to consumers can be targeted to certain markets and segmented to specific groups with specific needs and interests (Chan & Walker, 2015). Additionally,

the consumers can interact with the brand through social media and provide the organization real-time measurements on interest and need (Taneja et al., 2016). Small business hair salon owners who advertise their business using real-time social media can increase their brand awareness.

Short Hair Makeover Videos

A popular marketing tool for salon owners to gain attraction through social media is creating short speeded up hair makeovers (Nitin Joshi, 2017). These types of videos are found on Facebook, YouTube channels, and Tasty and five-minute crafts (Jermstittiparsert, 2019). The small business salon hair owners make step-by-step videos using clients that last about 20 seconds or less (Nitin Joshi, 2017). Some small business salon owners find this marketing strategy effective because the videos are short and captivating.

These short hair makeover videos are viewed and shared worldwide. Short hair makeover videos allow small business owners to attract more followers and publicity, gain new customers, and display their professionalism (Jermstittiparsert, 2019). Small business hair salon owners can become popular based on the likes received on Facebook and the YouTube channel which allows the small business hair salon owners to become more popular and profitable.

Customer Relationship Marketing

Customer relationship marketing is a vital tool for any firm or organization (Parsa et al., 2015). Using the customer relationship technique small business owners, including small business salon owners, can focus on customer relationship and customer loyalty

(Gilboa et al., 2019). Small business owners including small business hair salon owners who practice customer relationship marketing techniques can focus on the relationship between the customer and company; therefore, competition is left out (Gilboa et al., 2019; Thapa, 2015). Small business owners, including small business hair salon owners who implement customer relationship marketing could add new services and products, offer better prices and discounts, create new hours of operation, find new markets, and sustain against its competitors.

It is very important for a small business hair salon owner to know their customers. Approximately, 20% to 80% of customers bring in revenue for small businesses, including small business hair salons (Gilboa et al., 2019; Weshah, 2019). Therefore, small business hair salon owners should take good care of their current customers because they may seek better services elsewhere, resulting revenue losses (Weshah, 2019). Additionally, customer relationship marketing strategy is a good way of reaching specific target segments (Weshah, 2019)

Bench Marketing

Some small business leaders find the bench marketing strategy useful to help understand why some businesses succeed (Danis, 2015). The bench marketing tool is used by business leaders to evaluate the internal and external bench marketing (Danis, 2015). Small business leaders find internal bench marketing useful for creating strategies to motivate employees, recruit new employees, and maintain talent based on the data provided (Hart et al., 2016). Thus, an external bench marketing tool is useful to small businesses including small business hair salon owners to maintain a competitive edge by

gathering information about their competitor's performance to create effective marketing strategies (Chen & Uzelac, 2015).

Literature Summary

The body of literature on effective marketing strategies small business hair salon owners use to sustain beyond 5 years provides numerous strategies for small business owners to implement during their strategic planning. Researchers indicated that business leaders who implement effective strategic may sustain beyond 5 years and maintain a competitive advantage against their rivals (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). Porter's five forces model was an appropriate framework for explaining this phenomenon. Additionally, the literature supports the notion that the strategies used by some small business hair salons owners can have an impact on the state and local economies. A critique of the theoretical literature showed that there are unanswered questions about the success rate of small business hair salon owners and the effective marketing strategies small business hair salon owners use to sustain beyond 5 years.

Transition

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective marketing strategies for small business salon owners to sustain more than 5 years. In Section 1, I introduced the foundation of the problem and the need for further research, presented the problem statement, the purpose of this study, and the nature of the study. I justified the use of Porter's five forces model as the conceptual framework for this study. Additionally, I presented the research and interview questions and addressed the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations,

and significance of the study. Lastly, I provided a detailed literature review.

In Section 2, I addressed the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and the selection of participants. Additionally, other components of Section 2 included a detailed overview of the qualitative research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical research and implementation. I addressed data collection instruments and techniques, organization techniques and analysis. Finally, I discussed the reliability and validity of the study and conclude with the introduction of Section 3.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective marketing strategies that small business hair salon owners use to sustain their business for more than 5 years. The targeted population consisted of five small business hair salon owners in Florida who successfully implemented marketing strategies and sustained their businesses beyond 5 years. The results from this study could lead to positive social change by providing strategies for small business salon owners to sustain their business for more than 5 years by promoting operational efficiency, increasing jobs, and generating revenues and contributions to state and local economies.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers engaged in qualitative case studies are the primary instrument for collecting reliable and credible information about a topic through semistructured interviews (Berg & Struqig, 2017; Yin, 2018). I was the primary interviewer and data collection instrument for this study. In this qualitative multiple case study, I gathered data from five small business hair salon owners using an interview protocol that was followed during each interview (see Appendix A) to mitigate personal bias. The interview protocol consisted of step-by-step instructions and interview questions to improve the reliability and capture the true meanings of each participant (Merriam, 2015). Researchers refer to the interview protocol to ensure that each participant is asked the same questions, in the same order, to provide consistency and reduce personal bias (Merriam, 2015).

I had no prior relationship with the interviewed participants. Additionally, to avoid bias, researchers should limit their viewpoints and only include the data collected through the selected participants' interview (Robinson, 2014). To avoid bias, I used member checking to avoid inserting my personal views and reduce the misinterpretation of participant responses.

