2015

Small Seasonal Business Strategies To Increase Profits Through Community Collaboration

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

Small Seasonal Business Strategies to Improve Profits Through Community

Collaboration

by

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MSA, Central Michigan University, 1993

BBA, Eastern Michigan University, 1980

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

January 2015

Abstract

Seasonal small business owners (e.g., boating and golf industries), primarily within the

upper and Midwestern United States, face challenges for profit and growth because of a

brief business potential year and limited time to establish a reliable and committed

customer base. The purpose of this case study was to explore strategies that seasonal

small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local

associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. Stakeholder theory served

as the conceptual framework for this study. A purposive sample of 4 successful small

seasonal business owners in Oakland County, Michigan participated in face-to-face

interviews describing their perspectives. The central research question was aimed to

identify strategies successful small seasonal businesses owners apply to improve profits.

Data analysis included coding keywords, sentences, and ideas into categories. The

following themes emerged: (a) brand awareness, (b) community involvement, (c)

customer loyalty, (d) seizing operational opportunities, and (e) recapturing lost revenue.

Based on the business owners' narratives, brand awareness and community involvement

were the most important strategies to increase profits. The implications for social change

includes the potential to provide new strategies to support seasonal small business toward

sustainability, charity awareness, stronger relationships between small business and

communities, and economic prosperity.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful wife and two daughters.

They have been through it all with me. I am forever grateful to their support and

patience. Thank you. This dissertation is proof that any individual can grow mentally

and physically by stretching your resources to improve your life and the life around you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses operations, fundamental to the American economy, face challenges related to profit and growth (Besser, 2012). Ismail, Poolton, and Sharifi (2011) argued that some small seasonal businesses struggle with market uncertainty and instability and lack strategies to improve organizational growth as a means of surviving market changes. Small, seasonal businesses face further challenges in capturing customer loyalty over a briefer period and, year after year, must generate enough profits to sustain the company (Corluka, Radic, & Matosevic, 2013).

Research related to the effects of small seasonal business partnerships with local companies is sparse. Papasolomou and Kitchen (2011) suggested that small seasonal business owners who collaborate with local community initiatives and charities, may experience a richer sense of purpose to the community, fuel customer loyalty, and improve profits (Corluka et al., 2013; Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011). One strategy for improving community relations is cause-related marketing, which involves sponsoring businesses to donate to a chosen charity or cause with consumer purchases (Vanhamme, Lindgreen, Reast, & van Popering, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits.

Background of the Problem

The United States Small Business Administration (SBA) defined small businesses (SBs) as businesses with less than 500 employees (SBA, 2011). Small businesses with

no employees are self-employed businesses, meaning the owner is the sole proprietor (SBA, 2011). The estimated number of SBs in the United States is 23 million, 851,112 of which are in Michigan (SBA, 2011). Small seasonal businesses represent a smaller sector of small businesses including recreational theme parks, golf courses, and summer resorts, or winter businesses, with an even shorter season, including ski resorts (Corluka et al., 2013).

Owners of SBs provide two out of every three new jobs in the country, and in Michigan represent 98.3% of employers (SBA, 2013). Owners of SBs receive pressure from internal and external stakeholders regarding appropriate use of business resources (Neubaum, Dibrell, & Craig, 2012). Ignoring the needs of internal and external stakeholders can prove fatal for the success of an SB owner (Blower & Mahajan, 2013). Neubaum et al. (2012) noted attention to internal stakeholders is to meet the needs of external stakeholders. Neubaum et al. noted that from the inception of the business, leaders experience operational and financial pressures and must continue to strategize ways of building customer loyalty by gaining a strengthened presence in the community and competitive marketplace. Small seasonal business (SSB) owners need to rethink business strategies to incorporate new principles and ideas to adapt to societal and stakeholder expectations (Stellwagen, 2012; Steyn & Niemann, 2013). Lin, Baruch, and Shih (2012), stated no singular approach to strengthening the relationship with the community; conversely, a wide range of approaches may assist small seasonal businesses to gain the attention of local institutions and consumers.

Problem Statement

Small to medium-size enterprises are vulnerable to market changes and struggle with planning growth (Ismail et al., 2011). In the United States, the National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) reported that in 2013, 29% of small businesses borrowed money to prevent bankruptcy at least once per quarter, missing potential opportunities to foster organizational growth and stability ("National Federation of Independent Businesses Report," 2013). The general business problem is that approximately half of small business start-ups in the United States close within the first 5 years of operation (SBA, 2013). The specific business problem is that some seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan do not have strategies for collaborating with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. The targeted population was comprised of small seasonal business owners in Oakland County, Michigan. Knowledge gained from the study may help other small seasonal business owners learn community-building strategies SSB owners can use effectively in their own businesses (Kechiche & Soparnot, 2012). Developing community relationships generates social capital with stakeholders, enhances the social fabric by uniting common philosophies between society and business toward a common goal, builds competitive advantage, and fortifies employee job satisfaction (Lui, Eng, & Ko, 2013).

Nature of the Study

The three methods of research that I considered for this study were qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The best choice for this research study was a qualitative method, which applies subjectivity to understand phenomena (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Researchers use qualitative methods for exploration if no predetermined answer exists (Yin, 2014).

The quantitative method was philosophically different from qualitative method, leading to different research approaches (Abrams, 2011). Quantitative inquiry yields statistical, objective information supporting the presence or absence of a phenomenon (Weiner, Amick, Lund, Lee, & Hoff, 2012). Weiner et al. (2012) suggested quantitative research (a) examines relationships among variables, (b) uses closed-ended questions, and (c) tests hypotheses. The quantitative method compares states of being or action to each other using numbers, measurements, and hypothesis testing (Maxwell, 2010). The quantitative method was not suitable for this study because my intent was to gain a deeper understanding using semistructured, open-ended questions to explore how small seasonal businesses in Michigan collaborate with local association and charitable organizations to increase profits.

Mixed methods researchers focus on exploring issues related to organizational problem solving, blending qualitative and quantitative elements (Feilzer, 2010). A mixed method researcher applies both quantitative and qualitative methods in research (Mertens, 2011). Mixed methods approach was unsuitable for the proposed study because the inclusion of quantitative inquiry to study objective information supporting the presence

or absence of a phenomenon was not suitable for the proposed study.

Yin (2014) noted researchers use the qualitative method for exploring phenomena in which no predetermined answer exists. Qualitative research requires rigorous data collection, analysis, and interpretation by observing a phenomenon in a natural setting (Hanson et al., 2011). Observing the phenomena in a natural setting provides data in the form of words, images, and observation (Hansen et al., 2011) to develop richly detailed information generating a better understanding of the issues (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Weiner et al., 2012; Yin, 2014). I used a qualitative method to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan might use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits.

Research designs available for the qualitative method included grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenological, narrative, and case study (Rowley, 2012). Grounded theory would not produce the same in-depth understanding from the data case study research provides (Frank & Polkinghorne, 2010). Researchers use grounded theory design to develop a theory from the data collected. Grounded theory as a design for the proposed study was not suitable for this proposed qualitative case study because data analyzed are not intended to drive a new theory (Frank & Polkinghorne, 2010; Hays & Wood, 2011). Instead, the purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding how an organization benefits from established community relations.

A researcher using the ethnography design seeks shared patterns of group culture (Shover, 2012). Ethnography would not provide the same understanding as case study design because the population explored does not necessarily subscribe to a collective

belief or established cultural tradition (Moustakas, 1994). An ethnographic design for the proposed study was not suitable.

Researchers use a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of individuals to understand the problem (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological researcher applies the perspectives of multiple individuals with similar experiences to gain a broader scope on a phenomenon. A phenomenological investigator requires at least 20 participants, consuming too much time for the intended study. Based on the criteria for a phenomenological study, I did not choose phenomenological approach.

Narrative researchers explore small samples as in a case study, but explore life-long stories to capture the essence of the phenomenon. The life-long histories of storeowners add no value to an understanding of collaborating with, community associations to build profits. A narrative design was unsuitable for the proposed study (Kar & Samantarai, 2011).

Case study design is an in-depth study of a singular or multiple case, to gain the perspective of individuals (Rowley, 2012). Case study design was the most appropriate design using semistructured, open-ended questions drawing upon participants' views and researcher observation to provide meaning through patterns and themes of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2014). The case study researcher uses secondary data including documentation, records, advertisements, and in-store notices to triangulate data (Kar & Samantarai, 2011). The suitable research approach was a qualitative method using a multiple case study design. Case study design was the most appropriate research to explore and observe SSB participants to understand the phenomena and link similar

meaning, patterns, and behavior (Proietti, 2012; Yin, 2014). I used a qualitative method and case study design to conduct the proposed study.

Research Question

One central question with several semistructured, open-ended, nondirectional interview questions guided this research (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2012). The central research question was: What strategies do successful small seasonal businesses owners apply to improve profits?

Interview Questions

The following interview questions supported the central research question:

1. What is the timeline of your annual operating calendar?

2. How would you describe your professional relationship with local associations and charitable organizations within your area?

3. What have your experiences been regarding supporting local community events, or collaborating with, local associations or charities to fundraise?

4. What is your perspective about local associations and charities to provide space for them to advertise in your business?

5a. What, if any, benefits from your business establishing or fostering any relationship with local associations or charities?

5b. What, if any, drawbacks have you experienced from establishing or fostering any relationships with local associations and charities?

6. What would you consider as challenges for fostering relationships with local associations and charities to support local events or fundraising activities?

7. How would you describe the costs or investments of fostering these successful relationships?

8. What are your most successful relationships you have established in the community regarding building customer loyalty?

9a. What efforts if any have you made to build customer loyalty by collaborating with a charity or local associations?

9b. If so, how would you describe the success of this approach?

9c. How do you classify such a relationship as successful?

9d. What is the likelihood you would use this strategy again?

10. What business activities demonstrate your support of local associations and charities (for instance brochures, advertisements, products)?

11. How do these activities influence business sustainability?

12a. What other strategies, if any, have you considered for strengthening your presence in the community?

12b. If any, how successful have the strategies been?

13. How have these established relationships assisted you in forecast the next season profitability?

14. What additional information can you provide to help this investigation of successful small seasonal business relationships with local associations and charities?

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I used stakeholder theory as the foundation for my research.

Stakeholder theory focuses on the purpose of the firm and responsibility management has to stakeholders (Ehrgott, Reimann, Kaufman, & Carter, 2011; Freeman, 1984). Organizations, large and small, include internal and external stakeholders influencing organizational decisions. Internal stakeholders include employees and management. External stakeholders include suppliers, shareholders, communities, and customers (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011; Tang & Tang, 2012).

Internal and external stakeholders influence business-owner decisions. An intricate decision-making process of management is strategizing relationships with stakeholders, understanding the value stakeholders contribute to business decisions (Du et al., 2010; Gupta, 2011; Tang & Tang, 2012). Du et al. reported stakeholder relationships are influential to organization operations and resolving stakeholder conflict is necessary to the growth of organizational culture. Stakeholders create value, imparting social justice, and the ethical responsibility of business in society by influencing business owners to make business decisions aligned with stakeholder theory (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2011; Ehrgott et al., 2011). Business owners judge the value in the form of profits for businesses and social awareness through charitable or voluntary work by employees of organizations to the community. Gupta supported the viewpoint of Pomering and Dolnicar (2009), suggesting consumers are unaware of community-building strategies, and the community-building strategies can have positively or negatively on the company and society.

Freeman (1984), a pioneer of stakeholder theory, posited the worldview of

stakeholder theory suggests individuals can affect organization actions and strategic plans (Girard & Sobczak, 2012). Building upon Freeman's (1984) viewpoint, Tang and Tang (2012), and Girard and Sobczak proposed every organization has internal and external stakeholders; some are not as obvious as others are, but 100% of stakeholders look for benefits from the organization. Freeman (1984) recognized the breadth of stakeholders and management must manage stakeholders to be successful. Stakeholders include leaders, nonleaders, employees, nonemployees, government, nongovernment, profit organizations, nonprofit organizations, suppliers, customers, board members, community partnerships, and citizens, (Freeman, 1984; Tang & Tang, 2012). Stakeholders involved at various levels of the organization may affect decision-making (Ehrgott et al., 2011). Organizational decision makers influence the level of community involvement and the sustainability of the organization (Du et al., 2010). Prado-Lorenzo, Gallego-Alverez, and Gracia-Sanchez (2009) proposed stakeholder power is a function of the resources stakeholders' control, and knowing stakeholder responsibilities are important to the success of an organization. Thus, business owners need to know and understand stakeholders and the role stakeholders play in the organization.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions provide meaning to business terms used in the study.

Business community-involvement (BCI): Business community-involvement is the relationship businesses have with the community, stakeholders, and the social initiatives to support the stakeholders in the community (Liu, Eng, & Ko, 2013).

Business for social responsibility (BSR): Business for social responsibility is

achieving a competitive advantage ethically, and bringing the consumer closer to the company (Tashman & Rivera, 2010).

Cause-related marketing (CRM): Cause-related marketing is a marketing strategy in which organizations donate to a chosen cause with every consumer purchase and purchasers purchase specific products believing the proceeds are supporting a specific cause (Vanhamme & Lindgreen, 2012).

Corporate social opportunities (CSO): Corporate social opportunities are business opportunities through product innovativeness and service, emerging markets, and new business models, advances the environmental, and social sustainability (Jenkins, 2009).

Instrumental cause-related marketing (ICRM): Instrumental cause-related marketing campaigns focus on commercial marketing of a specific product or service (Liu, 2013).

Loss donations: Loss donations are lost purchaser contributions occurring when consumers perceive CRM as a form of charitable giving or a moral act and do not agree to give any additional charitable donations to charity (Krishna, 2011).

Moral emotions: Moral motions, drawn through tapped moral interests and values, used as a marketing approach, link products and services to a moral obligation to purchase (Kim & Johnson, 2013).

Off-season: Off-season is the annual period in which operations stifle normally because of seasonal changes and weather (Corluka et al, 2013).

Peak season: Peak season is annual period in which operations reap the most

profits (Corluka et al., 2013).

Philanthropy: Philanthropy can be simple acts of altruism, putting others before first, and volunteering in community service (Madison, Ward, & Royalty, 2012).

Relational Cause-related marketing (RCRM): Relational cause-related marketing campaigns focus on stakeholder relationship, management strategies measuring social performance while promoting a specific product or service (Liu, 2013).

Social responsibility (SR): Social responsibility is an active and volunteer contribution of business, to economic, social, and environmental, surroundings, of the business, although linking the philanthropy to constructive community involvement (Garay & Font, 2012).

Small business (SB): Small businesses are businesses with 499 employees or fewer (SBA, 2011).

Small seasonal business (SSB): Small seasonal businesses operate only a portion of the annual calendar capitalizing on seasonal characteristics, thus limiting operating months from weather limitations (Gao et al., 2012).

Stakeholders: Stakeholders are internal and external individuals affected by the actions of an organizational manager including (a) customers, (b) citizens, (c) service recipients of charitable agencies, and (d) social groups and associations (Fassin, 2012; Gonzalez-Benito, 2010).

Volunteerism: Volunteerism creates an environment of competitive advantage by aligning two necessary stakeholders, customers and employees (Lii & Lee, 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

In this study, my first assumption was that participants would be eager to answer interview questions honestly and provide detail information of the phenomena without intentionally introducing biased responses. The second assumption was the qualitative method was an appropriate method to explore how successful small seasonal business owners in Oakland County, Michigan collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. The third assumption was case study design was the best design for this study (Kisely & Kendall, 2011).

Limitations

Limitations include potential weaknesses affecting the study outcome (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). The first limitation was that I could misinterpret findings, creating researcher bias (Beukeboom, Finkenauer, & Wigboldus, 2010). The second limitation was that the sample size of at least three SSB owners was not an exhaustive representation of every small seasonal business in the region. The third limitation was that there was a possibility that participants may not cooperate and provide honest, open answers; dishonest answers could negatively affect findings of the study (Bendersky & McGinn, 2010). The interview process may intimidate participants and they may fear that I would fail to keep their responses and names confidential.

The fourth limitation was participant and researcher bias could affect participant perceptions of the interview questions, creating bias in the participant answers based on the tone of voice and my appearance (Bendersky & McGinn, 2010). The fifth limitation

was empirical results of the study cannot be generalized to every SSBs and are intended

to reflect the interests, decisions, and outcomes only of the businesses involved in the

study. The fifth limitation, empirical results of the study cannot be generalized, acted as

an advantage in reducing bias related to projecting any personal perceptions into the

interview process. Yin (2014) noted that case study researchers are subject to bias based

on a researcher possessing past knowledge or experience with the problem.

