

2021

Strategies to Sustain Small Construction Businesses Beyond the First 5 Years of Operation

Catherine Nyasha Mukopfa
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Business Commons](#), and the [Databases and Information Systems Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Catherine Mukopfa

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

Review Committee

Dr. Rocky Dwyer, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Gwendolyn Dooley, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Patsy Kasen, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2021

Abstract

Strategies to Sustain Small Construction Businesses Beyond the First 5 Years of Operation

by

Catherine Mukopfa

MBA, Keller Graduate School, 2001

BS, University of Zimbabwe, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

Small business owners employ over half the U.S. labor force, yet only 50% of small businesses survive beyond 5 years. When small business owners understand the factors that lead to their business failure, they can develop strategies to remain sustainable and profitable within the first 5 years, thus reducing the potential of business failure. Grounded in the resource-based theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies five small construction owners in central Georgia used to remain in business beyond 5 years. Data were collected from semi structured interviews, a review of organization income statements and balance sheets, and field notes. Three themes emerged from thematic analysis: strategic management, application of business strategies, and strategic business processes. A key recommendation is that leaders of small construction companies combine strategic management techniques such as networking, financial management, and leadership styles to create a platform to catalyze organizational productivity and customer satisfaction. The implications for positive social change include the potential for owners of small construction businesses to create jobs, support the economic development of regional communities, and foster positive community relations.

Strategies to Sustain Small Construction Businesses Beyond the First 5 Years of Operation

by

Catherine Mukopfa

MBA, Keller Graduate School, 2001

BS, University of Zimbabwe, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

August 2021

Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my children, Gwynneth, Glenys, and K. J. Without their support and prayers, I would not have achieved this monumental task. A special dedication to my late father, Moffat Mukopfa, for always believing in me. I wish you were here to celebrate this milestone with me and give me that signature smile of yours as your way of showing me that you are proud of me.

Acknowledgments

With sincere gratitude I would like to thank Dr. Sines, my former chair, who passed away unexpectedly, for always pushing me, providing words of advice, and encouraging me when I was about to give up. I would also like to thank my current chair, Dr. Dwyer, who always provided me with constructive criticism. My committee member, Dr. Dooley, I appreciate your constructive feedback. The 3 of you, your direction, and mentorship made me a better scholar, writer, and researcher. Finally, I would like to thank my dear husband Kennedy, my children, my siblings Viola, Ella, Patience, Fortune, Allen and Gaylene and all my nephews, and nieces for encouraging me, standing by my side and praying for and with me as I worked through this endeavor. Last but not least I would like to thank my mom, Jane Mukopfa, the rock of the family. Your steadfast prayers have been instrumental throughout my life and especially when I was going through my studies during Corvid time.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vii
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem.....	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose Statement	3
Nature of the Study.....	3
Research Question.....	4
Interview Questions.....	4
Theoretical Framework	5
Operational Definitions	6
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations	8
Assumptions.....	8
Limitations.....	8
Delimitations.....	8
Significance of the Study	9
Contribution to Business Practice.....	9
Implications for Social Change.....	9

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature	10
Resource-Based Theory	11
Limitations of the RBT Theory.....	15
Alternative Theories	16
Dynamic Capabilities Theory	16
The Contingency Approach	17
Analysis of RBT as the Chosen Theory.....	18
Small Business Definition	21
Small Business Types	23
Small Business Success Factors.....	25
Innovation	26
Owner Education and Leadership Qualities.....	30
Branding.....	34
Marketing and Networking.....	36
Environmental Uncertainty and Safety Strategies	39
Access to Capital	42
Small Business and the Specific Business Problem.....	44
Transition	46

Section 2: The Project.....	47
Purpose Statement.....	47
Role of the Researcher.....	47
Participants.....	49
Research Method and Design.....	50
Research Method.....	50
Research Design.....	51
Population and Sampling.....	53
Ethical Research.....	55
Data Collection Instruments.....	58
Data Collection Technique.....	60
Data Organization Technique.....	64
Data Analysis.....	65
Reliability and Validity.....	70
Reliability.....	70
Validity.....	71
Dependability.....	72
Credibility.....	75