Further, the *Belmont Report* is an important document for researchers to implement in research (Miracle, 2016). The *Belmont Report* (National Commission for the protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979) stated the basic elements researchers should follow include (a) respect, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. I followed the guidelines of the *Belmont Report* protocol by (a) obtaining written consent from each participant, (b) protecting the data collected and privacy, (c) assuring participants that they may withdraw at any time, and (d) ensuring the participant's safety.

Participants

In this study, the target participants were hair salon owners who sustained a business longer than 5 years, employed fewer than 500 employees, and located in Jacksonville, Florida. The data collection process began after approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Selecting participants is a vital component to conducting research (Yin, 2018). Researchers review participant's characteristics to ensure that the selected participants can provide valid and useful data to answer the research question (Latiffi et al., 2016; Sowman et al., 2014).

Researchers rely on referrals from acquaintance networks to gain access to participants (Brink & Benschop, 2014; Shwed & Kalev, 2014). Internet and social media

can be a useful tool to select participants (Back, 2013), which I used to search for relevant business owners. I personally contacted participants through referrals from friends and relatives. For each prospective participant I explained the study, advised the participants of the purpose of the research, and communicated the time expectations. I assured them that the information collected would be held confidentially and used solely for research. Before conducting the interviews, the participants must agree to participate (Lynn, 2014); therefore, I provided each interview participants with a consent form before conducting the interviews.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

There are three types of research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Yin, 2018). I chose the qualitative method for this study, which is flexible and helps focus on the broad context of a business problem as well as human experiences (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2014; Xu et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). The researcher can gain an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon and address details of the study's research question using qualitative methods (Bristowe et al., 2015; Cairney & Denny, 2015). Conversely, quantitative researchers analyze identified variables to determine a correlation, relationship, and use hypotheses to test a theory (Westerman, 2014; Yin, 2018). The quantitative method was not suitable for this research because I did not need to test one or more hypotheses about the variables' relationship or groups' differences. My desired goal was to provide details of the phenomena. The mixed method is useful when combining qualitative and quantitative methods to examine and explore organizational problems

(Fetters, 2016; Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Yin, 2018). But the mixed method can be time consuming and costly (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018); thus, a mixed method was not useful to answering the research question in this study.

Research Design

I chose the multiple case design because I was interested in obtaining the participants' opinions and experiences about effective marketing strategies to sustain beyond 5 years. Researchers use the case study design to better understand the participants' opinions, processes, and real-life experiences (Chan & Walker, 2015). A case study researcher can investigate a phenomenon within a specific context to provide clearer insights into the research question (Yin, 2018). In contrast, researchers use a phenomenological design to explore a phenomenon from the lens of individuals' real-life experiences (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Summarizing the meaning of experiences of small business hair salon owners was not the intent of this study, so a phenomenological research design was not appropriate. According to Marshall & Rossman (2016), the ethnographic research design was not useful to my study because I did not seek to explore the culture of a group nor its environment or unveil real life situations (Letourneau, 2015; Reich, 2015). I conducted semistructured interviews and there was no need for direct observation. Therefore, the ethnography design was not useful for my study.

Data saturation is a qualitative research process to ensure the accuracy of data collected from interview participants (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Horter et al., 2014). Data saturation occurs when the data collected is consistent and no new information is

obtained (Yin, 2018). Some researchers may use data saturation to confirm that the study results are credible and valid (Elo et al., 2014). I interviewed five small hair salon owners, asking ask follow-up questions until no new information or themes emerged and achieved data saturation after the fifth interview.

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative research study was a purposive sample of five small business hair salon owners in Florida who used effective marketing strategies to sustain beyond 5 years. Researchers use a purposeful sampling strategy to ensure that the samples exist within in a study (Faseleh-Jahromi et al., 2014). Additionally, using purposeful sampling, researchers must align the purpose of the research with the selected participant and provide a reason for selecting the participants (Rosenthal, 2016).

When conducting a study, the sample size should be planned to determine the correct number of participants needed for the study (Andersson & Evers, 2015; Robinson, 2014). In this multiple case study, I conducted interviews from a sample of five small business salon participants and reviewed the company's documents to obtain meaningful effective strategies that the small business hair salon owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I contacted each participant by email to request their participation in the study. When I received a reply confirmation from a participant, I set up a formal semistructured interview. Qualitative studies use semistructured, face-to-face interviews and in-depth qualitative interviews (Almalki, 2016).

Interviewing in a pleasant environment is appropriate (Patton, 2015). All interviews were conducted using Facetime. I transcribed each interview and emailed each

interview participant a one- to two-page summary of their responses for accuracy of my interpretation. All qualified participants approved the summary of their responses. To ensure data saturation, I continued to analyze all interview participant's responses until no new themes emerged (see Yin, 2018). I used member checking and included methodological triangulation to validate data saturation. Data saturation occurred after the fifth interview.

Ethical Research

Researchers consider two essential processes when collecting interview data: informed consent and ethical responsibility. To ensure my study was within the federal regulations and Walden University's requirements for informed consent, I submitted my research request to Walden University's IRB. I conducted this study only after receiving approval from Walden University's IRB (approval number 1116-20-0727994). The IRB guidelines provide researchers with a roadmap to follow ethical behavior that involves human participants (Nakkash et al., 2017).