Researchers must be open to contrary views and findings when exploring case

studies (Yin, 2014). Possessing no previous experience in this business sector

strengthens objectivity in the data collection process. The sixth limitation of the

interview process was participants could not fully recall examples of the phenomena, thus

weakening the study. Data saturation became fundamental to the success of the proposed

study. Saturation, in case studies, was the point at which adding new content adds no

new information, and the interview process ends (Kisely & Kendall, 2011).

Delimitations

Mitchell and Jolley (2010) noted that delimitations are boundaries researchers

impose to narrow the scope of the study. The delimitations of the study included (a)

sample size, (b) geographical location, and (c) business size. These are delimitations as

they serve to explore a small example with perspective on the phenomenon to gain a

deeper understanding through a close, detailed study, rather than attempting to infer

meaning from a broader population or area that may have dissimilar experiences, thus

diluting the value of information gained. A sample size of three successful SSB is

sufficient for understanding how the selected businesses increase profits through

establishing primary community relationships (Yin, 2014). The geographic parameters include only Oakland County, MI, and the target businesses as successful SSB employing 499 employees or less. My intent was not to produce generalizable results; rather, the delimitations support my intent to perform a detailed study of a small sample to understand the decision-making process within three specific businesses within this sector. I asked semistructured interview questions to draw out data related to their perspectives regarding the phenomena.

Participants of the study were owners of an SSB in Oakland County, MI, with no fewer than 3 years in operation. Small seasonal business owners with years of experience may be more likely to have established strong community relationships, whereas a new SSB owner may not have solid relationships with local associations and charitable organizations in the community.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Small businesses employ half the United States workforce, equating 59.9 million people (SBA, 2011). In the state of Michigan, SB is significant to the state economy, as 851,112 SB employers employ workers in Michigan. Small businesses in the state make up 98.3% of state employers (SBA, 2011). Small seasonal businesses may learn about formal strategies to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to improve profits. The study may provide an understanding of enhancing mutually advantageous relationships between SBs and local community associations and charities.

This study will add to the body of knowledge related to the strategies that small

seasonal businesses apply to build community relationships to enhance company presence and profitability. This study addresses gaps in current literature by examining the power of developing local networks through supporting sports associations, charities, or related community initiatives with the intent of building customer loyalty and business sustainability. Most related literature focused on large corporations (Blomback & Wigren, 2009: Fassin et al., 2011; Ma, 2012), disregarding small business, yet as noted earlier, small business represents 98.3% of businesses in Michigan (SBA, 2011).

Small businesses differ from large corporations with their dissimilar capital budgets, human resources, and stakeholders to address when initiating business strategies and making business decisions (Stubblefield, Loucks, Martens, & Cho, 2010). Lee (2009) posited that SBs are flexible and make business decisions based on easy access to organizational leadership. Small seasonal business owners limit organizational bureaucracy based on few employees and SSB employees manage many functions providing a relatively quicker response (Gupta, 2011).

Implications for Social Change

Small businesses face challenges related to profit and growth (Besser, 2012). The results of the study may add to positive social change by providing strategies to help improve business practices and provide leader insight into the importance of reciprocity between SSBs, local community associations, and charitable organizations in business sustainability. The results of this study revealed information supporting the need for the integration of business and community as part of a larger social network.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This review of the literature provides information about existing literature related to small seasonal business strategies, community dynamics, and business partnerships to identify and build on knowledge regarding small seasonal business sustainability, customer loyalty, and profitable growth resulting from collaborating with local associations and charities. Hart (1998) noted a review of the professional and academic literature connects previous research to the current study. Rozas and Klein (2010) noted literature review provides a researcher with an exhaustive search of relevant information on the topic.

The purpose of the literature review was to draw from and build upon a variety of different sources including peer-reviewed journal articles and books. I reviewed more than 60 peer-reviewed journal articles, along with articles written for professional publications, analyses from seminars and conferences, business books of theory and practice, and doctoral dissertations. Several databases for the review, including, but not limited to, ABI/INFORM Global database, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, ProQuest Database, Google Scholar, and Science Direct. My intent was to use Boolean names as keywords identifying topics using the keywords: *small seasonal businesses, local associations, charitable initiatives, social networking, corporate citizenship, small seasonal business sustainability, marketing, social responsibility, community partnerships, customer loyalty, corporate governance,* and *stakeholder theory*. According to Rowley (2012), literature reviews accomplish the 5 outcomes:

1. Support the topic.

2. Identify the literature and contribute to the research study.

3. Build an understanding of the conceptual framework and literature.

4. Establish a bibliography of sources.

5. Analyze results.

In this literature review, I summarized the subject field in support of identifying future research questions (e.g., Rowley, 2012). Rowley noted conceptual frameworks are necessary theoretical tools for developing and supporting the understanding of the research. Stages of the literature review include researching the subject, writing a literature review, and supporting literature with a bibliography. The present literature review includes a review of the literature related to how some SSBs can establish formal strategies to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to improve profits. The review begins with a summary of seasonal businesses, followed by the role of stakeholders, community, and customer loyalty.

Seasonal Businesses

Small seasonal businesses function within a condensed annual calendar stifled, usually, by changes in weather, making continued operation impossible (Stellwagen, 2013). Examples of small seasonal businesses include golf courses, summer resorts, ski resorts, and fishing excursions, among others. Seasonal businesses struggle with year-round sustainability through the off-season (Corluka et al., 2013). Golf courses are particularly vulnerable to changing seasons, geographical weather trends, and unpredictable weather conditions (Corluka et al., 2013). Small seasonal business owners

must understand the unique challenges of off-peak season operations and sales. By tapping into off-peak season consumerism and taking advantage of peak-season opportunities, small seasonal businesses prepare for year-round success (Corluka et al., 2013).

To complicate the situation for seasonal businesses, SSB owners may experience a shorter life cycle caused by consumer trends and interest (Corluka et al., 2013). For instance, golf courses experienced trend peaks in 2001 with over 518 million rounds of golf played in the United States. Since that time, the sport has lost significant popularity, leading golf course owners to strategize new ways to prolong the golf season to generate profits (Licata & Tiger, 2010). For example, the city of St. Francisville, LA, experienced a significant drop in tourism from approximately 23,000 tourists in 2008 to 8,000 tourist visits in 2012; as a result, the local golf course had to become solely dependent on the local economy to support the longevity of the golf course (Bock & Larson, 2013).

Valuable measures are available for business operators seeking to understand seasonal fluctuations in consumer behavior, local and global economic conditions, and employment needs (Proietti, 2012). Small seasonal business owners use forecasting techniques to prepare for off-peak season challenges by generating enough business in peak season, or by stretching off-season options for consumers to remain committed to products and services (Stellwagen, 2012). Zhang, Prajapati, and Peden (2011) illustrated the importance of a stochastic production planning model used in manufacturing to prepare activities toward seasonal sales. To work efficiently with suppliers and to reduce long lead inventory storage and empty stock issues, suppliers demand detailed

information from seasonal businesses to prepare for smooth transfer of goods to consumers. Small seasonal businesses forecast next-season sales by analyzing previous seasons and reporting projections to suppliers to optimize inventory control (Zhang et al., 2011). This strategy assists small seasonal businesses, suppliers, and consumers to ensure product availability based on seasonal demand.

Small seasonal businesses strive to expand the off-peak season through extensive marketing initiatives and late season discounts (Gao, Demirag, & Chen, 2012). In addition, Gao et al. (2012) explored the effect of weather-condition rebates on seasonal businesses, for example, consumers who risk pre-purchasing tee-time or weather-reliant products, only to find weather conditions rendering the activities impossible. To remedy weather uncertainty, some small companies provide rebates to compensate purchasers, offering a guarantee to enjoy the product or service in favorable weather conditions. Although rebate poses no risk to a small seasonal business, it provides security to purchasers, and leads to increased loyalty as purchasers plan a return to the business as weather conditions improve (Gao et al., 2012).

Business momentum builds over the course of several years as a company becomes profitable. Seasonal business owners face a challenge when they lose momentum in off-season downtime. To compensate for the loss of business through the off-season, small seasonal businesses might improve customer loyalty through advertising beyond the season end, to draw continued interest or sell memberships in anticipation of the next season. Golf course owners, for instance, extend the season through membership, equipment, clothing brand sales, and other related strategies.

Cause-Related Marketing

Between 2002 and 2012 cause-related marketing (CRM) has become the fastest

form of sponsorship spending, averaging 12% growth rates annually (Koschate-Fischer,

Stefan, & Hoyer, 2012). CRM campaigns share these features:

1. A specific currency amount for a product sold.

2. A certain percentage of sales of a product pledged to a charity.

3. A contribution matched by the business related to product.

4. A percentage of net profits pledged from sales of a product.

5. A specified time or sales value.

6. A product -specific or business-specific campaign.

7. A specific local cause that is necessary to the community and supported by a

     business without offering a product (Kotler & Lee, 2005).

Krishna (2011) noted that American Express was the pioneer of CRM. American

Express conducted the first known CRM campaign in 1983 for the Statue of Liberty

(Anuar & Mohamad, 2012). Anuar and Mohamad noted this CRM campaign was a

promotional tool that raised funds for the restoration of the landmark. The Statue of

Liberty campaign created strategic awareness for businesses to tie consumer purchases

with donations to improve society (Anuar & Mohamad, 2012). Anuar and Mohamad

noted that the Statue of Liberty CRM campaign changed CRM from a promotional tool to

a strategic tool.

Similar to American Express CRM campaign, Yoplait Yogurt, in 1997, formed a

partnership with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. For every yogurt sold,

10 cents went to cancer research initiatives. Yoplait Yogurt started an advertisement for the CRM campaign called "Save Lids to Save Lives." This CRM campaign is successful, collecting over $12 million for cancer research (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). Both CRM campaigns American Express and Yoplait Yogurt connected their brand identity to a social cause for the benefit of society. Thomas et al. (2011) noted that collaborating with a reputable charity reduces community skepticism for the sponsoring CRM business but does not always guarantee the desired donation results for the charity and business.

Cause-related marketing has opened the door for critics, who argued that CRM undermines the no-strings-attached business contribution policy, as businesses will expect marketing benefits from their contribution or sponsoring efforts (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011). Cause-related marketing is associated with skepticism as donations tied to consumer purchase and consumers question the sincerity of the sponsoring business to eliminate social problems (Anuar & Mohamad, 2012). Disgruntled consumers accuse business CRM activities of not being altruistic (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011).

Additionally, SSBs may not contribute to charities without some form of marketing benefit and public exposure. Anuar and Mohamad (2012) noted that consumer knowledge and consumer skepticism influences how they interpret buying signals in CRM advertisements for consumers. Skeptical consumers believe business owners want to improve sales and profits instead of helping promote a cause (Anuar & Mohamad, 2012).

Further arguments against CRM indicated too much CRM practice in the marketplace both nationally and locally can diminish positive results for the sponsoring

SSB owner and charity (La Ferie, Kuber, & Edwards, 2013). Berglind and Nakata (2005) noted many consumers sense CRM campaigns do not raise enough money per purchase to support the cause. A cancer watchdog group called Think Before You Pink monitors breast cancer CRM campaigns for improprieties (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). In one example, Think Before You Pink is critical of the Yoplait Yogurt CRM campaign's decision to donate only 10 cents to cancer research per purchase. Berglind and Nakata noted the average consumer would need to consume three containers a day of Yoplait Yogurt for 4 months to raise $36 for the cause while exposing the consumer to other health risks from overconsumption of dairy products. For many consumers, CRM campaigns leave more questions unanswered, such as (a) whether a concern exists for the integrity of the product, (b) the motive behind the CRM campaign, (c) the amount donated insignificant to the sales dollars generated by the CRM campaign, and (d) the CRM campaign only business-related and not the cause.

Cause-related marketing was a strategy of capturing customer attention by appealing to a sense of connectedness to the human condition. Understanding society requires financial support through the kindness of consumers; companies capitalize on emotional sensitivities to draw donations toward social cause products. Cause-related marketing strategy was effective in drawing donations; however, CRM strategy has limitations regarding identifying which charities appeal to which potential donors.

Koschate-Fischer, Stefan, and Hoyer (2012) conducted a quantitative study examining the relationship between the amount of company donations toward a charity and the customer willingness to pay for a product contributing to the cause. Koschate-

Fischer et al. found a strong correlation between customer attitudes toward helping others with customer willingness to pay for a product related to the cause. Koschate-Fischer et al. research results suggested customer predispositions influence willingness to pay for a product; but only under certain circumstances, and donation size of a company does not influence customer-purchasing behaviors to any notable degree. The particular cause adopted by the company had more influence on willingness to pay than the amount or financial contribution goals of the company (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012). Organizations did not move customers to meet organizational donation goals; however, influenced customer decisions to tailor purchases leading to support a particular cause.

Robinson, Imak, and Jayachandran (2012) contributed another study on the topic. In their four-part quantitative analysis of the influence on customer willingness to pay for products marketed through cause-related means, customers who determined the charity based on alternative charities were more apt to purchase products supporting a specific charity and cause. Customer donation amounts depended on the personal choice of the customer toward the significance of the CRM campaign.

Liu (2013) discussed two forms of cause-related marketing and exploring the marketing decisions associated with the specific cause-related marketing strategy. Two distinct components of cause-related marketing campaigns were instrumental and relational cause-related marketing. Instrumental campaigns focused on commercial marketing of a specific product or service; relational campaigns focused on stakeholder relationship management strategies measuring social performance while promoting a specific product or service. Liu suggested instrumental and relational campaigns divide

further into altruistic, commercial, social, and integrative. Liu conducted a qualitative

study and interviewed a large cohort (99) of managers to determine the influence of

cause-related marketing on stakeholder commitment. Each of these domains emphasizes

shifting perspectives on the company and product toward the cause association. Liu

suggested donations-in-kind were most effective in establishing committed donors.

Cause-related marketing strategy achieved more success than other approaches (Liu,

2013). The strategy involves donating less tangible gifts to a specific cause such as

management time and services. These approaches established trusting and caring

relationships that go beyond providing a product for customers to purchase, which

demonstrated no organizational interest in the cause presented.

Eikenberry (2013) conducted a case study to explore why a nonprofit selects

cause-related marketing strategy campaigns to raise funds. Results of the case study

conducted by Eikenberry found social influence and participation of volunteers in cause-

related marketing and fundraising events generated customer loyalty and commitment.

Eikenberry illustrated the one-to-one contact and intermingling between volunteers,

customers, and business owners established increased spending than not engaging the

social interaction. In summary, stakeholder interaction influenced cause-related

marketing strategies.

The recruitment of volunteers in fundraising events, particularly when cause-

related marketing applies, supported citizenship and motivates customer spending.

Demetriou, Papasolomou, and Vrontis (2010) indicated organizations must demonstrate a

connectedness to society through corporate citizenship by helping to solve social

problems affecting the local community. Establishing a relationship with society enhances business success. Demetriou et al. noted consumers expect businesses to create social change in exchange for customer loyalty. Demetriou et al, argued customers are willing to switch brands to support a cause-related marketing campaign that may affect the community. More specifically, long-term business commitment to social change factors into consumer spending, particularly in smaller communities with less competition, and the affect of business activities are more pronounced.

Kim and Johnson (2013) conducted a case study in both the United States and Korea exploring perspectives on the relationship between purchasing behaviors and cause-related marketing strategies. The authors demonstrated that in both countries moral emotions are the basis of human connectedness to purchasing social cause products; however, American participants indicated pride and guilt were primary motivators for making social cause purchases. Kim and Johnson concluded cultural dimensions factor into moral emotions and the influence on purchases of social cause products.

A fundamental limitation to cause-related marketing is the importance of customers identifying with the particular cause targeted through the campaign (Winterich & Barone, 2011). If customers have no affiliation or interest in the social cause product, customers likely purchased the preferred brand or brands costing less. Cause-related marketing strategies have no effect when the customer cannot relate to the cause. Conversely, Human and Terblanche (2012), researching Generation Y participants, found no distinctive difference in donation patterns between giving to known charities and

unknown charities, and participants were equally likely to donate to a charity based on the level of goodwill aligned with the initiative. Human and Terblanche suggested the behavior is specific to the age demographic of the study and results are not representative of all age cohorts.

Whether the customer was in favor of or against CRM, CRM can be a way to demonstrate awareness for charities by giving life to an organization's brands, values, and beliefs and gaining stakeholder support (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011). The success of CRM relies on business owners aligning their values with an appropriate cause and communicating to stakeholders the campaign objectives, commitment, and duration of program (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011). Cause-related marketing improves customer retention and creates a positive perception of business brands (Demetriou et al., 2010).

Small seasonal business owners play a significant role in society possessing economic power leading to influential decisions on the lives of individuals and communities (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011; Proietti, 2012). Papasolomou and Kitchen argued consumers are expecting company involvement with society through communication and brand support. Consumers require companies and their brands to go beyond the practical issues of quality and image (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011). The authors noted the importance to have stakeholder support to engage in CRM strategies. One way to gain stakeholder support is for SSB owners to communicate activities and behavior of business to stakeholders to satisfy expectations and their demands (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011).