Transferability.....	78
Confirmability.....	80
Data Saturation	81
Transition and Summary	81
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change	83
Introduction	83
Presentation of the Findings	83
Theme 1: Strategic Management	85
Theme 2: Application of Business Strategies	89
Theme 3: Strategic Business Processes	92
Relevance to the Conceptual Framework	95
Applications to Professional Practice.....	97
Implications for Social Change	99
Recommendations for Action.....	101
Recommendations for Further Research	103
Reflections.....	104
Conclusion.....	105
References.....	108

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Research Protocol.....	130
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	132
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	134

List of Tables

Table 1. Relationship Between Success Strategies and Themes.....	96
Table 2. Number of Participants Relating the Subtheme to Their Success	106

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small business success factors capture the interest of many scholars and practitioners (Onkelinx et al., 2015). Small businesses have an important role not only in economic life but also in social life since they can be used to explain how society is changing. I looked for strategies used by small business construction workers to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Analyzing the strategic factors used for small business success allowed the study to show factors that influence the life of a small business. Understanding success factors that can influence businesses can help the reader to see what works and what does not. Such information is useful to create a basis for future analysis regarding small businesses.

Background of the Problem

Although small businesses are sometimes perceived as the engine of a country's economy, research indicates that small businesses tend to have a higher failure rate than large organizations (Bloch & Bhattacharya, 2016; Lo et al., 2016). For example, in Malaysia, it was found that a higher number of small businesses indicated a worse performance in the first quarter of 2016 as compared to 2015 (SME Corp, 2016). Many failure stories of small businesses reveal that their characteristics, which include reactive fire-fighting mentality, resource limitations, informal strategies, flexible structures, and lack of strategic planning processes, may contribute to their failures.

Despite the existing literature explaining the reasons for small business success, theories, concepts, and practices developed in different contexts are not necessarily applicable to small business construction industries. Hasani (2017) determined that cloud computing and information technology are positively related to the success of small business service sectors. Studies in small coffee shops considered factors such as networking, use of technology, and availability of

funding as strategies used by coffee shop owners to sustain their businesses (Turner, 2017). However, these studies did not cover other sectors, like the construction industry, to understand if the same factors relate to the success of small construction business companies. The gap in the research appears because results cannot be generalized to all small business factors (Radzi et al., 2017).

Little work exists to explore the business performance issue of small businesses in the construction industry. Moreover, scholars argue that the determinants of business success are based on the context of the research, hence the need for my research to study the small business construction sector in central Georgia.

My study reveals strategies that may help small construction business owners avoid business failure. Small businesses are considered the backbone of the economy in both developed and developing countries, and their success may lead to the success of the economy by creating employment and providing necessary help to the community through increased voluntary donations from small organizations.

Problem Statement

Small business owners fail at a higher rate than large corporations, although entrepreneurship impacts the economy positively (Radzi et al., 2017). Statistics shown by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) identified that out of 86,250 small construction companies created in March 2011 only 30,476 existed by the sixth year, reflecting a failure rate of 65% (BLS, 2020). The general business problem is that some small business owners in the construction industry create startup businesses without understanding the strategies needed to sustain business operations. The specific business problem is that some owners of small businesses in the construction industry lack sustainability strategies to remain operational beyond

5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore sustainability strategies that owners of small construction businesses use to remain operational beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of 5 small construction company owners in central Georgia, Georgia. These owners of small construction companies have consistently operated their businesses for more than 5 years. The results of my study may lead to positive social change by equipping small business owners with information on sustainability strategies that may lead to increased profitability and the ability remain operational beyond 5 years. Small business owners who sustain beyond 5 years may be able to increase job growth in the construction business sector to offer employment opportunities to local community members. Prolonged sustenance and success may also allow small business employees and owners to become involved in the community through increased voluntary work within their community.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use a qualitative research method to explore the *how* and *why* of a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Based upon the purpose of this study, a qualitative method was appropriate for this study. Researchers employ a quantitative research method to examine relationships between variables or to compare group differences (Ellis & Levy, 2009). The quantitative method was not appropriate because relationships between dependent and independent variables were not examined. Mixed methods are relevant when a researcher chooses to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Yin, 2018). However, I was not examining relationships between dependent and independent variables, rendering this method inappropriate for the study.