Researchers should select participants fairly, ensure the participants' safety, and protect the participants' identity (Yin, 2018). Respect for persons, their privacy, and justice are moral principles that are vital to the foundation of ethical research (Marshall & Roman, 2016). I obtained informed consent forms from the interview participants before conducting research. Researchers use informed consent to provide participants with informed choices such as the focus of the research process, clear information, and education about the rights of participants (Annas, 2017).

I informed each participant about their option to withdraw from the study at any time (see Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I asked each participant to email me their decision to decline or consent regarding their participation in the study. Additionally, I advised each participant to contact me by email or phone if they wanted to withdraw. None of the participants elected to withdraw from the study. Researchers sometime offer incentives to encourage participants (Patton, 2015). I informed the participants, on the consent form, that there were no incentives for participating. Researchers must adhere to ethical standards when conducting interviews (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018).

I will maintain the integrity of the data collected and stored it in a locked safe, for 5 years before disposal. I did not communicate any participant's information, and I ensured the confidentiality of each participant. To protect the participants' identities, I labeled each participant as PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, and PT5. Researchers can erase identifying information that can compromise the confidentiality of participants (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). After 5 years, I will erase and discard all data collected for this study to protect the confidentiality of the five small business hair salon owners who participated in this study.

Data Collection Instruments

In this qualitative research study, I served as the primary data collection instrument (see Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). The data collection for this research comprised three key components, which included the instruments, data collection techniques, and data organization techniques. These components are essential to any research study

because it can reflect how well the researcher collected and organized the data collected. Additionally, to determine if there is a need for future research (Yin, 2018).

Qualitative researchers may use several data collection techniques to conduct reliable and valid research (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I used face-to-face interviews with five small business hair salon owners who have sustained beyond 5 years as the data collection instrument. Other instruments included a notepad and pen and audio recorder. To create reliable and valid research, the researcher may provide knowledge, skills, and sensitivity regarding their research to the participants (Grossoehme, 2014).

Yin (2018) suggested data collection sources can be useful when collecting data such as interviews, documentation, direct observation, observation of the participants, and archival records. I used the data collected to answer the research question. The data collection process consisted of a semistructured interview with open-ended questions (see Appendix B) and a review of the company's marketing plans, and social media sites. Researchers use semistructured interviews to gain better insight and explanation of each participant's views (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

During the data collection process, I began and ended each interview by stating the purpose of my research. Additionally, I reviewed the content and the consent form with each interview participant. I addressed any participant's concerns and assured each participant that they were safe, and the information obtained will be held strictly confidential. I followed the guidelines of the interview protocol (see Appendix A). I asked probing and followed up questions during the semistructured interviews to obtain

relevant information about the effective marketing strategies that small business salon hair owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

A valid research study relies on the researcher's ability to collect data related to their study (Hurst et al., 2015; Yin, 2018). After the interview process, I transcribed the recorded interview data and began the follow-up member checking process. Member checking is vital to the researcher's study (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). Researchers use the member checking process to follow-up and ask probing questions and to enhance the validity and reliability, and trustworthiness of the study (Morse, 2015). To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected, I used member checking by providing participants with a summary of the analysis of their responses to verify that I obtained the intent of the interview responses. All qualified participants approved their responses, and no additional information were provided.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection technique included face-to-face interviews and reviews of company documents. There are two techniques for conducting data collection, in-depth interviews and review of company documents (Percy et al., 2015). After receiving consent from the willing participants, I scheduled a date, time, and location to meet with each participant. I collected the data for this study, with the participant's approval, using audio recordings, notes, and Facetime. Additional data was collected from the company's websites and documents. I requested and was shown internal company documents related to marketing plans and strategies from the hair salon owners; as well as confirmed the number of years each organization existed. By reviewing company documents, I provided

accurate information and triangulated the interview data. The semistructured interview process is designed so that the researcher can ask the participants a list of questions related to the research question (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Chen and Uzelac (2015) posited that researchers use the interview process to ask questions in sequence order.

I adhered to the interview guidelines and conducted a semistructured interview with all five participants (see Appendix A). I contacted each participant before the interview to reintroduce myself and confirm the scheduled appointment. To build a trusting relationship with participants and set them at ease, interviewers should contact the participants personally (Haahr et al., 2014). Each participant was sent a consent form via e-mail to inform them of the research purpose, privacy, and procedures of the study. The interview was performed using Facetime and limited to 60 minutes. An advantage using semistructured interviews are that the researcher obtains real-life experiences (Jamshed, 2014).

There are disadvantages researchers may face when conducting semistructured interviews such as the researcher may lack the required skills to conduct research, the research can become expensive, and the researcher fails to ask questions that are related to the research question (Rowley, 2012; Yin, 2018). Unlike, unstructured interviews, the data collected from semistructured could be unreliable, the research may be invalid, and data saturation unreachable (Rowley, 2012). Additionally, researchers should use caution when conducting semistructured interviews to avoid invasion of privacy of the participants (Myers, 2013). To avoid the disadvantages, all participants were informed before the interview which documents I would request such as social media usage, and

other relevant marketing and business materials.