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory, initially formulated in the 1950s, flourished as a working theory through the work of Freeman (as cited in Blower & Mahajan, 2012). Freeman (1984) considered the father of stakeholder theory, argued the relationships that businesses create and sustain with stakeholders hold tremendous value leading to the success or failure of a business. Freeman noted one strategic building block of SSBs and stakeholder relationship is the development and push for social initiatives. Owners of SSBs need to be actively engaged in stakeholder relationships to develop formal business strategies to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits.

Small seasonal business owners who develop an understanding of stakeholders by names and faces can build long-term strategic sources. Stakeholders building long-term relationships consider themselves connected to the strategic business process. Business owners including stakeholders early in the integration of business strategy and decision-making processes of SSBs can influence positively SSB owners to tear down internal barriers to social initiatives (Delgado-Ceballos et al., 2012). Owners of SSBs knowing and understanding the power of stakeholders can eliminate barriers and unforeseen conflicts for SSBs (Freeman, 1984). Small seasonal business owners need to develop stakeholder relationships, as no guarantee stakeholder relationship will work in the best interest of the SSB.

Debate since 1980 continues over the role of stakeholder relationships and involvement in the pursuit of organizational success (Madsen & Bingham, 2014).

Freeman (1984) argued corporate leaders are responsible only to shareholders regarding decision-making and determining activities. The other camp contends corporations must be responsible to a larger group of individuals. The later contention leads corporations to create links within society ensuring activities serve society and, in turn, generate profits for businesses (Madsen & Bingham, 2014).

Although several researchers explored stakeholder theory as a means of identifying or legitimizing the role of stakeholder theory, few have explored stakeholder theory and the influence on value creation. Stakeholders are involved in the significant role of developing and the implementation of business success (Ehrgott et al., 2011). Small seasonal business owners should communicate to internal and external stakeholders proposed business strategies to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits (Ehrgott et al., 2011). Schlierer et al. (2012) supported view communicating with stakeholders noting small seasonal business owners need to communicate formal strategic views and philosophy of collaborating with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits so stakeholders can be involved with decisions made by management related to charitable initiatives. Success in a highly competitive marketplace requires SSB owners to recognize and meet stakeholder expectations (Maden, Arikan, Telci, & Kantur, 2012). Value creation is a fundamental element of strategic management (Harrison & Wicks, 2013).

Garriga (2014) conducted a mixed method study using interviews, surveys, documentation, and observation to explore stakeholder capability in the value creation process. Garriga captured the perspectives of executives and various stakeholders using

various instruments to explore the effect of stakeholders on value creation on an

agricultural facility in Argentina. Findings suggested stakeholder contributions to value

creation in an organization are multidimensional and complex. Stakeholders engage in

decision-making to move the company forward. Further, Garriga highlighted the

importance of value creation for the stakeholder as each stakeholder group identifies and

appraises their capabilities. Ideally, stakeholders could evaluate management practices

and provide valuable feedback to generate optimal performance and profit-building

(Garriga, 2014). Garriga argued that organizational leaders could harness input from

various stakeholder groups to develop or fine-tune programs meeting multiple

stakeholder needs. Finally, Garriga emphasized the sense of importance garnered various

stakeholder groups as they provide valuable input into knowledge management,

production, service delivery, and other business initiatives designed to bolster

organizational performance and profit making.

　　　　Financial performance is not the only aspect of an organization's success Harrison

and Wicks (2013). Stakeholders engage in a reciprocal relationship with organizations as

customers, suppliers, employees, among others in the process of organizational growth.

Organizational leaders, who view stakeholders as contributors to company success,

typically function better. Organizational leaders develop stakeholder relationships as a

means of creating value while stakeholders gain tangible and intangible goods from the

organization, creating a cooperative relationship fostering fairness and growth (Harrison

& Wicks, 2013).

　　　　Small seasonal business owners implementing formal strategies to collaborate

with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits could affect

cultural change in the business. Promoting cultural change through stakeholder

involvement was a necessary process for business (Arnold, 2010). Because stakeholders

influence or discourage decisions made by SSB owners, the power of stakeholders in the

decision-making process cannot be ignored (Harrison, Bosse, & Phillips, 2010; Russo &

Perrini, 2010). Small seasonal business owners do not receive the same pressure from

stakeholders as do large corporations because SSB owners have limited capital and

human resources (Ma, 2012). The consensus is social initiatives are too complex for

SSBs owners to implement into business strategy (Ma, 2012). Paloviita and Luoma-aho

(2010) suggested stakeholder pressure drives business owners toward social initiatives.

Understanding who makes up the group of stakeholders allows leaders of SSBs to design

strategies and decisions benefiting SSBs and stakeholders together (Schlierer et al.,

2012).

Beringer, Siemens, Jonas, and Gemünden (2012) examined the variance in

stakeholder involvement in corporate decision-making and organizational growth. The

authors hypothesized stakeholder involvement was relative to the involvement of other

stakeholders, and the level of engagement increases as an organization matures. Findings

suggested conflicting results with previous studies (Garriga, 2014; Harrison, Bosse, &

Phillips, 2010; Russo & Perrini, 2010) discussed. Successful organizations had limited

stakeholder involvement, and explained success in terms beyond stakeholder

engagement. For instance, the study sample provided from short-term project managers

who might not have the needed time to establish stakeholder relationships, and may depend on other factors such as internal input to be successful (Beringer et al., 2012).

Small business owners need to identify with stakeholders (Maden et al., 2012). Freeman (1984) noted stakeholders create barriers to profitable business practices causing anticapitalist, or nonprofit, motives by supporting legal or ethical issues. The business culture can be stakeholders against shareholders or common values versus wealth maximization. Small seasonal business owners, promoting social initiatives through employees, would realize less organizational turnover, allowing employee tacit knowledge to stay within the company and potentially driving up performance (Hansen & Dunford, 2011; Proietti, 2012). Stakeholders can help businesses succeed by providing core values, which spread throughout the organization, and promote the business and community as one partnership working together for a common good. Shareholders invest for wealth maximization with modest concerns for society (Cosans, 2009).

Crilly and Sloan (2012) used a case study approach involving eight organizations drawn into four pairs, interviewing 88 participants, examining annual reports, and concluding the data analysis with cross company comparisons. The purpose of the study was to identify stakeholder importance working from inside the organization toward the outside. Findings suggested an inside-out perspective of who influences organizational decision-making. Crilly and Sloan pointed to the enmeshment of opportunity and threat classification plays in drawing stakeholders into the decision-making process. Further, a differentiation of attention constrains or promotes managers address competing stakeholder interests and objectives. Managers exhibiting superior business autonomy

are apt to give increased attention to the interests of stakeholders, thus sustaining optimal harmony between stakeholders and organizational management. Managers operating in an autonomous environment take risks to enhance organizational creativity and growth, whereas managers exhibiting constricted autonomy operate to minimize threats. Thus, managers could be reluctant to engage stakeholders in decision-making processes (Crilly & Sloan, 2012).

Blower and Mahajan (2012) conducted a quantitative study examining stakeholder demands and scrutiny as they relate to corporate social performance. Findings suggested high performing organizations relied on and responded to stakeholder needs and diverse stakeholder demands. In turn, responsiveness leads to better decision-making regarding marketing and meeting stakeholder demands (Blower & Mahajan, 2012). Blower and Mahajan concluded organizational leaders who ignore the detailed needs of stakeholders, fail to capitalize on the contributions of stakeholders, thus failing to benefit from opportunities to sustain and grow business.

Building on Blower and Mahajan's (2012) quantitative study, Madsen and Bingham (2014) advanced the question of the relationship between corporate social performance and corporate financial performance. Madsen and Bingham posited corporate social performance positively correlates to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) compensation. Madsen and Bingham posited a business cannot establish a strategic position in the competitive market without employing competitive marketing strategies. Marketing strategies are contingent upon the wants and needs of consumers and other stakeholders such as social groups, regulators, financial backers, suppliers, and others.

Stakeholders contribute to the growth and success of enterprise by shaping corporate decision-making, contouring to meet consumer demand (Madsen & Bingham, 2014). From this perspective, corporate leadership must understand the relationship between the goals of financial growth, and the relationships forged to encapsulate financial growth. Reciprocal relations between businesses and stakeholders could evolve simply by companies providing services related to a specific cause or social interest, thus drawing stakeholders, and related opportunities for growth, toward the organization. Related opportunities may be advancements in technologies used by the organization promoting organizational growth (Madsen & Bingham, 2014).

An understated benefit of corporate social performance, as presented by Madsen and Bingham (2014), is the cushion organizations create through established social connections, protecting the company from sudden challenges to reputation. Establishing relationships may shield a company, at least momentarily, from the effect of bad press as stakeholders assess the benefits and contributions of a specific business and how this may outweigh or diminish attempts to undermine or devalue activities of the company (Madsen & Bingham, 2014).

A company's relationship with society could further draw a higher quality of leadership toward the firm as potential leaders may seek association with a firm reputed as possessing strong societal linkages or involvement. Madsen and Bingham (2014) studied the relationship between financial growth and corporate social performance as proposed through stakeholder theory, using CEO compensation as the indicator of successful financial growth. Findings suggested CEO compensation positively correlates

with a business's corporate social performance, suggesting that if leaders wish to develop their executive careers in an organization, placing the stakeholder interests first could result in increased compensation, inflated societal respect, and regard, and the benefits of a more cushioned personal reputation (Madsen & Bingham, 2014).

Fassin (2012) categorized stakeholders into two groups: primary and indirect. Primary stakeholders, which include employees, customers, suppliers, and shareholders, actively partake in the everyday activities of the organization. Owners of small seasonal businesses may not be able to survive without primary stakeholders' commitment to the business strategy. Owners of SSBs need to serve and create value for the primary stakeholders by meeting stakeholder demands and expectations (Proietti, 2012). Stakeholders not involved in the daily activity are indirect stakeholders. Seasonal small business owners' decisions affect indirect stakeholders even though indirect stakeholders do not participate in the daily decision-making process (Fassin, 2012). Input from indirect stakeholders is not necessary for business to succeed long-term (Gonzalez-Benito & Gonzalez-Benito, 2010). Owners of SSBs acknowledging different levels of stakeholders should promote cooperation as a means to provide stakeholders and the organization with a win-win association (Harrison et al., 2010). Stakeholders could consider the organization's reputation prior to accepting employment. Employees decide where to work; investors decide where to invest money; and customers choose products to buy based on company reputation (Maden et al., 2012).

Small Seasonal Business Strategies in the Community

Small businesses are the drivers of economic development helping to promote

social change (Spilling, 2011). In the state of Michigan, small businesses in the year

2011 made up 98.3% of Michigan businesses, employing 1.7 million employees, or

51.7% of the private sector labor force, in 851,112 businesses (SBA, 2013). The first

decade of the 21st century has been challenging for SSBs with rapid changes in

technology, demanding customer requirements, and economic uncertainty (Demmer,

Vickery, & Calantone, 2011; Vlad, 2011). These conditions magnify for small seasonal

businesses (Gao et al., 2012).

      Small seasonal business owners experience economic uncertainty as they struggle

to borrow money and collect account receivables on time (Corluka et al., 2013).

Sweeney (2010) reported collection payments for SSB owners accounts receivables were

going 60 and 90 days past due. Collection payments for services not collected by SSB

owners disrupt the local economy forcing SSB owners to lay off employees, invest less in

the local economy, tighten finances, and formulate survival strategies to survive until

payments come into SSB owners (Sweeney, 2010). The National Federation of

Independent Business (NFIB, as cited in Sweeney, 2010) reported 42% of SB owners

received payments for services and products more slowly in both economic growth and

economic downturn. Small seasonal business owners need to understand the

consequences of leveraging debt collection and the result of business performance

(Corluka et al., 2013; Vlad, 2011). Demmer et al. (2011) noted that in the state of

Michigan business owners realize business conditions are in flux with the decline in the

automobile industry resulting in massive layoffs and permanent business closures from

the recession.

Some companies foreshadow, and mitigate risks, capitalizing on risks by creating buying frenzies. A snowmobile company, in Canada, facing the same struggles, created a purchasing frenzy by offering $1,000 rebates for purchasers of Bombardier snowmobiles if the upcoming snow season experienced less snowfall than the previous three seasons, in 44 U.S. cities. The result was an increase in snowmobile sales by 38% (Gao et al., 2012). Small business owners need to be resilient and innovate by reinventing new strategies for themselves and their customers as circumstance change (Demmer et al., 2011). A further example from a small seasonal business sector is price variation. Golf courses infuse price variations on the same product capitalizing on user behaviors on weekends, during which 75% of U.S. golf courses have higher greens fees, or an average of 12%-20% higher than during week days. Such strategies are most common within the seasonal industry (Limehouse, Maloney, & Rotthoff, 2012).

Small business owners during recessions receive recognition for contributions to job creation and productivity growth (Solomon, Bryant, May, & Perry, 2013). Since January 2000 SSB owners could rely on the business model to create staying power, as management would focus on getting better at what SSB owners did during bad economic times. Seasonal small business owners need to obtain different strategies to succeed (Demmer et al., 2011). Box (2011) supported Demmer on business strategies; small business owners need new strategies to be competitive and to accomplish business goals. Small business owners, who suffered through a recession lasting three years and unemployment at a 27-year high (Box), need to understand consumer preferences on an individual basis to innovate and promote their product offerings to increase profitability

and growth (Box, 2011; Gofman & Moskowitz, 2010).

New marketing strategies might be a way for SSB owners to develop knowledge regarding their target market, ensure business growth, and reduce concern for business failure (Gofman & Moskowitz, 2010). Gofman and Moskowitz argued that marketing synergy is part of the innovation process and business performance. Marketing strategies may be in the form of market segmentation allowing SSB owners to define the group of people who could be most receptive to the SSB owner's products (Gofman & Moskowitz). One business strategy growing in popularity is cause-related marketing (Robinson et al. 2012). Small seasonal businesses engaging in local charitable initiatives may experience less disruption during recessions, perform better, and generate more profits than the competition (Proietti, 2012).

Small seasonal businesses collaborating with charities form partnerships to raise both money and brand awareness. Small seasonal business owners may build on ethical decisions to make a profit although doing well in the local community (Proietti, 2012; Wilburn & Wilburn, 2014). The traditional view of organizations using a capitalist business model was to use resources to generate profits (Friedman, 1970). Wilburn and Wilburn suggested that creating social opportunity initiatives was not the strategy of the traditional capitalist business model; making profits for the shareholders and stakeholders was the business model. Business owners pursuing value creation through cause-related marketing (CRM) might improve business reputation and legitimacy, which may improve consumer behavior, attracts talented employees, and could have a positive effect on the business financial performance (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Small seasonal businesses

involved in CRM activities should complement their core competencies and use available resources and stakeholder interests while adhering to the values of the owners and local community (Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011; Proietti, 2012).

Companies large and small, promoting local community-building initiatives, may find sales increase through consumer brand loyalty, which improves consumer behavior, attracts talented employees, and has a positive effect on business financial performance (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011). However, cause-related marketing can have a negative influence on charitable giving as well (Krishna, 2011). Krishna noted charitable donations could decrease because of CRM. Consumers may perceive CRM as a form of charitable giving or a moral act and not agree to give any additional charitable donations (Krishna, 2011).

Loss charitable donations occur because the consumer normally could buy the product associated with the CRM campaign and assumes contributions to the cause relieves the consumer from giving to charity (Krishna, 2011). The donations tied to the CRM campaign are costless to the consumer, and the consumer could sense as though the consumer has contributed to the charity so the consumer would not contribute anything more to charity in the future (Krishna, 2011). Additionally, consumers sense participating with CRM campaigns is more selfish compared to giving directly to a charity; thus, consumers may not be as happy because their donations are not self-directed (Krishna, 2011). The benefits to business owners for implementing community-building initiatives allow owners to gain customer loyalty and promote specific products reflecting customer demand (Chia & Peters, 2010). Additionally, business owners can

attract new investments for their business through community building strategies and strengthened community presence (Chia & Peters; Lin et al., 2012, Papasolomou & Kitchen, 2011).

Cause-related marketing has other detractors as well (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). Fear based on the union of profit and nonprofit organizations for a cause may damage the intent and support of the cause (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). Berglindand Nakata noted for-profit organizations are building value for shareholders, and nonprofit organizations are building social conditions. Another concern was the money raised does not meet the expectation of the nonprofit organizations as promised (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). Additionally, CRM campaigns do not always provide the specifics of the agreement between the nonprofit and profit organizations, leaving the consumer guessing whether a percentage of profit or price goes to charity (Berglind & Nakata, 2005).