Member checking is vital to the study finding's reliability and validity (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Kornbluh, 2015). Researchers use member checking to confirm the actual meaning of the participant's responses (Morse, 2015; Yin, 2018). Member checking can enhance the credibility of the data collected. I used member checking by providing each participant with a summary of their responses for them to review for accuracy. All participants approved their summary responses.

Data Organization Technique

Yin (2018) provided two purposeful meanings why researchers should organize data efficiently, ease of access and timesaving. I organized all the collected data by creating an electronic folder for each participant appropriately named on my laptop computer. The electronic file included the interview transcripts, date of interview, and the participant's false identity. Additionally, the researcher maintains the trust of the participants by properly storing confidential information (Mohamadzadeh et al., 2015; Morse, 2015). I documented the interviews transcriptions using Microsoft Word. Each participant's interview transcript is separately stored, under their label designation folder.

Reflective journals are useful to document the emerging themes. Morse (2015) and Gabriel (2015) noted that researchers use reflective journals to code and collect data into emerging themes. I followed the protocol standards of Walden University IRB requirements by protecting human rights and ensuring the privacy of the participants. All participants are referred to by their pseudonyms in data storage. All electronic data,

audio, and transcriptions are stored on a thumb drive that is safely secured in a safe for 5 years after which time it will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

Methodological triangulation is a qualitative data analysis process. Researchers use methodological triangulation to compare collected data interviews with additional data sources to enhance the reliability of the results (Hadi & José Closs, 2016; Yin, 2018). Researchers collect data to gather the information, find meaningful themes, and provide better insights into the research question (Guo & Guo, 2016). Patton (2015) posited that methodological triangulation includes cross-checking information from several sources with the intent to ensure a better understanding of the collected data and a reliable response.

Yin (2018) stated that data is collected, by the researcher, from various sources, archives, and private and public websites. I collected data from five small business hair salon owners using the defined interview protocol (see Appendix A). Upon completion of the interviews, I transcribed the interview participant's responses to Microsoft Word. I used the member checking process to ensure that the interpretation of participant's responses were accurate. Yin (2018) suggested that researchers use the participants' review and member checking of the interpretation of the data to enhance the accuracy of the data collected during the interview.

I used the five-stage data analysis outlined by Yin (2018) (a) gathered data, (b) organized data, (c) coded data, (d) created themes to draw inferences, and (e) concluded the findings. Data are gathered through semistructured interviews and questionnaires

(Yin, 2018). Semistructured interviews were used as a method to collect the data. The collected data was entered in Microsoft Word. NVivo 11 is used by researchers to code and organize unstructured data and develop themes from interview transcripts and pertinent company information (Lenses et al., 2016). I coded the data and used Vvivo 11 to analyze the data for recurring themes. The themes were related to Porter's five forces framework and the existing literature to better understand effective marketing strategies small business hair salon owners use to sustain beyond 5 years.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are concepts researchers use to evaluate the quality of a qualitative research study (Yin, 2018). The elements required to confirm the reliability and validity of a qualitative study include: (a) dependability, (b) credibility, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability (Elo et al., 2014). Reliability ensures the consistency of a measure and validity ensures the accuracy of the data (Yin, 2018). Reliability and validity are criteria used to determine if the data is accurate and the trustworthiness of the study.

Reliability

Dependability refers to the reliability and validity of the study (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Researchers often implement research designs and data collection to provide support to a study (Connelly, 2016). I enhanced the dependability of this study using member checking. Researchers use member checking to help increase the reliability and validity of the study (Yin, 2018). To ensure the reliability of the data I member checked the participant's responses. Each participant was asked to review a one to two-

page summary of their interview to ensure that the data reflected their intent.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research refers to the credibility of the data collected, and that the data represents the phenomenon the researcher is claiming to measure (Dean, 2014). Validity occurs when the findings of the research study are confirmable, credible, and transferable (Yin, 2018). Assarroudi et al. (2018) suggested valid research findings are well founded data that correspond to real life experiences. Varpio et al. (2017) noted that researchers can increase validity in qualitative research by providing rich and detailed themes.

Credibility

Credibility is a key element of a sound qualitative research study. Research findings are credible when researchers accurately represent data and interpret participants responses (Morse, 2015; Yin, 2018). Fusch and Ness (2015) posited that to ensure that the research is credible, researchers should use member checking, triangulation, and data saturation techniques. Qualitative researchers who use credibility confirm that they are addressing the findings from the view of the participants. To ensure credibility, I used methodological triangulation and member checking. Yin (2018) interpreted methodological triangulation as the process of comparing data from multiple sources to ensure credibility. Additionally, Patton (2015) postulated the application of methodological triangulation supports the credibility of the study by fusing and comparing multiple sources to determine emerging themes. Therefore, I used member checking to ensure the data collected reflected the participants meaning and triangulated

the interview data with data collected from the company websites and documents.

Transferability

Transferability is established by providing reviewers with proof that research findings can be applied or transferred to other contexts or situations (Piskur et al., 2017; Pozzebon et al., 2014). To determine transferability and enable other researchers, the researcher should provide a thick description of the findings (Houghton et al., 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To facilitate transferability, I provided readers with a thick, rich, and detailed presentation of the research processes and findings, to enable researchers to assess the study's similarities to other settings. Researchers should describe the study's context rigorously to enable readers to assess its similarities to other settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Therefore, documenting a thick description of the steps involved in this study, future researchers who participate in a similar study could make objective determinations of this study's transferability.