Community Involvement

Small businesses are the vast majority of businesses and contribute significantly to the economic prosperity of the community (Spilling, 2011). Small seasonal businesses are equally necessary and require rigorous development within the surrounding community (Proietti, 2012). Local SSB owners makeup the majority of businesses in the local industry (Besser, 2012). Owners of SSBs, and SSBs, have a tendency to provide socially and economically to the community in which SSB owners conduct business (Besser, 2012). Besser noted the prosperity of SSB ownership was the result of the welfare of the community. For the betterment of the community, strong SSBs and SSB leadership supporting the local interest of the community was important (Besser, 2012).

Business community involvement (BCI) was the relationship businesses have with the community, its stakeholders, and the social initiatives to support the stakeholders in the community (Liu, Eng, & Ko, 2013). Liu et al. noted BCI is a business strategy businesses should use to manage the goodwill with the stakeholders in the community to gain information, social influence, and community loyalty. Business community involvement is the act of business owners developing social capital (Liu et al., 2013), which described how business owners cultivate networks and relationships for strategic sustainability (Russo & Perrini, 2010). Small seasonal business owners cultivating stakeholder relationships is fundamental to community and neighborhood involvement supporting reputation enhancement rebates (Gao, Demirag, & Chen, 2012; Liu et al., 2013).

Business community involvement or initiative programs fail usually from the lack of a detailed partnership agreements between parties. Organizations do not define the partnership roles and fail to carry out the delivery protocols of the agreement (Kihl, Tainsky, Babiak, & Bang, 2014). Kihl et al. noted delivery protocols are marketing, branding, and communicating the goals of the partnership. Partnerships with strong defined roles bring organizations together from different sectors both profit and nonprofit to address social concerns knowing each partner has different skills, resources and knowledge to enhance communities and build stakeholder loyalty (Kihl et al., 2014). Kihl et al. suggested aligned partnerships could improve the financial position of the organization.

Social opportunities. Owners of SSBs create competitiveness through merging

company synergies providing social opportunities and job creation. A moral economy and product stewardship working hand in hand can create synergies to grow profits for owners of SSBs and provide opportunities for the supply chain working as partners to collaborate (Bolton & Houlihan, 2012). Owners of SSBs can benefit from job creation and a profitable bottom line, creating a strong economy instead of job losses (Wagle, 2011). The supply chain collaboration creates competitive advantage for the entire supply chain through corporate social opportunity.

Small seasonal businesses may benefit from taking advantage of corporate social opportunities. Corporate social opportunity is a way of seeking nontraditional entrepreneurialism through community-building initiatives (Lefebvre & Lefebvre, 2012). The opportunities also help create social awareness for the SSB in the local community. Incorporating community-building initiatives can become a way of doing business and thus is part of the everyday culture. Small seasonal businesses taking the time to address corporate social opportunity may realize a competitive advantage in the marketplace rebates (Gao et al., 2012; Misani, 2010).

Competitors cannot easily imitate competitive advantage through community-building initiatives. The reason is competitors cannot see or grasp which competitive advantage comes from product, process, or service (Misani, 2010). Implementing strategies of social interest through community-building initiatives creates an attitude connecting planet, people, and profit to a common goal (Theyel & Hofman, 2012).

Social responsibility. The proliferation of social responsibility (SR) started in the 1950s with the publication of *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, by the father of

social responsibility, Bowen (1953). Bowen, ahead of his time (Carroll & Shabana, 2010), explained the power and value companies possessed and questioned the responsibility companies had to society as a corporate citizen. Bowen's seminal work on social responsibility through social management viewpoint and codes of conduct still provides a foundation for current literature (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Through the 1950s, literature emphasized benefits to society without any benefit to business (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Research literature emphasized businesses doing well for society as supported literature of the 1950s: Eell's (1956) *Corporate Giving in a Free Society*; Heald's (1957) *Management's Responsibility to Society: The Growth of an Idea*; and Selekman's (1959) *Moral Philosophy for Management*.

The most prominent writer of the 1960s on SR was Davis (1960). Davis posited businesses would achieve long-term economic growth through SR initiatives. Davis (1960) posited the social responsibility of businesses must be equal to their social power in society; if business owners ignored social responsibility, businesses social power would decline. Davis's view later became a benchmark for further studies in the 1970s and 1980s (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Scholars including Frederick (1960), and McGuire (1963) began awareness of philanthropy and volunteerism. Frederick and McGuire defended business actions should go beyond the economic and social interest of firms and include commitments to community, politics, education, employees, and the world.

Friedman (1970) in the 1970s presented a different view from Davis's (1960) view of equality between business and society. Definitions of SR focused on

performance, Friedman argued business was only responsible for profits and obeying the law; anything else would undermine free capitalism and society. Taddei and Delecolle (2012) agreed with Freidman's view, arguing profits come first and conditional to profits comes social networking, after achieving economic responsibility. Wilburn and Wilburn (2014) concurred with Friedman, argued funds used to promote social activity belong to the company stockholders and investors, not society. Scholars opposed to Friedman's philosophy advocated for social, economic, and environmental SR (Carroll, 1999).

Stakeholder theory grounds and complements the business research conducted on SSBs and SR recognizing the need for social, economic, and an environmental SR to participate with the construct of stakeholder theory (Carroll, 1999). Stakeholders directly and indirectly influence SSBs strategies and decision-making processes. Carroll expanded on McGuire's (1963) definition of SR, positing a four-part definition on SR that included economics, legal issues, ethics, and philanthropy (Coppa & Sriramesh, 2013). Clifton and Amran (2011) refined Carroll's view, defining economics as the ability for companies to generate profits; legal issues as operating by obeying the law; ethics as guiding companies on doing what is right, just, and fair; and philanthropy as supporting society to improve the ways in which people live.

The economic view of the 1980s has offered a different insight regarding SR as previously presented through Friedman's (1970) profit maximization. Drucker (1984) posit three functions of economic profits include: (a) activity, (b) risk, and (c) capital. Drucker disagreed with Friedman's theory of profit maximization, arguing organizations need to realize only profit minimization. Drucker believed competitive advantage

through concentration social and environmental issues could achieve economic prosperity.

Business owners promoting social, economic, and environmental SR create business opportunities (Hong & Andersen, 2011). Supporting Drucker's view, Hong and Andersen, along with Kemp (2011),suggested business owners maximizing profits destroys an organization's ability to influence stakeholders. Freeman developed stakeholder theory in the 1980s, providing an alternative theory complementing and building from SR (Coppa & Sriramesh, 2013). Coppa and Sriramesh posited stakeholder theory builds and embraces the concept of SR through identifying groups. The 1990s was a period of refinement and definition rebuilding to support SR (Coppa & Sriramesh, 2013).

Charitable initiatives. The phenomenon of charitable initiatives as a means of gaining and retaining customer loyalty and sustaining a company may be a strategic tool for organizations. The organization owner has to plan the process, strategically communicate the purpose to the community, and monitor the economic outcome for the bottom line value to the organizations (Maas & Liket, 2010). Torres, Bijmolt, Tribo, and Verhoef (2012) agreed, that collaborating with charitable organizations may influence an SSB owner's financial performance. Charitable initiatives include CRM, cash donations, business gifts, services, facilities, school events, team sponsorship, and loaning of managerial expertise (Amato & Amato, 2012; Maas & Liket, 2010).

Philanthropy. Charitable organizations registered with the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)3 totaled 1.2 million organizations (Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2011).

The National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS, 2011) noted of the 1.2 million

charitable organizations, 500,000 are public charities in the United States ranging from

small to large charities. If a person donates to a specific charity or cause-related

marketing campaign without a cause-brand alliance usually the individual is personally

connected to or affected by the charity cause directly and brand purchasing decision does

not matter (Chowdhury & Khare, 2011).

Another form of business philanthropy is volunteerism (Madison, Ward, &

Royalty, 2012). Philanthropy can be simple acts of altruism, putting others before first,

and volunteering in community service. Volunteering employees to support the

community, enhances employee morale, reduces absenteeism, and fosters a demand for

employment application (Lii & Lee, 2012). Volunteerism creates an environment of

competitive advantage by aligning two necessary stakeholders, customers and employees

(Lii & Lee, 2012). Another form of customer and employee alignment is CRM

(Vanhamme et al. (2012). Cause related-marketing was a way to transfer ethical business

practices from a purely philanthropical approach into a commercially related business

activity and sponsorship (Liu & Ko, 2011).

Cause-related marketing is value creation. Value creation happens when

customers and employees leverage a chosen cause for consumer purchases (Vanhamme,

2012). Customers and employees are stakeholders of CRM. Cause related-marketing

needs employee support to be an effective strategy of business and society (Liu, Liston-

Heyes, & Ko, 2010).

Lafferty and Edmondson (2013) noted charitable causes most likely to be

associated with CRM campaigns fall into four categories: (a) health, (b) human services, (c) animal, and (d) environmental. Of the four categories of charitable causes, health and human services are most likely to gain the attention of consumers in a CRM campaign (Lafferty & Edmondson, 2013). However, most people purchasing goods in a CRM campaign do not participate by purchasing products because of the worthy cause, consumers participate because consumers identify with the brand and the worthy cause was part of the CRM campaign (Lafferty & Edmondson, 2013).

Business owners promote their agenda through discretionary philanthropy, marketing, and advertising as a form of discretionary philanthropy creating brand identification, market awareness, and customer satisfaction through company funds (Amato & Amato, 2012). Friedman (1970) believed spending corporate funds on anyone other than shareholders in the form of social responsibilities and strategic philanthropy is taxation without a vote. In contrast to Friedman, Maas and Liket (2010) reported strategic philanthropy could serve the dual purposes of social welfare and financial profitability. Similarly, in a Korean study, Oh and Chang (2011)viewed business philanthropy differently from Friedman; instead, it complements an organization's strategic plan and can lead to market share and growth. Supporting Oh and Chang's position on philanthropy, Ahmad and Ramayah (2012), in a study done in developing countries, posited community-building initiatives in the form of philanthropy could provide a strategic and competitive advantage through market presence, buying behavior, and product perception.

Maas and Liket (2010) argued strategic philanthropists create a winning situation

for business by building trust, loyalty, and profits for the bottom line. Business marketers communicate the philanthropy message of the product to consumers through sponsorships, and advertisements create product personality establishing social values consumers identify and buy as an expression of their values, adding to the bottom line (Oh & Chang, 2011). Philanthropy has the dual objectives of benefitting society and bringing profit to the business; measuring the outcome of philanthropy can benefit 100% of the parties involved (Maas & Liket, 2010). Koehn and Ueng (2010) argued a moral justification for business philanthropy, suggesting the company is a good citizen giving back to the community, and the only way to gauge good citizenship is through measuring the outcome.

Philanthropic activities as a form of community-building initiatives may prove difficult for SSBs. Seasonal small business employees may view philanthropic activities as threatening to employment by the monetary outlay and the endorsement of the owners of SSB. Poorly managed philanthropy not measured internally by a business can damage the business firm by putting a strain on business funds and creating a bad reputation for the company in society (Maas & Liket, 2010). Liu et al. (2010) concluded ignoring employees as stakeholders would impede upon SSB operations, as it would be hard to retain valuable employees.

Transition and Summary

Section 1 of this qualitative multiple case study included the (a) background of the problem, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose statement, (d) nature of the study, (e) research question, (f) theoretical framework, (g) definitions, (h) assumptions, limitations,

and delimitations, (i) significance of study, and (j) literature review. The literature

included a review of the history of strategies used by small businesses, adding specific

research related to small seasonal businesses as available (Durmaza et al., 2011; Gao et

al., 2012). Small business and large corporation stakeholders play a significant role

influencing decision-making processes. The focus of the study was to explore how some

small seasonal businesses can establish formal strategies to collaborate with local

associations and charitable organizations to improve profits.

     Based on the findings from the literature review, I supported this qualitative case

study design method as appropriate design to answer the central research question instead

of another research design. The literature review also supported qualitative research

benefits from exploring participants lived experiences. Different scholarly viewpoints

and theoretical assumptions concluded Section 1.

     In Section 2, I provide the research method of case study design based on the

research question, role of the researcher, participants, and data collection. The section

includes a discussion on the study participants, research methodologies, data collection,

analysis, and reliability and validity of the study. In Section 2, I provide an in-depth

approach to understand and connect the central research question of the study to the role

of the researcher, methods and design of the study, and data gathering supporting the

research findings.

     In Section 3, I provide the purpose statement and research question. The section

includes detailed summary of the research findings related to business practices,

recommendations for social change, and recommendations for professional practice. The

study conclusion, recommendations for future research and reflections of my research

experience are detailed in Section 3.

Section 2: The Project

A well-constructed case study demonstrates a researcher's ability to place participant safety and confidentiality at the forefront before, during, and after an investigation, and apply stringent techniques to protect participant rights. In this study, I used thought-provoking interview questions to draw information pertinent from SSB owners to assist other SSBs to strengthen their local presence and build customer loyalty. In Section 2, I discuss the details of how I constructed the case study to achieve the study goals. Section 2 includes (a) the purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research method, (e) research design, (f) population and sampling, (g) ethical research, (h) data collection, (i) data analysis, and (j) reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. The objective was to interview at least three owners of small seasonal businesses who have experience regarding community-building initiatives. Yin (2014) noted two or three replications of a case study are sufficient, provided the theory is straightforward and the degree of certainty is not excessive.

In order to participate in this study, participants needed to have met two criteria: (a) owning and operating a small seasonal business in Oakland County for at least 3 years, and (b) demonstrating community involvement as a means of generating business profits. The sample size for the case study was four purposefully selected owners from

the population of SSBs in Oakland County, Michigan. I conducted the study in Michigan

because Michigan's economy was similar to other Midwest states, with a similar

distribution of small seasonal businesses as other states. The data from the study will

help to expand the body of knowledge related to community-building initiatives and

SSBs. Business owners would be able to use this knowledge to provide SSBs with a

competitive advantage (e.g., Lahdesmaki & Suutari, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher was to gather data from face-to face interviews and

secondary resources, organize, and analyze the data for patterns and themes. Leedy and

Ormrod (2013) noted researchers performing qualitative research assume the role of data

collection instrument. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) made a similar argument; researchers

must be able to collect reliable and valid data through interviews, review documents, and

provide sample observations.

Prior to interviewing participants, my intent was to foster trust with them by

communicating openly and honestly so they can make informed decisions regarding their

participation. I asked the same open-ended questions, in the same order, to each

participant and used bracketing to mitigate any preconceptions in the research process

and add rigor to the study. I bracketed any preconceptions with the following bracketing

methods: (a) writing memos during data collection and analysis, and (b) maintaining a

reflexive journal (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Participants

A qualitative case study requires recruiting participants with experience in the

phenomenon studied (Yin, 2014). The criteria to participate in the study included (a) owning and operating a small seasonal business in Oakland County, MI, for at least three years; and (b) demonstrating community involvement as a means of generating business profits. Yin posited sample size of three was sufficient in case study research. The geographic area of Oakland County, Michigan provided an opportunity to conduct face-to-face interviews with SSB owners.

Following Walden University and IRB approval to conduct the proposed study, I gained access to the participant's names through approaching local businesses by phone. I identified potential participants by looking through the Oakland County, phonebooks. I made initial contact by telephone requesting to speak to the owner/manager, then I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the proposed research, provided the criteria to participate, and explained the confidential and informed consent process. If the owner/manager met the criteria, agreed to participate voluntarily, then I obtained his or her email address and emailed a consent form.

I encouraged participants to ask questions regarding the study research prior to responding by email stating participant consents. Email became the method of communication in the event the participant needed to contact me at any time. Participants also had my phone number if this was preferred instead of email communication. Participants did not use my phone number as a communication mode.

Once the participant emailed consent to be included, I contacted the participant again to establish a time and place for an interview, reminded the participant of the criteria to participate, the purpose of the proposed study, and the process of protecting all

data. I requested permission from the participant to record the interview for accuracy and understanding. Participants agreed to have interview recorded and I took copious notes during the interview process, to ensure I captured details and observations of the interview.

Interviews were conducted in person, recorded to ensure I retained information for recall and analysis. I interviewed participants until the study reached saturation. Saturation occurred when information from participants interviewed provided redundant information (Kisely & Kendall, 2011).

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan might use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. I interviewed four small seasonal business owners using purposive sampling in Oakland County. During my review of research methods and designs, I determined the best approach to address the research question was a qualitative case study design. Qualitative research was a beneficial approach to learn from personal experience and to identify unique approaches to establishing customer loyalty through community involvement to improve profits (Burns, Acar, & Datta, 2011).

Method

A researcher must select the right method for the line of inquiry to obtain meaningful results (Weiner et al., 2011). The three methods of research for inquiry are (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods. Each of the methods draws

different types of information from the population(Anderson, 2010). I used a qualitative method with a case study design because my purpose was to learn from the experiences of those who have been successful in developing relationships with community organizations and charities with intent to foster customer loyalty and improve profits. A qualitative case study uses in-depth interviews and secondary resource information to understand the process of building and sustaining relationships. Yin (2014) noted that researchers use qualitative research to explore meanings of situations because quantitative research, using experimental control of variables, is impossible or unreasonable to provide an in depth study of the phenomena.

Quantitative inquiry relied on numeric data using instrument-based questions to prove or disprove hypotheses, participants were required to answer close-ended questions (Suri, 2011). Anderson (2010) had similar findings as Suri; quantitative research does not provide a broad understanding of the phenomenon. Quantitative researchers describe population trends through numeric reasoning leading to generalizations of the population (Demetriou, Papasolomou, & Vrontis, 2010; Weiner et al., 2011). I explored perspectives of small seasonal business owners on how SSB owners collaborated with community agencies to improve profits. A quantitative approach was not suitable for the pursuit of perspectives. I did not use a quantitative method to conduct the proposed study because quantitative study was not suitable for this proposed study.

Mixed methods research is qualitative and quantitative methods combined. A mixed methods research complements the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Mixed methods research

requires the researcher to set aside more time to conduct two full studies, qualitative and quantitative, interpreting data from both studies, and formulating research findings (Venkatesh et al., 2013). A researcher applying a mixed methods approach requires the inclusion of quantitative analysis, which was not suitable for this proposed study.

Researchers apply research methods to explore gaps in knowledge (Weiner et al., 2011). Researchers use qualitative research methods to explore phenomena, relying on text and image data using open-ended questions. Based on this assessment, I conducted a qualitative study to gain detailed information through semistructured, open-ended interviews and secondary resource materials. The participants included experienced SSB owners from four SSBs in the state of Michigan which had amassed tacit knowledge during the longevity of their careers to improve company profits through collaborating with local associations and charitable organizations.

Research Design

Researchers apply designs that are appropriate for the desired population. I explored five qualitative designs to determine which design provided the best fit for the proposed study: (a) grounded theory, (b) ethnography, (c) phenomenological study, (d) narrative, and (e) case study. A qualitative case study was the best fit to answer the research question how can SSB establish formal strategies to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to improve profits. For this research study, I eliminated research designs based on how researchers use design in practice.

Tan (2010) suggested grounded theory is a qualitative research design used to create new theories. Researchers implement grounded theory to dissect elements of a

group experience, developing a new theory during the study to explain the group experience set in a natural group environment (Tan, 2010). Tan posited the initial intent of grounded theory moves beyond lived experiences and descriptions to develop new theories. Conducting research about lived experiences of SSBs, charitable organizations, and local associations, I needed participants to be in a natural setting for theory development; in grounded theory; the appropriate setting is a group setting, which would not provide a natural setting for participants to elaborate on the lived experience. I did not use grounded theory in the proposed study.

Weiner et al. (2010) posited ethnography research is similar to grounded theory exploring culture instead of understanding an issue or event. Researchers implementing ethnography research indulge long periods in the field to write in a narrative manner (Weiner et al., 2010). Researchers unfamiliar with the culture or narrative writing technique may abandon the study (Weiner et al., 2010). I explored various perspectives and approaches from a diverse sample of small seasonal business owners rather than exploring one specific cultural aspect of the population. Ethnography was not appropriate for the proposed study.

Researchers use a phenomenological approach to examine lived experiences. A generous sample size assists the phenomenological researcher to gain a deeper perspective on an event or situation. I did not choose a phenomenological study because the required sample size might not provide the level of detail I needed.

A researcher uses a narrative approach on a very small sample size to gain rich data. The intent was to learn from life stories. This approach was suitable for a personal

memoir or biography but not suitable for an exploration of profit-building processes within a small business sector. I did not select the narrative approach for this research study, personal memoir or biography was not suitable to explore profit-building processes within a small business sector (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). A suitable research design for this study was qualitative case study. A researcher chooses a case study design to examine a smaller sample using multiple approaches to gather data including interviews, and secondary source materials (Yin, 2014). I conducted a qualitative case study exploring perspectives on profit building within a unique business sector (Anderson, 2010; Suri, 2011).

Population and Sampling

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. Sample size for this study was a purposeful selection of four small business owners in Oakland County. Small businesses are those with 499 employees or less. The criteria for SSB owners in this study are having at least three years of management experience in one small seasonal business and having participated in local community social networks or charitable initiatives to increase profits. Participation in the study was voluntary.

The population and geographic location selected were suitable for the proposed study to learn more about profitability in SSBs in companies in a state with similar economic and growth challenges as other close states. A sample size of four SSB owners provided an opportunity to gather thick, rich data using interviews and secondary data

(Yin, 2014). I collected secondary data in the form of physical artifacts, calendars, website, and welcome board information which aided in identifying strategies to promote local events, initiatives, and programs (Yin, 2014). Asking semistructured, open-ended questions of a small sample of participants, adds richness to the interview process (Yin, 2014).

Sample sizes larger than 10 participants for case study research does not guarantee richness in data (Rowley, 2012). Rowley opined case study research requires sample sizes between one and 10 participants. Yin (2014) posited a sample size of two or three case studies should be enough if the theory is straightforward and the degree of certainty is not excessive. Trotter II (2012) noted in qualitative case study research power analysis is not appropriate to determine number of participants to study based on the total population size. Researchers conducting case study research using large or small sample sizes must continue to conduct case study interviews until reaching redundancy or saturation of data (Kisely & Kendall, 2011).

Purposeful sampling was the preferred sampling method. Purposeful sampling permits the researcher to determine the selection of participants for the study allowing better insight and understanding of the phenomena (Abrams, 2011). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to pick participants who would be rich in information providing in depth knowledge of the phenomenon (Abrams, 2011). Four selected owners of SSBs provided a sample sufficient to achieve data saturation and sufficiency (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012).

Ethical Research

Ethical researchers protect study participants from harm, protect the confidentiality of participants, and gain informed consent from participants (Yin, 2014). Researchers need to protect participant rights and anonymity, develop trust, protect against potential harm incurred through the interview process, protect against impropriety, and ensure research integrity (Rowley, 2012). I studied the National Institute of Health Office of Extramural Research and received certification required to engage in research involving human subjects (see Appendix B).

Once I received Walden University and IRB approval to conduct my research, I made initial contact with potential participants by telephone to introduce myself and explained the purpose of the study. I verbally invited SSB owners to participate in the study, and once I generated interest from the potential participant, I emailed a consent form (see Appendix A). Study participation was voluntary and included no children or, to the best of my knowledge, other vulnerable populations. No monetary incentive available to participate.

In the consent form, I explained the following: (a) contact information,(b) the sponsoring institution, (c) the purpose of the study, (d) any anticipated risks, (e) the voluntary nature of the study, and (e) the ability to withdraw from the study at any time. Those who agreed to participate in the study consented to participate through email response, and had an opportunity to ask questions regarding the study requirements. To protect participant identity, I used code numbers as identifiers for participants, P1 and P2, and would keep information secured on a password-protected memory stick and in a

locked storage cabinet in my home, for a period no less than 5 years, after which time I would destroy information linking participants to the study. Electronic data information would be erased and hard copy data would be shredded.

Data Collection Instruments

A qualitative multiple case study is complex, and ensuring reliability and validity throughout the process was eminent to the study's success. Years of experience in market research and employee interviewing prepared me for the face-to-face interviews involved in the study. I interviewed participants to ask appropriate questions, probed for thorough understanding, listened intently, recognized and reduced the penetration of personal bias, protected participants from harm or breach of confidentiality, and gained pre-approval for the use of instruments, including recording devices and note-taking (Yin, 2014). I did not conduct a pilot test of the interview questions as the semistructured, and open-ended nature of the questions provided an opportunity to clarify questions during the interview process.

One instrument used for the proposed qualitative case study was face-to-face interviews. Interviews lasted 45-60 minutes using 14 semistructured, open-ended questions (see Appendix C). I observed and recorded nuances in a journal during the interview process. With participant approval, I audio recorded with tape recorder responses to questions in the interview process and supported audio recording with handwritten notes in a journal. I monitored the interview time using the tape recorder so interviews did not go longer than promised. Data collected remains in a locked storage cabinet and password protected memory stick to ensure confidentiality for a period of no

less than 5 years, at which time I would destroy all data. Electronic data would be erased and hard copy data would be shredded.

I transcribed interview notes after the interview was complete. Two additional sources of data collection supported the investigation: public documentation, in the form of any written agreements between the SSB and charitable organizations or associations; and physical artifacts, including posters, products, brochures, labels, in-store advertisements, websites, and photographs demonstrating strategies to promote local events, initiatives, and programs. Yin (2014) suggested a case study requires more than interviews, adding documentation and artifacts add texture and depth to understanding a particular investigation.

Data Collection Technique

The technique used for data collection was face-to-face semistructured interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts. Documents produced in the course of the interviews included calendars, websites, and welcome board information (see Appendix D). Calendars showed annual events, times and dates the SSBs had scheduled with local community-based organizations or associations. I physically toured and observed the entire business facility looking for brochures and pamphlets related to local associations and charitable organizations. I also asked about supporting documentation during the interview process which led me to the calendars and website (see Appendix D). Physical artifacts included calendars and website information, additionally SSBs had welcome boards for guest to promote the event of the day.

Prior to conducting the research, I gained approval from Walden University and

the IRB. In an introductory phone call, I introduced myself to prospective participants, and explained the purpose of the study, encouraged participation, and explained the withdrawal process. I offered an opportunity to ask any questions. With established agreement, I forwarded the consent form asking participants to email the form back stating participant consent to participate.

I set an interview time and place suitable to the participant. The day before the interview, I contacted the participants to remind them of the scheduled interview, the purpose of the study, the consenting process, the confidentiality process, and the ability to withdraw at any time. Interviews were conducted based on the 14 semistructured interview questions (see Appendix C). The interview process opened with an introduction about the importance of the study and value the participant adds by participating in the study. The length of time of the interview depended on the thoroughness of participant answers to the interview questions. I provided participants with an interview estimate time of between 45-60 minutes. I provided a 1-2 page summary of the study, once completed, to participants. To review the entire study, participants were encouraged to access the published document through normal academic channels.

Data Organization Techniques

The collection, storage, and retrieval of data during and following the research period was the sole responsibility of the researcher and practices must be in accordance with IRB requirements. I hand wrote field notes with paper and pencil, to support and back up audio equipment malfunction which occurred during the interview. I transcribed

audio recording and checked field note data for accuracy after the interview process. Audio recording data was transcribed with paper and pencil. Checking data for accuracy required contacting the interviewee to verify content and ensure understanding of data by member checking.

Secondary source information may or may not be confidential. Any agreements, receipts, or documentation related to developments between the SSB owner and community-based associations not confidential was requested and reviewed. Secondary information obtained included calendars, website information and welcome boards, providing data triangulation. Triangulation of data is a process proving, establishing, and making evident the construct validity of the research findings (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011).

I analyzed data with pencil and paper. Traditional pencil and paper analysis interprets meaning from data while computer analysis provides positive and negative qualifying statements (Bright & O'Conner, 2007). I used an Excel spreadsheet to record, categorize, and draw themes from interview data and field notes. I physically entered interview information into Excel spreadsheet. Data analysis would occur in the following evaluation process. I read all data collected, highlighting themes and patterns for analysis. Reviewing all data creates a quality analysis (Yin, 2014). I coded data for organizational purposes and ease of retrieval, and promised to destroy information 5 years after the study ends. Electronic data erased and hard copy data shredded.

Data Analysis Technique

Researchers must prepare, analyze, and interpret data for meaning (Standing,

2009). Prior to beginning data analysis, I reviewed and transcribed recordings of the interview, and journal notes with paper and pencil. Although I did not perform a pilot test prior to conducting the interviews, the intent was to encourage participants to ask questions to gain clarity on any questions that might cause confusion. Participants received continual support throughout the interview process to ensure a clear understanding of each question. I used the following questions to interview participants.

The following interview questions support the central research question:

1. What is the timeline of your annual operating calendar?

2. How would you describe your professional relationship with local associations and charitable organizations within your area?

3. What have your experiences been regarding supporting local community events, or collaborating with, local associations or charities to fundraise?

4. What is your perspective about local associations and charities to provide space for them to advertise in your business?

5a. What, if any, benefits from your business establishing or fostering any relationship with local associations or charities?

5b. What, if any, drawbacks have you experienced from establishing or fostering any relationships with local associations and charities?

6. What would you consider as challenges for fostering relationships with local associations and charities to support local events or fundraising activities?

7. How would you describe the costs or investments of fostering these successful relationships?

8. What are your most successful relationships you have established in the community regarding building customer loyalty?

9a. What efforts if any have you made to build customer loyalty by collaborating with a charity or local associations?

9b. If so, how would you describe the success of this approach?

9c. How do you classify such a relationship as successful?

9d. What is the likelihood you would use this strategy again?

10. What business activities demonstrate your support of local associations and charities (for instance brochures, advertisements, products)?

11. How do these activities influence business sustainability?

12a. What other strategies, if any, have you considered for strengthening your presence in the community?

12b. If any, how successful have the strategies been?

13. How have these established relationships assisted you in forecast the next season profitability?

14. What additional information can you provide to help this investigation of successful small seasonal business relationships with local associations and charities?

Data analysis entails three steps:

1. Reviewing the transcribed data and identifying themes using a highlighter.

2. Cutting and sorting, which involves reviewing the data further and clustering information by words and phrases.

3. Scrutinizing and engaging, the final step to analyze data, which entails a

    further detailed review of codes and any additional data, drawing in systems

    theory and the central research question to ensure connections drawn reflect

    the foundation of the study.

Stakeholder theory provided the foundation for the proposed study designed to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. Internal and external stakeholders influence business-owner decisions. An intricate decision-making process of management is strategizing relationships with stakeholders, understanding the value stakeholders contribute to business decisions (Du et al., 2010; Gupta, 2011; Tang & Tang, 2012). I compared findings to stakeholder theory to see how SSB owners strategize with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits.

I analyzed all primary data from the 14 semistructured interview questions and the secondary data collected from business brochures, pamphlets, and websites. I identified patterns and themes from analyzing individual interviews and secondary data to categorize themes regarding SSB owners strategies for collaborating with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. Traditional pencil and paper analysis served as a suitable alternative to computer software application.

Traditional pencil and paper analysis interprets meaning from data while computer analysis provides positive and negative qualifying statements (Bright & O'Conner, 2007). I used pencil and paper analysis and an Excel Spreadsheet to organize,

code, and analyze raw data. Using pencil and paper analysis, I was able to cluster and code data by recurring patterns to develop themes (Bright & O'Conner, 2007). I provided a code letter and number to each participant to protect participant identity (P1, P2). Connecting themes together from the data collected provided an understanding of the phenomena studied (Tan, 2010). I identified themes using word repetition. I noted words used the most to ascribe meaning to perspectives and experiences by SSB owners as significant thematic statements. Information extracted from the interview process relating to local associations, charitable initiatives, CRM, and SSBs provided additional theme patterns.

<center>**Reliability and Validity**</center>

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability to repeat a study, following the same procedures, and finding similar results (Barusch, Gringeri, & George, 2011). Murphy and Yielder (2010) posited reliability would produce similar findings in different circumstances. Ali and Yusof (2011) termed reliability the assurance another researcher can duplicate the original research findings. Reliability can be in the form of documenting the research procedures so other researchers can repeat the study by following the steps documented. Proper documentation of research procedure provides repeatability of the research study (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Reliability of quantitative research depends on instrument construction. For qualitative research, the researcher is the research instrument. I documented procedures for tape recording interviews, taking interview notes, and interviewing participants. Consistently following the research method increased

reliability in the study (Ali & Yusof, 2011).

Member checking was part of the reliability process. Member checking included going back to the participants to confirm the interpretation of their responses to the questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Member checking can build trust between participant and interviewer and potentially opens participants up to offering more information on the phenomena after the interview process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Validity

Validity is the strength of qualitative research (Murphy & Yielder, 2010). Validating research through accurate methods, findings, listening more and talking less, and finding a balance through subjectivity, would create quality in qualitative research (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Yin (2014) posited no single approach to achieve research validity even if different methods of data interpretation exists. Lincoln and Guba (1985) termed trustworthiness as the qualitative equivalent to quantitative validity noting internal and external validity as associated only with quantitative research. Gelo, Braakman, and Benetka (2008) maintained validity in qualitative research starts with correct data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Threats to internal validity can jeopardize the research study if the researcher cannot conclude correct inferences from the population. False data from inferior experimental procedures in quantitative research or poor data collection from the participants in qualitative research can be a factor. Documenting steps of the procedures is necessary (Yin, 2014). External validity does not apply to qualitative case studies, as the idea is not to develop results generalizable to every settings; conversely, a case study

identifies unique patterns pertaining specifically to the population investigated (Yin, 2014). To eliminate internal validity concerns, I introduced member checking and triangulation as a validity strategy.