Conformability

Confirmability in qualitative research indicates the findings can be confirmed or supported by others (Abdalla et al., 2018). Researchers can ensure conformability by using interviews, member checking, triangulating, and incorporating questions from different perspectives to avoid biases (Cope, 2014). Researchers rely on the participants' words and narratives to enhance conformability. I incorporated the company's archives, interview notes, and followed the data collection guidelines to ensure the accuracy of data and confirm the findings from the interviews. Pozzebon et al. (2014) suggested that having a reflective diary of the interview participant's experiences and challenges may

help support the study findings. I used a reflective diary to ensure the accuracy of data collected from the interview.

Data Saturation

Data saturation occurs when sampling additional data will not lead to new information (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Morse (2015) stated that the process of data saturation can be challenging. Yin (2018) suggested that a researcher should reach data saturation in their study to ensure the information provided is reliable and valid. I interviewed five participants until the responses were reoccurring and no new themes emerged. I achieved data saturation after the fifth interview.

Transition and Summary

In Section 1, I provided support about the importance of studying what effective marketing strategies some small business hair salon owners use to sustain beyond 5 years. I explained the problem, purpose of the study, nature of the study, conceptual framework, and potential significance of the study. I provided the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, used in the study and included a review of the literature.

In Section 2, I elaborated on the purpose of this study, identified my role as the researcher, described the participants, and discussed the research methodology and design. Additionally, I detailed the population and sampling method, ethical assurances, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization, data analysis, and means for assuring the reliability and validity of my data.

In Section 3, I begin by restating the purpose statement and the research question. I then present the interpretations of the data, elaborate on the results' potential for

application to professional practice, and discuss how the findings apply to small business sustainability. I have highlighted the implications for social change and describe recommendations for action and further research. I end Section 3, with an account of my reflections on the DBA research process and a statement of key conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to identify and explore effective marketing strategies that some small business hair salon owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The study's participants consisted of five small business owners of separate hair salons in Florida. The business owners had comparable and varied responses when asked about the effective marketing strategies they employed to sustain and improve the performance of their businesses. The diverse nature of each business owner's business environment and personal attributes resulted in the heterogeneous responses.

I used the NVivo 11 analysis software to code and organize the interview transcripts, company documents, and all unstructured data and to classify all relevant data into topical themes. The resulting themes were (a) customer loyalty, (b) word of mouth, and (c) social media. The proceeding paragraphs constitute information pertaining to the study's findings and identified themes, application to professional practice, social change implications, recommendations for action and further research, and my reflections and conclusion.

Presentation of Findings

The overarching research question for this study was "What effective marketing strategies do small business hair salon owners use to sustain beyond 5 years?" Each of the participants had over 5 years of experience as a small business hair salon owner in Jacksonville, Florida. All owners in the study have extensive experienced in operating a

small hair salon in Florida and their businesses have sustained for 6 years or more. To maintain confidentiality and privacy, I utilized codes PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, and PT5 instead of using the participant's names in the study.

In addition to interviewing the participants, I reviewed relevant company documents from the participants' social media sites and company websites for conducting methodological triangulation. Employing member checking assured the reliability and validity of the interview data. Using the thematic analysis and the NVivo 11 software comprised my analysis of the interview data for identifying and exploring themes.

The three dominant themes that emerged were (a) brand loyalty, (b) word of mouth, and (c) social media. The participants' responses to the interview questions were consistent with the literature review findings and the conceptual framework, Porter's five forces. In the proceeding paragraphs, I discuss each of the emergent themes and explore the themes' alignment with Porter's five forces and literature and the extent to which the findings disconfirm, confirm, or extend knowledge.

Emergent Theme 1: Customer Loyalty

All five small hair salon business owners agreed on the importance of customer loyalty as a successful marketing strategy. As the participants explained, customer loyalty is vital as a marketing strategy as a means of generating and sustaining profits. If the customers are satisfied with the services, they not only return to the business but will recommend the business to others (Nguyen et al., 2020). The five participants confirmed that their sustainment of profits contributed to a marketing strategy that relied on customer loyalty.

Findings

Providing excellent customer service increases brand loyalty and profits (Abdullaeva, 2020). Customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty, which has an impact on the profits and the success of the business (Abdullaeva, 2020; Rashid et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2020). PT1 explained, “Well, I have loyal customers and they make referrals. Additionally, I have gained loyal customers because of social media.” PT2 stated, “Moments of truth, always refer to clients’ needs and customer satisfaction which generally promotes customer loyalty.” PT3 said, “I give customers the best service by providing high-quality products and beautiful hairstyles.” PT4 agreed “if you treat the customers right, they are likely to remain loyal.”

Further, business owners who achieve a competitive advantage use quality services and products to attract and maintain customers (Gogoi & Jyoti, 2020). Providing meaningful products and services brings less competition because these meaningful products and services motivate customers to remain loyal (Xiao et al., 2020). PT4 stated, “I aim to please my customers by providing products and services based on their needs.” PT5 added, “My customers are provided with customized services based on their desires.” Customer loyalty depends on the exceptional quality of service because providing exceptional quality service is significant for obtaining customer loyalty (Abdullaeva, 2020).