Member checking was a beneficial method to promote credibility in the study (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Member checking was an opportunity for participants interviewed to review and check accuracy of interview information they provided as interpreted by the interviewer (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Member checking provided participant validation to improve credibility, reliability, validity, and accuracy of data collected (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified member checking as the most critical validity strategy ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative study.

Triangulation was a validity strategy to strengthen a qualitative study (Ali & Yusof, 2011; Yin, 2014). Multiple sources of data were compared to triangulate the case study data providing multiple measures of the same phenomenon (Oleinik, 2011). Interviews, field notes and secondary data collection supported triangulating evidence of the study (Yin, 2014). Strategies used to validate qualitative research included triangulation with interviews, physical artifacts and websites, member checking to verify the accuracy of interview data, verbatim transcribing of data, and thick rich description of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Summary and Transition

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. In Section 2, I presented the

method and research procedures used in conducting qualitative case study research. The outline of Section 2 included the (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research method, (e) research design, (f) population and sampling, (g) ethical research, (h) data collection, (i) data organization technique, (j) data analysis, (k) reliability and validity, and (l) summary. In Section 3 I provide results of the research study, recommendations of professional practice and social change, and suggestions for future research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In this section, I present findings identifying what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with associations, and charitable organizations, to increase profits. With the study results, I reaffirm the relationship between themes found within the data, and the conceptual framework used. Section 3 includes the: (a) study overview, (b) presentation of findings, (c) discussion of the application of study's findings for professional practice, (d) social change implications, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) reflections on the research process, and (h) study's conclusions.

I conducted a research study guided by one central research question: what strategies do successful small seasonal businesses apply to improve profits? I developed the research questions to understand the different strategies four SSB owners use to increase profits. The data collection tools included semistructured, open-ended, face-to-face interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts. The targeted population for this study was four successful small seasonal business owners in Oakland County, Michigan, operating businesses for three years and demonstrating community involvement as a means of generating business profits.

In Section 3, I summarize the results of the research study in relation to the central research question and the conceptual framework. I used stakeholder theory as the conceptual framework for this study. The section concludes with data analysis, applications for professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further studies, and reflections of the researcher's experience.

Overview of Study

I conducted a qualitative case study to identify what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. In this study, I proposed one central research question: what strategies do successful small seasonal businesses apply to improve profits? Identifying and investigating the following research interview questions ensured rich data collection from the exploration of small seasonal business owners' perspectives of the business problem. Participants of the study responded to the following interview questions during the face-to-face interviews:

1. What is the timeline of your annual operating calendar?

2. How would you describe your professional relationship with local associations and charitable organizations within your area?

3. What have your experiences been regarding supporting local community events, or collaborating with, local associations or charities to fundraise?

4. What is your perspective about local associations and charities to provide space for them to advertise in your business?

5a. What, if any, benefits from your business establishing or fostering any relationship with local associations or charities?

5b. What, if any, drawbacks have you experienced from establishing or fostering any relationships with local associations and charities?

6. What would you consider as challenges for fostering relationships with local associations and charities to support local events or fundraising activities?

7. How would you describe the costs or investments of fostering these successful relationships?

8. What are your most successful relationships you have established in the community regarding building customer loyalty?

9a. What efforts if any have you made to build customer loyalty by collaborating with a charity or local associations?

9b. If so, how would you describe the success of this approach?

9c. How do you classify such a relationship as successful?

9d. What is the likelihood you would use this strategy again?

10. What business activities demonstrate your support of local associations and charities (for instance brochures, advertisements, products)?

11. How do these activities influence business sustainability?

12a. What other strategies, if any, have you considered for strengthening your presence in the community?

12b. If any, how successful have the strategies been?

13. How have these established relationships assisted you in forecast the next season profitability?

14. What additional information can you provide to help this investigation of successful small seasonal business relationships with local associations and charities?

I collected data through semistructured interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts retrieved from four small seasonal business owners in Oakland County,

Michigan with at least three years of business experience. Purposeful sampling was the process for participant selection. I made initial contact with potential purposively selected participants by telephone to introduce myself, explain the purpose of the proposed study, and inquire about the criteria to participate. I verbally invited small seasonal business owners to participate in the study. Once I generated interest from the potential participant and received verbal agreement, I emailed the informed consent form (see Appendix A). I requested participants sign and return the consent response by email. Interview appointments were scheduled after receipt of signed consent form. Participants gave approval to recordings prior to interviews.

I interviewed four participants, then stopped the process, as the responses shared by the final participant added no new information. I conducted four face-to-face interviews at SSB owners offices. To triangulate the research, I conducted an independent search for second-hand documents and literature review relevant for exploration of the study research question and interview questions. Beyond the interviews, additional data information collected for the study included calendars and websites (see Appendix D).

I conducted face-to-face interviews and transcribed the digital audio recordings. Participants answered 14 interview questions (see Appendix C). I explored the documentation, which included the golf course work schedules identifying special events and tasks for employees. I also explored physical artifacts including calendars and organizational websites. Once transcribed, information from interviews, combined with calendars and websites provided ample information for data analysis.

I conducted data analysis with paper and pencil for codes, keywords, and emerging themes. I applied member checking to strengthen the credibility of the case study. Participants received an email draft of my findings and interpretations to request their opinion regarding the accuracy of the information.

I collected data, analyzed data and coded data for information, provided a mixture of interpretations about what strategies SSB owners could implement to increase profits through community collaboration. Five primary themes emerged from the study leading to a better understanding of small seasonal business strategies. The five themes emerging from the study included:

1. Brand Awareness

2. Community Involvement

3. Customer Loyalty

4. Seizing Operational Opportunities

5. Recapture Lost Revenue

Small seasonal business owners introduced brand awareness to the community to strengthen the business-community relationship. In the first theme, participants emphasized the value of brand awareness and drawing future business opportunities from previous successes. The more events and golf rounds the golf course owner supports, the more exposure to other revenue generating activities the golf course owner would engage in to make profits. I discovered community involvement as the second theme SSB owners applied to advertise the business. In the third theme, participants stressed the importance of customer loyalty. Participants used the facility for additional revenues

promoted the optimization of operational opportunities. In the fifth theme, participants

emphasized the importance of recapturing lost revenues. Small seasonal business owners

reached out to schools to help celebrate and engage in sporting events to bring in lost

revenue. Themes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 affirmed the stakeholder theory. From the findings,

participants identified strategies SSB owners can apply to increase profits through

community collaboration. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what

strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to

collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits.

Exploring the strategies that increase profits for SSB owners was a prominent aspect of

the research study.

Presentation of the Findings

In this study, I addressed the research question: What strategies do successful

small seasonal businesses owners apply to improve profits? I developed the following

themes based on the findings from the information gathered from the participants,

documentation, and physical artifacts. The themes gathered from the four participants

were as follows:

1. Brand Awareness

2. Community Involvement

3. Customer Loyalty

4. Seizing Operational Opportunities

5. Recapture Lost Revenue

The emerged themes from the participants, documentation and physical artifacts may be factors in business strategy for SSB owners to increase profits. In the following subsections, I describe (a) the participant sample, (b) the five themes, (c) how the participants answered the 14 interview questions, (d) how the data assisted in addressing the central research question, (e) aligned with existing research, and (f) how I supported the choice of stakeholder theory as the conceptual framework for this research.

Descriptive Data of Participants

Participants consisted of SSB owners with a minimum of three years' experience; specifically, four experienced SSB owners of golf courses in Oakland County, Michigan.

Themes

Through semistructured interviews, documentation, and physical artifacts, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of issues related to small seasonal business sustainability. After careful and deliberate research and thorough analysis, I exposed several themes related to the phenomenon. The following is a description of the themes.

Theme 1: Brand Awareness. In the first theme, participants emphasized the need for brand awareness to increase visibility and availability to as many prospective golfers as possible. A charity event or a high school banquet may introduce someone to the facility and a game of golf. Brand awareness was an approach to entice people's interest by getting them onto the grounds. One participant noted:

> Someone comes to an event at our facility, they talk about it for days, then
>
> remember the facility when they have a family member getting married and
>
> suggest to them to look at our facility for the wedding reception especially since

the grounds are so beautiful and the service is great (P2 interview).

Gofman and Moskowitz (2010) argued that marketing synergy is part of the innovation process and business performance. Results revealed 100% (4/4) of participants thought SSBs need brand awareness. Table 1 provides participants supporting statements.

Table 1

Theme 1: Brand Awareness

Participant	Participant comment
P1	We allow people to take Prom or Homecoming pictures on our facility that generates brand awareness through many guest who are not familiar with our grounds. Having Prom dinners and Homecoming dinners allows brand awareness to future golfers.
P3	Charity events provide great brand awareness to people who are not in the area, but come out to the charity event. They may bring their spouse out to a game of golf at our facility.
P4	We have many municipality golfing events and we get golfers to come back again and people to come out to dinner.

In the first theme, participants identified the need for brand awareness. Brand awareness, visibility, and availability create new business opportunities and revenue by introducing the SSB to new clients. Implementing community-building initiatives creates brand awareness generating new business. Through community-building initiatives, SSB

owners gain customer loyalty and promote specific products fostering customer demand (Chia & Peters, 2010).

      Theme 2: Community Involvement. In the second theme, participants emphasized the importance of community involvement. Small seasonal business owners might be active through local associations such as the Chamber of Commerce, school functions, sporting events, civic meetings, or a downtown authority group. Owners of SSBs may participate in local community events or charities. Proietti (2012) posited that small seasonal businesses require rigorous development within the surrounding community. Besser (2012) noted the prosperity of SSB ownership evolved from the welfare of the community. Community welfare was a decisive factor in developing a business strategy for SSB owners to increase profits. I analyzed data to understand the significant factors of community involvement. From the results, I found 100% (4/4) of participants thought community involvement was critical for SSB owners to increase profits. Participant 1 (P1) stated, "We never participated in any community activity until I came on board, now we participate in many communities and continue to grow the business."Table 2 provides participants supporting statements.

Table 2

Theme 2: Community Involvement

Participant	Participant comment
P2	We are involved with the local chamber of commerce, local schools, and local charities. This involvement within the community does increase revenues, increasing financial bottom line in a positive way.
P3	We participate in fundraisers to support local charities. It supports our business and makes us a good neighbor in the community. Supporting the community can never be bad.
P4	We attend 90% of all local community functions to get growth.

In this community involvement theme, participants emphasized the importance of community relations for SSB owners. Small seasonal business owners are collaborating with charities forming partnerships to raise both money and brand awareness. Similarities existed between the theme and concepts proposed by Proietti (2012), whereas SSB owners may build on ethical decisions to profit and while serving the community.

Theme 3: Customer Loyalty. In the third theme, participants emphasized the need for customer loyalty. Loyal customers provide repeat business for SSB. At the beginning of the new season, the business owner already may rely on a certain percentage of repeat business for budgeting and forecasting. Participant 4 (P4) stated, "Well, 92% of our outings are repeat business. We work the community extremely hard to get business,

creating customer loyalty. I have a full-time salesperson who attends all community

activities, and I would attend during the off-season." P4 also stated, "Our quality of

service brings in repeat business as the customer has tested the product and knew the

quality of service is a good value every time a customer attends an event." Owners of

SSBs may gain customer loyalty through quality of service, and SSB owners making the

customer feel important.

P4 stated, "Getting back to the customer immediately when they have questions

about their outing, making the customer feel important develops customer loyalty." From

the results, I found 100% (4/4) of participants thought SSBs needed repeat business to

ensure long-term sustainability. Table 3 provides participants supporting statements.

Table 3

Theme 3:Customer Loyalty

Participant	Participant comment
P1	It is a win-win for both parties. Charity is happy to have an event in a nice facility, and we are happy to have the money coming into our facility.
P2	Repeat business is important. We sign 10-year contracts to keep business and make money.
P3	Charities would sign up for next year on the day of the event. Usually get 3-year contract. Repeat business is important to our sustainability.

Theme 4: Seizing Operational Opportunities. Small seasonal business owners seized operational opportunities to maximize facility use to generate revenues during non-peak hours. The facility is open, and the staff is on-duty, hence, slow non-peak times bringing in a banquet, or donating golf time through a charity may bring in revenue to the golf course. Small seasonal business owners may gain business revenue through operating smarter during slow business hours. P1 stated, "Having a charity banquet on a Tuesday night when I already have staff on duty doesn't cost the club anything, and the club could make money on an otherwise slow night." P1 also noted, "Donating a foursome for golf on a Tuesday night allows the golf club to get four extra dinners. Golfers may reciprocate having dinner at the golf facility. Golf fees on non-peak hours are at a discount rate." Small business owners need to be resilient and innovate by reinventing new strategies for themselves and their customers as circumstances change (Demmer et al., 2011). In exploring the findings, I noted 100% (4/4) of participants thought SSBs needed nonpeak business to increase profitability. Table 4 provides participants supporting statements.

Table 4

Theme 4: Seizing Operational Opportunities

Participant	Participant comment
P2	We can stay busy during our slow time.
P3	Usually do not have to bring any additional staff into support event
P4	Utilizing golf during non-peak hours is 35% of our business

In the seizing operational opportunities theme, participants emphasized the need to use the golf facility during nonpeak times to generate other business revenues. Small seasonal business owners may benefit from taking advantage of corporate social opportunities. Corporate social opportunity is a method of seeking nontraditional entrepreneurialism through community-building initiatives (Lefebvre & Lefebvre, 2012).

Theme 5: Recapture Lost Revenue. Golfers, and golf course owners, are dependent on favorable weather conditions. If the springtime is cold and rainy, many disheartened golfers stay home, and the lost revenue, is not recoverable later in the season. The SSB owners attempt to recoup lost revenue by offering more in-house banquets that are less weather dependent. Golf course owners have banquet facilities as part of the landscape, and golf course owners reach out to the community offering sports banquets and charity banquets. P1 stated:

> We love the hockey team, ski team, volleyball team, lacrosse team, basketball team, baseball team, football team, swim team, and the soccer team. These teams

are all opportunities for us to make up lost revenue with no real out of cost

expense.

P1 also stated, "This is how we become sustainable especially during our slow

time as I am able to keep staff employed and busy." Small seasonal business owners

might gain knowledge regarding the target market, ensuring business growth, and

reducing concern for business failure by implementing new business marketing strategies

(Gofman & Moskowitz, 2010). From the results, I found 75% (3/4) of participants

thought SSBs needed to recapture lost revenue while 25% (1/4) of participants thought

events made up the loss. In Table 5, I provide participants' supporting statements.

Table 5

Theme 5: Recapture Lost Revenue

Participant	Participant comment
P3	Banquets are a great way to grow our business. We would get additional banquet business from the banquet. We encourage this to offset our weather related losses.
P4	Try to capture springtime school activities to host banquets to offset weather-related losses. Employee staff is already working, so hosting banquet is added revenue.

In this theme, participants emphasized the need to capture lost revenues.

Reciprocal relations between businesses and stakeholders evolve simply by companies

providing services related to a specific cause or social interest, thus drawing stakeholders,

and related opportunities for growth. This theme is consistent with concepts presented by Madsen and Bingham (2014), and related opportunities may be advancements in technologies used by the organization promoting organizational growth. Small seasonal business owners might increase revenue by using the facility for banquets to garner new business growth to capture revenue loss from the weather.

Research Question

The central research question that guided the data collection and data analysis for this research focused on strategies small seasonal business owners can implement through community collaboration to increase profits. Leaders may develop business strategies from the research findings to increase profits. This question was: What strategies do successful small seasonal businesses owners apply to improve profits? I answered the central research question through 14 interview questions answered by four participants. The four participants responded to every interview question in a face-to-face interview (see Appendix E) providing depth of knowledge to the study. Participants answered interview questions (see Appendix A, Appendix C, and Appendix E) and five themes emerged. The five themes from the participants' response include:

1. Brand Awareness

2. Community Involvement

3. Customer Loyalty

4. Seizing Operational Opportunities

5. Recapture Lost Revenue

In the following subsection, I describe participant responses to Interview

Questions 1-14 which provided the primary data to answer the central research question, raw data from participants are represented in Appendix E.

Interview Question 1: What is the timeline of your annual operating calendar?

The purpose of this question was to gain insight into the amount of time the seasonal business is open for business. Each participant answered; seasonal business is weather dependent (see Table E1 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants). Golf is the core business and weather affects rounds of golf every year. On average, all businesses open mid-March and close mid-November. The participants' raw data from interviews remains stored on a password-protected database (see Appendix E). All participants (4/4), stated the operating calendar starts in Mid-March and ends Mid-November.