The theme of customer loyalty relates to the conceptual framework of Porter’s five forces model, particularly to competitive rivalry and threat of substitutes. As indicated in the study, the threat of substitutes is high in the hair industry and could

reduce profits. Clients frequently switch from one hair salon to another due to (a) an overbooked stylist, (b) a salon no longer in business, (c) an increase in service price, or (d) dissatisfaction with services provided (Jang & Park, 2020). By providing clients with an excellent service, hair salon owners may obtain a greater chance of retaining more clients and avoid the threat from substitutes. Satisfied customers provide longevity to products and services (Abdullaeva, 2020).

Competitive rivalry occurs when businesses, including small hair salon business owners, compete with other firms in the industry and to the extent they exert pressure on each other (Porter, 1980; 2008). The pressure from businesses within the same industry can have an influence on potential profits sustainability (Porter, 1980). To maintain a competitive edge, small business owners, including small hair salon owners, must develop a sense of awareness and remain focused on signals from their clients (Weinstein & Johnson, 2020). Additionally, customer relationships are a source to maintain a competitive edge and a firm's competitive performance because of the level of confidence and trust the owner builds with the client (Gogoi & Jyoti, 2020).

Emergent Theme 2: Word of Mouth

All five participants agreed that using word of mouth is one of the effective strategic marketing tools to sustain profits and sustainability of the business, which serves as a catalyst to attracting new clients. The participants posited that they use several forms of word-of-mouth marketing to acquire new clients to maintain profits. Sugama & Sukaatmadja (2020) stated that whenever hair salon owners target customer preferences and offer promotions that the customer finds satisfying, word of mouth increases.

Findings

All the participants agreed that word of mouth is an effective marketing strategy for sustaining business. Using word of mouth is more effective because consumers trust their friends and family (Vasan, 2020). A recent study showed that 92% of consumers trusted family and friends more than advertising (Bianchi, 2020). Thus, small business owners rely on customers to share their experiences about the company and products because customers are the ultimate reliable source (Vesci et al., 2020). PT3 said that “Word of mouth is more productive than social media. When clients are referred it generates more clients and customer loyalty.” PT5 stated,

I find it very helpful to use current clients to promote my business with the use of an incentive program. For every new customer that patronizes my salon and whom they refer, that current customer will receive a discount on their next service.

PT1 stated, “My existing customers provide comments on my social media platforms and prospects respond heavily to these reviews.” PT2 declared, “Social media and word of mouth is the way to go.” PT4 stated, “I am pretty ole school and do not use social media; however, word of mouth has been useful to my business growth.” These findings are compatible with those of previous research that word of mouth is a potent marketing strategy tool (Bianchi, 2020). Small business hair salon owners may have a competitive edge attracting new clients and increasing profits because of customer loyalty and awareness (Slack & Singh, 2020). However, lack of word-of-mouth marketing may pose a threat to the success of small businesses growth, profits, and customer recruitment and

loyalty (Slack & Singh, 2020). In addition, a critical element to small business sustainability includes good interaction between owners and existing clients (Bianchi, 2020).

The word-of-mouth theme aligned directly to the conceptual framework of the study, Porter's five forces, particularly concerning the threat of substitutes, supplier power, and buyer power. As addressed, high demand exists for suppliers and clients in the hair industry. Small business owners, including small business hair salon owners, who have a quality relationship with several suppliers and customers are likely to have a greater competitive edge and may be able to sustain the business for a long time (Slack & Singh, 2020). Word of mouth with existing clients helps the business owner gain profits and remain in business for a prolonged period (Bianchi, 2020). Additionally, when small business hair salon owners develop a good relationship with existing clients and encourage them to recruit new prospects, owners may increase their chance to sustain profits and remain in business.

Emerging Theme 3: Social Media

All five small hair salon business owners agreed on the importance of social media as an effective marketing strategy. All participants indicated that social media marketing strategy serves as a means of generating and sustaining profits. Their sustainability of profits and competitive advantage was due to a marketing strategy that relied on social media.

Findings

Social media as a marketing tool can grow business, enhance organizational performance, and profits (Arora et al., 2020; Fagan, 2020). For instance, photos and videos can help boost the firm's profit (Ali et al., 2020). PT1 stated,

I created a business page; I took pictures of my work and posted them to my website and conveyed with family and friends. One thing to add, I contacted a local artist who creates posters and cards to create an attractive website.

Additionally, PT1 said, "social media and word of mouth have positively impacted my business." PT2 agreed that "the use of social media has not only attracted one population such as high schoolers or younger people but has attracted the whole family." PT3 added, "social media has great benefits for advertising businesses; however, I work with existing clients, and my new clients are basically from referrals." PT4 stated, "I love social media because I can reach my targeted population, younger people, and generate potential clients. They can leave comments, ask questions, and schedule appointments.

Additionally, view prices regarding products and services that are offered." PT5 emphasized that "social media is the way to go!" and stated, "in the past, I solely relied on word of mouth to promote my business." All five participants agreed that a social media marketing strategy allows the business owners to engage with existing clientele and potential for new clientele with small expenditures, which positively impacts profits.