Interview Question 2: How would you describe your professional relationship with local associations and charitable organizations within your area?

All participants (4/4), indicated their professional relationship with local associations and charitable organizations were superb. All participants (4/4), stated they conduct business with charities, schools, and Chambers of Commerce. Fewer participants, only 25% (1/4), indicated they participate with Michigan Golf Association to get experienced golfers on the course (see Table E2 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants). Additionally, 25% of participants (1/4), stated they put on tournaments for Michigan Junior Golf Program to grow and attract younger golfers to the facility. All participants (4/4) indicated that relationships with local associations, and charities were

critical for SSB sustainability.

Interview Question 3: What have your experiences been regarding supporting local community events, or collaborating with, local associations or charities to fundraise?

All participants (4/4) indicated that personal experiences with patrons had been magnificent creating referral business and increased traffic through the golf facility. One participant (1/4) responded experiences could never be bad. Half of the participants (2/4) noted, experiences provide recognition to the SSB owner for being a good neighbor. All participants (4/4) mentioned experiences create market exposure. All participants (4/4) noted SSB owner's experiences have been positive, providing new opportunities for SSB to promote additional business and capturing additional revenues (see Table E3 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

Interview Question 4: What is your perspective about local associations and charities to provide space for them to advertise in your business?

Most participants (3/4) indicated SSB owners do not permit advertising in the business except on the day of the charity or local association event (see Table E4 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants). One participant (1/4) provided SSB owners do not advertise noting advertising commercializes the facility. All participants (4/4) indicated SSB owners approve advertising anywhere on the facility the day of the event. All participants (4/4) stated SSB owners participate in advertising to promote the charity event on the day of the event but 75% (3/4) of participants responded, SSB owners would not allow advertising at any other time.

Interview Question 5a: What, if any, benefits from your business establishing or fostering any relationship with local associations or charities?

All participants (4/4) responded making money, market exposure, and goodwill as benefits to establishing or fostering relationships with charities or local associations. Half of the participants (2/4) indicated the benefits of supporting charities or local associations are, members of the charities are pleased after the event and express happiness. One participant (1/4) noted an SSB owner night count on new customers as a benefit for fostering relationships with local associations or charities. Half of the participants (2/4) indicated repeat business as a benefit to establishing relationships with local associations or charities (see Table E5a in Appendix E for raw data from the participants). All participants (4/4) noted benefits are from increased revenues, increased people traffic, and positive community attitudes.

Interview Question 5b: What, if any, drawbacks have you experienced from establishing or fostering any relationships with local associations and charities?

In Table E5b (see Appendix E), half of the participants (2/4) indicated there are no drawbacks from relationships with local associations or charities. Half of the participants (2/4) responded that we were helping ourselves when we helped a charity or local community so there are no drawbacks. One participant (1/4) noted; drawbacks occur because charities forget we need to make money on the event. Another participant (1/4) stated the only time there is potential for a drawback when fostering relationships with charities is if the golf course could have booked a party at the facility with the full banquet rate but instead booked the charity at discount pricing. Half of the participants

(2/4) noted, there are no real drawbacks from establishing relationships with local associations or charities.

Interview Question 6: What would you consider as challenges for fostering relationships with local associations and charities to support local events or fundraising activities?

The biggest challenge related to fostering relationships with local associations and charities to support local events is when there is a change in stewardship. Most participants (3/4) indicated changing the person in charge of the charity makes a job difficult because the new person required training(see Table E6 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants). One participant (1/4) responded charities forget golf courses are a business, and need to make money. One participant (1/4) noted, charities usually do not have money to pay for a fundraiser, so decisions on the event are difficult to make with the budget so small.

Interview Question 7: How would you describe the cost of investment of fostering these successful relationships?

Half of the participants (2/4) noted, SSB owners schedule employees for shifts already, so costs are low, and the facility is open, there are no burden costs. One participant (1/4) stated costs are minimal, resulting from chamber annual dues, breakfasts, and lunches associated with monthly chamber meetings. All participants (4/4) responded, costs of investment for fostering successful relationships is long term because owners can brings in repeat business for the golf course. All participants (4/4) indicated costs of investment fostering successful relationships are worth all the time and effort

associated with the relationship. Most participants (3/4) responded that costs for

investments were low or minimal, but relationships create repeat business for SSB

owners making the costs of fostering successful relationships worth the time and effort

(see Table E7 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

Interview Question 8: What are your most successful relationships you have

established in the community regarding building customer loyalty?

All participants (4/4) indicated most successful relationships SSB owners

established in the community to build customer loyalty were hospitals, schools, and

Chamber of Commerce (see Table E8 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

One participant (1/4) responded, due to building customer loyalty in the community, the

catering business grew for community business meetings. One participant (1/4) stated,

because of customer loyalty in the community with charities, and local associations

individual and family fundraisers were growing events at the facility. All participants

(4/4) indicated building relationships with hospitals, schools, and Chamber of Commerce

builds customer loyalty in the community and creates new business opportunities with

repeat business for SSB owners.

Interview Question 9a: What efforts if any have you made to build customer

loyalty by collaborating with a charity or local associations?

All participants (4/4) indicated efforts SSB owners made to build customer

loyalty by collaborating with a charity or local association included showing appreciation

to the charity for their business(see Table E9a in Appendix E for raw data from the

participants). Half of the participants (2/4) noted, SSB owners build customer loyalty by

providing complete access for the charity to use the golf facility. All participants (4/4) responded SSB owners build customer loyalty by participating in local association and charity events. All participants (4/4) responded SSB owners build customer loyalty by being active in local association and charity events.

Interview Question 9b: If so, how would you describe the success of this approach?

Most participants (3/4) responded success of this approach is good. All participants (4/4) indicated repeat business is a result of the success of this approach. Half of the participants (2/4) noted, goodwill is a result of community collaboration making this approach a successful strategy. One participant (1/4) responded golf rounds increase using this approach, making this approach successful. All participants (4/4) noted, repeat business and increased rounds of golf are results of this approach (see Table E9b in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

Interview Question 9c: How do you classify such a relationship as successful?

In Table E9c (see Appendix E), all participants (4/4) indicated a relationship is successful if SSB owners can make money from the local association event or charity. All participants (4/4) responded, a relationship is successful if market exposure to new clients results in increased traffic through the golf facility bringing in new business later in the year. Half of the participants (2/4) noted, relationships are successful if charity representatives are happy after the event is over. All participants (4/4) responded relationships are successful for SSB owners by making money on the event and the flow of people traffic picks up after the event is over. Charity representatives need to feel

good about the funds raised from the event.

Interview Question 9d: What is the likelihood you would use this strategy again?

All participants (4/4) responded building customer loyalty by collaborating with local associations and charities is a successful strategy, and there is no reason to change this approach. All participants (4/4) indicated the experience of SSB owners demonstrates collaborating with local associations and charities builds customer loyalty (see Table E9d in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

Interview Question 10: What business activities demonstrate your support of local associations and charities (for instance brochures, advertisements, products)?

All participants (4/4) responded word of mouth and SSB owner website are business activities demonstrating SSB owners support local associations and charities. One participant (1/4) noted, SSB owners participate with local schools by promoting charity activities through school calendars. All participants (4/4) noted, announcing activities through brochures and fliers are too expensive with little business return. Most of the communication about the charity event is through word of mouth. All participants (4/4) noted, word of mouth is the best form of communicating charity events for SSB owners (see Table E10 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants). Brochures and fliers are too expensive and do not seem to provide enough communication outreach.

Interview Question 11: How do these activities influence business sustainability?

One participant (1/4) stated SSB owners had some business for 20 years providing

a consistent foundation for sustainability. All participants (4/4) responded, collaborating with local associations and charities provided customer loyalty, and long-term promotes SSB sustainability. Most participants (3/4) stated staff plan charity events at non-peak times and SSB staff are already in place so there is no additional costs to have a charity event, making many charity events profitable. One participant (1/4) stated we love school events because we can keep busy during slow times adding to the bottom line and sustainability. All participants (4/4) stated SSB owners benefit from charity events during non-peak business hours and increase revenues, establishing relationships in the community, and building loyalty (see Table E11 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

Interview Question 12a: What other strategies, if any, have you considered for strengthening your presence in the community?

Half of the participants (2/4) stated SSB owners are trying to narrow their community involvement relationships by working with police and fire departments as a new strategy. All participants (4/4) noted, continually building relationships through community involvement strengthens SSB owner presence in the community and is a strategy that works. One participant(1/4) stated print and brochures are too expensive and just do not reach intended parties as word of mouth does as a communication forum. Half of the participants (2/4) responded the best form of sustainability is community involvement, and SSB owners would continue to do what works. All participants (4/4) responded the best strategy for SSB owners is to establish and maintain SSB community involvement(see Table E12a in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

Interview Question 12b: If any, how successful have the strategies been?

All participants (4/4) stated an intent to continue to use the current strategies as current strategies work splendid. Most participants (3/4) stated they have not tried anything new because the current strategy works well. One participant (1/4) responded we try new ideas to make sure we do not miss a new strategy to make us sustainable. All participants (4/4) noted, SSB owners are content with the current strategies that make SSBs sustainable (see Table E12b in Appendix E for raw data from the participants).

Interview Question 13: How have these established relationships assisted you in forecast the next season profitability?

All participants (4/4) responded established relationships assist in forecasting business as SSB owners rely on repeat business as a foundation for forecasting. One participant (1/4) noted, established relationships are important, as 92% of outings are repeat business from the previous year (see Table E13 in Appendix E for raw data from the participants). Most participants (3/4) stated scheduling staff for work hours is easier when an SSB owner can count on repeat revenues from the previous year. Small seasonal business owners count on repeat business for scheduling staff and forecasting for the next year revenue.

Interview Question 14: What additional information can you provide to help this investigation of successful small seasonal business relationships with local associations and charities?

Half of the participants (2/4) indicated quality of the product determines the chance of SSB owners getting repeat business on a continued basis. All participants (4/4)

responded community involvement and market exposure is critical to the success of

business relationships and sustainability. Most participants (3/4) noted, getting the SSB

name into the community is important to the success of the company. Half of the

participants (1/4) state SSB owners need to get the name into the community instead of

waiting for the community to find out about SSB (see Table E14 in Appendix E for raw

data from the participants).

Review of Case Study Documents

Table 6

Description of Reviewed Case Study Documents

Document identification	Description
Document 1	Golf Course Master Calendar
Document 2	Golf Course Schedule of School Banquets
Document 3	Golf Course Schedule of Annual Charity Events
Document 4	Golf Course Municipal Fundraiser

Document 1, a golf course master calendar is available at the beginning of the season providing dates the golf course hosts charity events, banquets, weddings, business social events, and business meeting. The general manager revised the calendar during the season, as the manager scheduled new events. Participants corroborated the findings identified in the calendar through community involvement, customer loyalty, and seizing operational opportunities. Calendar dates included charity lunches, local business breakfast meetings, and municipal outings.

Document 2 was a golf course schedule of school banquets showing the reserved dates for school sporting banquets and offsite school administration meetings. Document 3 was a schedule of annual charity events at the golf course. The printed charity event sheet was available for all employees. Copies were available in the baggage area, golf cart storage, kitchen, maintenance area, and administrative offices. Document 4, a golf course schedule of municipal fundraisers, available to all administrative golf course personnel, and employees can determine how to set up banquet rooms or dining rooms

for guests.

Four physical artifacts were used as sources of evidence in this study. Physical Artifact 1 was a website providing relevant information on the charity event. Physical Artifact 2 was another website available to employees to allow scheduling of school banquets and school administration meetings. The website included information pertaining to charity events, school banquets, and school district board meetings. Through this website the general managers provided information that contributed to the study by demonstrating how parts of the system interact making the whole a dynamic, and synergetic set of activities involving multiple employees within the organization (e.g., von Bertallanfy, 2009).

Physical Artifact 3, similar to Physical Artifact 1, was a website the golf course managers used to depict relevant information about annual charity and social events. Physical Artifact 4 was a website source used by the general manager to schedule municipal fundraiser events and golf league outings. Physical Artifact 5, the welcome boards, stand at the front entrance as a welcoming gesture to guests of the event. The general manager was responsible for putting the correct information and announcement on the welcome board.

Applications to Professional Practice

Identifying best business strategies is critical to the success of small business. Most participants indicated business strategies to increase profits through community collaboration need to include customer loyalty, seizing operational opportunities, recapturing lost revenues, and generating market exposure. I identified common factors

that contributed to increased profits through community collaboration. Particiapnts would receive a summary of findings as a resource for SSB owners to use to develop business strategies.

The findings of the current study apply to small seasonal businesses in several ways including (a) promoting community involvement, (b) creating customer loyalty, and (c) seizing operational opportunities. By conducting this research, I contribute to the existing literature and provide rich data to the body of knowledge regarding small seasonal business strategies. A critical emerging theme of the study was the significant role community involvement plays in the sustainability of SSBs. Community involvement provides visibility, product awareness, and social opportunity. Besser (2012) noted the prosperity of SSB ownership evolved from the welfare of the community.

The research may fill a gap in knowledge regarding small seasonal business strategies to improve profits. The findings of the study may be helpful to all small business owners. The owner's role in business strategy and economic performance supports the dynamic capabilities of the organization (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the creation of proactive strategies to increase business profits. Improved business sustainability fosters a strong economy, producing employment, community goodwill, and profitability. Owners of SBs receive pressure from internal and external stakeholders regarding appropriate use of

business resources (Neubaum, Dibrell, & Craig, 2012). Ignoring the needs of internal and external stakeholders can prove fatal for the success of an SB owner (Blower & Mahajan, 2013).

The knowledge gained from this study may direct small seasonal business owners to collaborate with communities, local association, or charities to increase profits. Strategies shared by participants may assist small business owners considering collaboration with charities or local associations. The strategies to create community collaboration can support SSB owners to increase productivity, promote employee development, and maintain talent and profitability.

Recommendations for Action

The synthesis of themes derived from the case study interviews, documents reviewed, and physical artifacts supported the identification of five recommended actions that SSB owners should consider for increasing profits through community collaboration. Lack of business strategies may have a significant influence on business (Patockova, 2012). The following five recommendations may assist SSB owners with implementing strategies to promote the value of community collaboration.

First, SSB owners conducting business should promote, communicate, and understand that community involvement is critical to sustainability. Small seasonal business owners could develop and nurture community relationships to increase revenues through collaborating with the local community. The organization owner must plan the process, strategically communicate the purpose to the community, and monitor the economic outcome for the organizations (Maas & Liket, 2010).

Second, SSB owners should recognize the value of customer loyalty as primary strategy of business sustainability. I recommend SSB owners develop and encourage long-term relationships with customers to gain customer loyalty a predict and achieve a steady flow of business revenue. Eikenberry (2013) found the social influence and participation of volunteers in cause-related marketing and fundraising events generates customer loyalty and commitment. Eikenberry illustrated the one-to-one contact and intermingling between volunteers, customers, and business owners established increased spending than not engaging the social interaction.

Third, SSB owners could recognize seizing operational opportunities as critical to operating a successful SSB. I recommend SSB owners use the facility during non-peak hours to add revenue for the golf course operations through school sporting events and league functions. Owners offering flexibility of services may broaden the scope of customer appeal and generate increased profits.

Fourth, SSB owners must recapture lost revenues from inclement weather to start the season. I recommend that SSB owners promote banquet facilities to add revenues to the golf course. The strategy may promote even distribution of services throughout the season and expand on ways of profiting within the industry.

Fifth, SSB owners should provide visibility and availability of the facilities to the community for events. I recommend that SSB owners use the facility to host individual parties, weddings, charity black tie events, reunions, and board meetings. Marketing strategies may be in the form of market segmentation allowing SSB owners to define a group of people who would be most receptive to the SSB owner's products (Gofman &

Moskowitz, 2010).

The themes identified by the participants support the recommendations above as the participants noted the value of community involvement, customer loyalty, seizing operational opportunities, recapture lost revenue, and market exposure. Effective communication between SSB owners and stakeholders would foster mutually supportive relationships as well as providing a shared vision of shared initiatives and organizational growth. The audience for the doctoral study should include owners of SSBs, community leaders, stakeholders, business consultants, academic practitioners, charity stewardships, and researchers who may build upon the findings to further add to the body of knowledge on small business proactive strategies for long-term sustainability.