Further, business owners can use social media marketing strategies to reduce costs and maintain a competitive advantage (Arora et al., 2020). PT3 added, "I rely on social media because it is free and allows me to reinvest in my business." PT2 noted that "social

media such as Facebook and Instagram encourage people to care for themselves frequently and gain a desire to change their physical appearance. Additionally, I am able to attract potential customers.”

The findings that small business hair salon owners’ usage of social media as a marketing tool to sustain profits confirms other peer-reviewed studies from the literature review (Kaur & Kumar, 2020). The finding affirms social media is an effective marketing strategy for sustainability and to maintain profits (Kaur & Kumar, 2020). Social media has an impact on consumer purchasing decisions, a positive linear relationship is created, and the sustainment of profits with the use of social media (Fagan, 2020). The theme aligns with the findings that companies who incorporate e-marketing (social media, emails, and websites) were able to reach consumers quickly (Fagan, 2020).

The social media theme aligned directly to the conceptual framework of the study, Porter’s five forces, particularly concerning supplier power. The supplier power allows the business supplier the ability to increase prices which might lower profitability (Porter, 1980). In addition, when the business suppliers are low, the ability to raise prices is easily achieved. Additionally, when there is a larger number of business suppliers, the business, including small business hair salon owners, have the power to resist price hikes (Porter, 1980; 2008). Additionally, there is a single pool of suppliers for social media (Garg et al., 2020).

Application to Business Practice

The results of this study provided effective marketing strategies that small business hair salon owners could use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Small

businesses, including small business hair salons, contribute to the economic growth and development of local economies to sustain profits beyond 5 years. The strategies presented in this study may be utilized by small business hair salon owners to sustain profits. The findings of this study include (a) customer loyalty, (b) word of mouth, and (c) social media. The findings of this study could provide marketing strategies to help small business owners create or develop effective marketing plans that help them sustain their business. Marketing can be a determining factor in a business's failure or success (Gyimah et al., 2019). Therefore, small business hair salon owners who lack effective marketing strategies are at a greater risk of failure (Kunle Ade et al., 2017).

Small business hair salon owners can be successful in sustaining their business beyond 5 years with the implementation of effective marketing strategies. Implementing effective marketing strategies such as (a) mobile ads, (b) referral discounts, (c) loyalty program punch cards, (d) coupons, and (e) social media (Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) can create channels for businesses, including small business hair salon owners, to sustain profits and maintain a competitive advantage against their rivals (Jiang et al., 2020). Additionally, business profits can become more sustainable with successful marketing strategies anchored in customer loyalty, word of mouth, and social media presence (Bundy, 2017). Small business owners should invest in effective marketing strategies which include customer loyalty, word of mouth, and social media to sustain profits (El Haddad, 2015).

First, the participants' responses specify that consumers often patronize the services of small business hair salon owners whom they trust with their hair. Small

businesses, including small hair salon owners, should implement the use of various social media platforms such as Facebook, blogs, Instagram, and YouTube to help sustain profits. Social media marketing can help business owners attract new customers, which may lead to word of mouth and referrals (Fagan, 2020). Therefore, small business hair salon owners should ensure they have an effective social media presence. The use of social media as a marketing tool for small businesses, including small business hair salons, can allow them to maintain a competitive advantage.

Second, the participants responses indicate that developing a good relationship with clients translates into customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction promotes loyal clients to the small business hair salon when the hair salon owners (a) provide the essential products and services, (b) address the needs and concerns efficiently, and (c) deliver service that aligns with the client's expectations. Providing excellent customer service small business owners, including small business hair salon owners, could gain new clients and sustain existing clientele relationships (Bianchi, 2020). To achieve long-term business sustainability, small business hair salon owners, and the upcoming entrepreneurial venture should gain trustful relationships with consumers by providing (a) effective marketing and communication strategies, (b) exceptional products and services, and (c) the highest level of customer satisfaction.

Third, I recommend that small business hair salon owners implement word of mouth as a marketing strategy to sustain profits and maintain a competitive edge against their rivals. Word of mouth is one of the most important marketing strategies to sustain profits (Slack & Singh, 2020). Potential customers rely on reviews from previous

customers. The word-of-mouth marketing strategy is a good way of encouraging existing loyal customers to promote the small businesses. Additionally, for word-of-mouth marketing strategy to be successful and positively impact profits sustainability, small business, including small business hair salon owners should develop a good interaction between client and owner. Lastly, when small business hair salon owners create a positive relationship with their clients and encourage them to recruit new clients, owners can maintain a competitive edge and sustain profits.

Implications for Social Change

The potential social impact of this study is that the findings can lead to positive social change by increasing the sustainability of small businesses. Increased sustainability could lead to more jobs and higher revenue, which could promote operational efficiency and contribution benefiting both state and local economies. Increased employment opportunities could benefit society with more small businesses being created and influence a stronger economy in general (Dimitrieska, 2016). Furthermore, the taxes paid by the small businesses, including small business hair salon owners, can be used by community officials to help build infrastructures such as roads, libraries, housing, schools, and health centers (Dimitrieska, 2016).