Recommendations for Further Study

The first recommendation is to conduct future research with a different market segment of small seasonal business owners, not to include golf courses. Opportunities for further studies may include ski lodges or vacation resorts. The second recommendation for future research is to conduct a quantitative study of seasonal small businesses. The contributions of a quantitative study approach may also add further insight regarding small seasonal business strategies to increase profits through community collaboration. A quantitative study applying a survey distributed to service recipients may provide valuable data to inform owners of issues related to strategic planning and growth. A quantitative study may contribute to valuable changes within the industry targeting customer needs.

The third recommendation for future research would be to conduct a qualitative case study with charities to gain perspectives on working with seasonal small businesses. Research study on charities may provide a different perspective on strategies to increase profits through community collaboration. Small seasonal business owners may gain insight regarding new strategies to promote charity relationships and charity events.

In addition, a fourth recommendation would be to conduct a phenomenological study. Researchers who conduct a phenomenological study often attempt to engage participants in a deep and meaningful discussion to understand the uniqueness of their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological approach could uncover details about lived experiences adding depth of understanding into a broader context of SSB ownership.

Reflections

Results of the study confirmed my perception that a qualitative case study approach is an effective method to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. My preconceptions about collecting data were inaccurate. I did not realize how difficult it would be to get participants together to interview after confirming willingness to participate. Several participants did not respond to any of my email correspondence after consenting even though they were very responsive on the initial introductory phone call. I conducted the interviews following an interview protocol to ensure consistency, and all participants responded to each question. I took copious notes to support my digital recordings and compared the notes to digital

audio recording for accuracy. I did not plan for the length of time to transcribe interviews correctly. My goal conducting the qualitative exploratory case study was to build my competence as a qualitative researcher with no predetermined outcome.

The interview process was exciting and uplifting. Participants were eager to participate in the study, and, to the best of my knowledge, responded openly and honestly. During the course of the interviews, I realized the importance of strategic techniques to increase profits. The majority of the participants mentioned community involvement, customer loyalty, seizing operational opportunities, recapture lost revenue, and market exposure. Participants through the interviews process provided a time of reflection of the years of service and the goodwill they provided to the less fortunate. I am grateful to the business owners for opening up to me to share business leadership strategies and accomplishments.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan may use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. Small to medium-size enterprises are vulnerable to market changes and may struggle with planning growth (Ismail et al., 2011). Small seasonal business owners may not know what strategies to implement to increase profits through community collaboration. Small, seasonal businesses face further challenges in capturing customer loyalty over a briefer period and annually, must generate enough profits to sustain the company (Corluka et al., 2013). Owners of SSBs need to rethink business strategies to incorporate new principles and

ideas to adapt to societal and stakeholder expectations (Stellwagen, 2012; Steyn &

Niemann, 2013).

Five themes emerged from the study (a) brand awareness, (b) community

involvement, (c) customer loyalty, (d) seizing operational opportunities, and (e) recapture

lost revenue. Small seasonal business owners may desire to work in partnership with

communities, local association, or charities to increase profits. The implications for

social change from the findings of this doctoral study include improving SSB owner's

leadership skills, more community involvement, optimizing employee skills, and

providing job satisfaction to employees.

I concluded from the findings that brand awareness, community involvement,

customer loyalty, seizing operational opportunities, and recapture lost revenue, were

significant strategies increasing profits through community collaboration. Small seasonal

business owners need to involve themselves in the community to generate business

revenue, create social opportunities, and develop customer loyalty and the prospect for

future customers. Incorporating these strategies may help small seasonal business owners

remain sustainable, season after season.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Date

Name of Business
Owner-Manager
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Owner-Manager:

As a doctoral candidate and businessperson, I am conducting a research study exploring what strategies seasonal small business owners in Oakland County, Michigan might use to collaborate with local associations and charitable organizations to increase profits. The title of this study is: Small Seasonal Business Strategies to Improve Profits Through Community Collaboration.

The researcher is requesting participants who own and operate a small seasonal business in Oakland County, MI, for at least three years and demonstrate community involvement as a means of generating business profits. If you agree to participate in this study you would be asked to:

➢ Participate in a 45-60 minute interview, audio recorded, and transcribed.

➢ Conduct member-checking-I would interpret participants perspective, seeking participants opinions about my findings and interpretations to assure it matches participants intentions for mutual understanding.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline or discontinue participation at any time in the research study with no negative effect and data collected would be destroyed upon your request. Participation in this study would not pose a risk

to your safety or health. Participants would not receive compensation for participating.

Individual interview responses and information collected would remain confidential. Public information such as advertisements and brochures regarding charity involvement may be requested. Only identifiers (P1, P2) would identify study participants Electronic data collected would be stored on a password protected memory stick in a locked file cabinet for no less than 5 years. Physical data collected would be stored in a locked file cabinet for 5 years. All data would be destroyed after five years. Electronic data would be erased and hard copy data would be shredded.

The benefits of this study could provide knowledge regarding strategies used by Seasonal Small Businesses to improve profits through community collaboration. The results of the research may be published.

If you have general questions concerning this research, please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email (xxxx.xxxx@xxx.xxx). If you want to discuss privately about your rights Dr. Leilani Endicott, Walden University representative can discuss with you. Dr. Leilani Endicott phone number is 1-800-xxx-xxxx. I have a legal obligation during the course of this study, if you disclose to me any illegal activity, to report this illegal activity to the study organization and proper authorities. Walden University approval number for this study is **10-01-14-0192300** with expiration date of **September 30, 2014.** Researcher would provide you a copy of this form.

Thank you in advance for your support and confidence in this research study.

Sincerely,

Kevin Gibbons, Doctoral Candidate

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood fully the information contained in this consent form and hereby voluntarily participate in this study. By emailing the researcher the words "I consent," I agree to the terms described in this form.

Appendix B: Certificate of Ethical Compliance

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Kevin Gibbons** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 11/13/2010

Certification Number: 569582
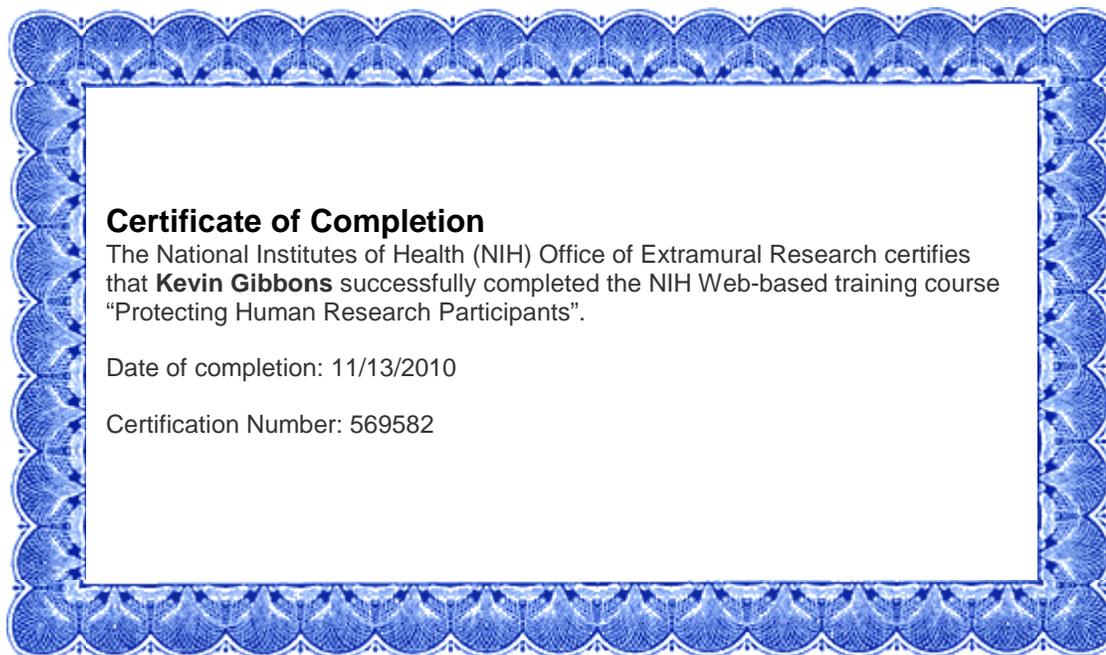
Appendix C: Semistructured Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What is the timeline of your annual operating calendar?

2. How would you describe your professional relationship with local associations and charitable organizations within your area?

3. What have your experiences been regarding supporting local community events, or collaborating with, local associations or charities to fundraise?

4. What is your perspective about local associations and charities to provide space for them to advertise in your business?

5a. What, if any, benefits from your business establishing or fostering any relationship with local associations or charities?

5b. What, if any, drawbacks have you experienced from establishing or fostering any relationships with local associations and charities?

6. What would you consider as challenges for fostering relationships with local associations and charities to support local events or fundraising activities?

7. How would you describe the costs or investments of fostering these successful relationships?

8. What are your most successful relationships you have established in the community regarding building customer loyalty?

9a. What efforts if any have you made to build customer loyalty by collaborating with a charity or local associations?

9b. If so, how would you describe the success of this approach?

9c.	How do you classify such a relationship as successful?

9d.	What is the likelihood you would use this strategy again?

10.	What business activities demonstrate your support of local associations and charities (for instance brochures, advertisements, products)?

11.	How do these activities influence business sustainability?

12a.	What other strategies, if any, have you considered for strengthening your presence in the community?

12b.	If any, how successful have the strategies been?

13.	How have these established relationships assisted you in forecast the next season profitability?

14.	What additional information can you provide to help this investigation of successful small seasonal business relationships with local associations and charities?

Appendix D: Case Study Documents

Document identification	Description
Document 1	Golf Course Calendar
Document 2	Golf Course Schedule of School Banquets
Document 3	Golf Course Schedule of Annual Charity Events
Document 4	Golf Course Municipal Fundraiser

Appendix E:Invariant Constituents to Interview Questions

Table E1

What is the timeline of your annual operating calendar?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Seasonally	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
October 1 to September 30	2	50%	P1,P3
Weather dependent	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Middle of March to Mid November	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Office close November to February	2	50%	P1,P3
Banquet facility close December & January	2	50%	P1,P3

Table E2

How would you describe your professional relationship with local associations and

charitable organizations within your area?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Michigan golf association	1	25%	P1
Junior Golf	1	25%	P1
Great relationship with associations, charities, & local community	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Charity events	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
School events	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Business events	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Weekly charity request	1	25%	P2
Belong to Chamber of Commerce	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Very good	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Attend 90% of Chamber events	1	25%	P4

Table E3

What have your experiences been regarding supporting local community events, or

collaborating with, local associations or charities to fundraise?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Very good	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Good exposure in community	2	50%	P1,P3
Market exposure	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Creates referrals for other non golfing events	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Seen as good neighbors	2	50%	P1,P3
Get lot of people traffic	2	50%	P1,P2
Parents think about place for kids wedding	1	25%	P2
Business banquet for fundraiser	1	25%	P2
Experience can never be bad	1	25%	P3
We expect future business not just one time	1	25%	P4

Table E4

What is your perspective about local associations and charities to provide space for them

to advertise in your business?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
We allow charities & associations to advertise only when they have an event at the course	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Charities & local associations can advertise all over facility on day of event	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
No advertising on scorecards	2	50%	P2,P4
Some charities are prohibited from advertising	2	50%	P1,P3
We have advertised in the past but not anymore don't want to make facility commercialized	1	25%	P4
No separate advertising other than on event day	3	75%	P1,P3,P4

Table E5a

What, if any, benefits from your business establishing or fostering any relationship with

local associations or charities?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Exposure in community	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Good neighbor	2	50%	P1,P3
Goodwill	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Breakeven or make money	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Repeat business	2	50%	P1,P3
Charities are happy	2	50%	P1,P3
Host cocktail /Open house parties for the community	1	25%	P4
New clientele	1	25%	P4

Table E5b

What, if any, drawbacks have you experienced from establishing or fostering any

relationships with local associations and charities?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
No real drawbacks	2	50%	P1,P3
Looking for free stuff	1	25%	P2
Charities & associations forget we have to make money	2	50%	P2,P4
If we had to turn down a party with normal rates because we already had a charity event at a discounted price	2	50%	P1,P3
There is a small cost attached to doing business	1	25%	P2
No real drawback, when we are helping someone we are helping ourselves	1	25%	P3
Charity or local associations expect huge discounts	1	25%	P4

Table E6

What would you consider as challenges for fostering relationships with local associations

and charities to support local events or fundraising activities?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Biggest challenge changing stewardship	2	50%	P1,P2
One person has been at the charity 10 years	1	25%	P1
With turnover you reinvent the wheel every year	3	75%	P1,P2,P3
Not a lot of money available	1	25%	P2
They don't view us as a business, just golf	1	25%	P4

Table E7

How would you describe the costs or investments of fostering these successful

relationships?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Time & discount	1	25%	P1
No cost at all or low cost	2	50%	P2,P3
Cost is long term investment to get repeat business	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Investment is worth it we get extra business	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Cost are not burden to our operation	1	25%	P3
Chamber fees & dues	1	25%	P4
Nominal fees for lunch & breakfast	1	25%	P4

Table E8

What are your most successful relationships you have established in the community

regarding building customer loyalty?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Hospitals, schools, & chamber of commerce	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Business retreats	1	25%	P1
Repeat business with charities & local associations	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Catering businesses	1	25%	P2
Individual & family foundations	1	25%	P3
Municipalities	1	25%	P4
Leagues	1	25%	P4

Table E9a

What efforts if any have you made to build customer loyalty by collaborating with a

charity or local associations?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Show appreciation for business	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Work with local government and give government employees discounts	1	25%	P2
Provide entire facility access for the event	2	50%	P1,P3,
Sponsor school events to get banquets & golf outings	1	25%	P4
Attend community events for charity	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4

Table E9b

If so, how would you describe the success of this approach?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Get repeat business	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Goodwill	2	50%	P1,P3
Long term contracts	2	50%	P2,P3
Increases golf rounds	1	25%	P3
Don't need to advertise for business	1	25%	P3
It's good not great	1	25%	P4
Great	3	75%	P1,P2,P3

Table E9c

How do you classify such a relationship as successful?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Win-win for both parties	1	25%	P1
Market exposure, people traffic	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Golf course breaks even or makes money	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Charity makes money	2	50%	P1,P3
Longevity in business	1	25%	P2
Staff busy during slow time	3	75%	P1,P2,P3
Tit for tat	1	25%	P4

Table E9d

What is the likelihood you would use this strategy again?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
It works why change	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
No need to reinvent the wheel	2	50%	P1,P3
No reason not too	1	25%	P1

Table E10

What business activities demonstrate your support of local associations and charities (for

instance brochures, advertisements, products)?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
School calendars	2	50%	P1,P2
Website/Internet	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Donate foursomes to charity & chamber events	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Word of mouth	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Brochures & fliers are too expensive	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Attend 98% of chamber meetings	1	25%	P4

Table E11

How do these activities influence business sustainability?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Keeps facility busy during slow time	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
No added cost to put on these charity events	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
We love all the school teams	1	25%	P1
Some outings we have had 20 years	1	25%	P3
Activates support sustainability	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Activities are 35% of our business	1	25%	P4

Table E12a

What other strategies, if any, have you considered for strengthening your presence in the

community?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Status quo	2	50%	P1,P2
Tried print, not good	1	25%	P2
Continue to do community outings	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Tried more exposure with police & fire departments	2	50%	P3,P4
Send left over food to soup kitchen	1	25%	P3
Just like to give to the community	1	25%	P3
We would support community partners who afford us in other ways	1	25%	P4

Table E12b

If any, how successful have the strategies been?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Haven't tried anything new	3	75%	P1,P2,P3
Current strategies are very good	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Try new ideas to be sustainable	1	25%	P4

Table E13

How have these established relationships assisted you in forecast the next season

profitability?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Repeat business helps offset your operating costs	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
We make money on outings even with discounts	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Yes we can count on repeat business from year before for planning purposes	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Helps to plan employee staff	3	75%	P2,P3,P4
Staff is happy because we stay busy	1	25%	P3
92% of outings are repeat business	1	25%	P4

Table E14

What additional information can you provide to help this investigation of successful small

seasonal business relationships with local associations and charities?

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience	Participants offering this experience
Community awareness	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Quality product	2	50%	P2,P3
Build relationships	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Don't expect business to come to you	1	25%	P3
Chamber of commerce	4	100%	P1,P2,P3,P4
Give to the community	3	75%	P1,P2,P3
Get name out to business	1	25%	P3
Get involved with local government	2	50%	P2,P4

Curriculum Vitae

Kevin B. Gibbons

<u>Education</u>

Walden University
Doctor of Business Administration
DBA with a Specialization in Leadership - Graduation 2014

Central Michigan University
Master of Degree /Management

Eastern Michigan University
Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)

University of Michigan-Dearborn
General Business/Pre-Engineering

<u>Professional Affiliations</u>

Habitat for Humanity

Salvation Army –Red Kettle Program

Michigan Outlaws – Coach Girls Softball