Recommendation for Action

The purpose of this multiple case qualitative case study was to explore the effective marketing strategies small business owners use to sustain beyond five years. Based on the research findings, I provide some recommend that current and future small business owners, including small business hair salon owners, can use to achieve long-

term sustainability. These recommendations for small business hair salon owners are the result of three emergent themes identified from semistructured interviews, triangulation of the data, and the analyzed participant's responses. To ensure business sustainability, small business hair salon owners should develop customer loyalty and promote the business through social media and word of mouth marketing strategies to maintain a competitive advantage and sustain profits. Small business hair salon owners who invest in social media to increase and sustain profits should ensure marketing strategies align with business goals and profit plans.

I will disseminate the results of this study to the qualified participants. Additionally, I will share the results of this study through the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database, business newsroom and business forums, Small Business Association, and at business networking events.

Recommendation for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective marketing strategies small business hair salon owners used to sustain beyond 5 years. A primary limitation of the study included a multiple case study of five hair salons, a sample size of five participants, and a target group of owners. Some of the qualified participant's ability to interpret the questions and communicate their answers may pose a limitation. However, the use of member checking provided channels for the participants to expound and follow up on their answers. I recommend using a larger sample size of participants to determine if the data collected might produce different results. Conducting qualitative research using a larger sample size might make it easier to obtain more

valuable information that can be useful in understanding effective marketing strategies small business owners use to sustain beyond 5 years.

I recommend future studies be conducted to test a different research question such as What effective marketing strategies small business hair salon owners use to sustain beyond 15 years or more? Further research can explore marketing strategies of large hair salons which may result in various marketing strategies used to sustain their business and profits. The study was a qualitative multiple case study, future researcher could use a mixed-method or quantitative study which could enhance the results of the findings.

Reflections

In this research study, I explored the effective marketing strategies small business owners used to sustain beyond 5 years. I enjoyed interviewing five small business hair salon owners in Florida who implemented effective marketing strategies. I was able to gain significant insight that supported my knowledge of why some small businesses' hair salons are successful.

As I reflect, on this research process, finding qualified participants was a challenge due to the holiday season. Small business salon owners are often busier during the holiday season because people are more concerned about their appearance due to family gatherings and seasonal events. Additionally, getting the qualified participants to pencil me in their schedule was difficult. Nevertheless, I managed to gain the attention of the qualified participants, the participants were pleasant, willing to engage, and provided pertinent information pertaining to their best practices. Developing a good relationship with the participants was vital to my study which allowed the interview process to

progress smoothly. All the participants expressed their support of the study and interest in the results.

I was amazed to discover that the older small business hair salon owners incorporated modern technology such as websites, Instagram, and Facebook, into their marketing tools. The qualified participants expressed the importance of creating and developing operational and promotional strategies to sustain their firm. Lastly, I was surprised at how quickly I was able to obtain data saturation

The doctoral process appeared as a mountain that I would never be able to scale. However, as I began to understand the elements required to present a valid research study and the methodology, I became committed and focused with the utmost diligence. The road has not been easy, but I have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge needed to conduct a qualitative study. Additionally, my knowledge has increased regarding effective marketing strategies for small business owners, including small business hair salon owners should implement to aid business performance and attain long term business sustainability.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective marketing strategies small business hair salon owners used to sustain beyond 5 years. Small business owners, including small hair salon business owners, are one of the main contributors to economic growth in the U.S. However, 50% of small businesses fail, including small hair salon owners, within the first 5 years of operations (SBA, 2018). I selected Porter's five forces model as the conceptual framework for the study. Porter's

five forces model can be useful to business owners, including small business hair salon owners, to help understand the factors affecting profitability, whether to enter new markets, and develop new competitive strategies (Porter, 2008). I interviewed five small salon owners about the specific marketing strategies they used to remain sustainable. To ensure the validity and reliability of the responses I used member checking, triangulation of the data, and data saturation. Following data analysis, these themes emerged: (a) customer loyalty, (b) word of mouth, and (c) social media. Small business owners who are successful will continue to create and develop effective marketing tools to sustain their business. Small business owners, including small business hair salon owners, who implement Porter's five forces competitive edge model could benefit by (a) attracting new customers and retaining existing clients, (b) sustaining profits, (c) promoting customer satisfaction, and (d) attaining long term business sustainability.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Pre-Interview

- A- Make contact with the participant and introduction myself to the participant.
- B- Explain the consent form; address all participant questions and concerns.
- C- Obtain informed consent from participant, through e-mail and prior to the interview.

Interview

- D- Inform participant(s) and turn on audio-recording device.
- E- Follow procedure and introduce participant with coded identification.
- F- Begin interview by asking questions, in order from the first to the final one.
- G- Follow up with additional questions if necessary.
- H- End interview session and discuss member checking with participant.
- I- Thank the participant for their input in the study. Repeat contact numbers for further questions and concerns from participants.

Post-Interview

- J- Provide participant with a 1-2-page summary of the transcribed interview to ensure I accurately interpreted their responses, within 7 days of the interview.
- K- End of the protocol.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What effective marketing strategies have you used to sustain your business for more than 5 years?
2. How did you implement the marketing strategies?
3. What were the key barriers you encountered while implementing strategies to sustain your business?
4. How did you address the key barriers encountered when implementing strategies to sustain your business operations?
5. How did you measure the effectiveness of these strategies?
6. What, if any, additional measures did you take to ensure that the marketing strategies met their specific target audience?
7. What information can you share that was not already covered about strategies you used to sustain your business for more than 5 years?