A researcher uses a case study design to explore one or more cases, bound in time and place, for purposes of generating insights from observations, interviews, questionnaires, archiving, and focus groups (Yin, 2018). The case study design was appropriate since interviews were conducted with participants to explore strategies used to sustain their small businesses beyond 5 years. Ellis and Levy (2009) indicated that the phenomenological design studies individuals who share a collective experience. However, leaders in this study may or may not share a collective experience, making a phenomenological design inappropriate. The ethnographic design involves describing a particular people or culture and is used when researchers want to explore culture in real-life settings (Lambert et al., 2011). Hence, the ethnographic design was not appropriate as the intent of this study was not to explore the culture.

Research Question

What sustainability strategies do small business construction owners use to remain operational beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
2. What systems/functions have helped you to implement your strategies successfully?
3. How would you attribute the relevance of your background and education to the choice of your business strategy?
4. What are the 5 most important strategies you have used to sustain your business for the first 5 years?
5. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years?

6. What additional information can you share about the strategies that help sustain your business?

Theoretical Framework

This study used the resource-based theory (RBT) as the conceptual framework. Barney formulated RBT in 1991. Barney (1991) stated that for resources to hold potential as sources of sustainable competitive advantage, they must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and not substitutable (now generally known as VRIN criteria). The VRIN resources exploit unique growth opportunities and protect first-mover advantages within the industry (Nason & Wiklund, 2018).

In the RBT, Barney and Clark (2007) posited that for an organization to achieve a competitive advantage, it must possess some unique organizational based attributes, which should be costly, difficult, or impossible for close rivals to imitate (Osakwe, 2016). RBT consists of 4 characteristics that an organization's product or service must have to be considered unique. These include the value of the product or service, the rarity of the product or service, inimitability of the product or service, and organizational processes that are unique to that organization (VRIO). These 4 attributes create a competitive advantage for an organization.

Organizations are groupings of resources, capabilities, and competencies. An organization may achieve competitive advantage when its resources and competencies are unique and hard to produce (McDowell et al., 2014). Small business owners start their businesses with specific values that are transferred to the organization's values. These values form a culture of the organization, which will set the precedence on how resources are used within the company. The value and rarity of resources allow firm leaders to create new economic value, while inimitability and no substitutability provide the isolating mechanisms that lock in concepts associated with

those resources (Nason & Wiklund, 2018). RBT is used in this study to explore sustainability strategies that owners of small construction businesses use to remain operational beyond 5 years.

Operational Definitions

Big data analytics: Big data analytics are a form of IT that can trigger unpredictable future innovation. Extremely large data sets are analyzed to reveal patterns, trends, and associations with human behavior and interactions (Gandomi & Haider, 2015). The data sets are too large for traditional data processing application software. Therefore, researchers use advanced analytic techniques to analyze different patterns to reveal different information that can be useful in strategic management.

Bosspreneurship: An entrepreneur who can transcend from starting a business to successfully formulate written goals, targets, and quantifiable actions is bosspreneurship (Davis, 2017).

Bottom-up approach: A bottom-up approach is a management strategy used by managers that starts by them gathering ideas from the rank and file and then using those ideas to formulate policies (Geels et al., 2016). The bottom-up approach takes advantage of the specialized skills and talents of the rank and file employees and encourages them to pass on ideas to middle managers who then pass on the ideas to the executive team.

Competitive advantage: Competitive advantage is a condition or circumstance that puts a company in a favorable business position (Abdelkader & Abed, 2016). It is an attribute that allows an organization to outperform its competitors; therefore, competitive advantage creates greater profits for the organization.

Entrepreneurialship: This is a strategic business concept that increases a firm's

competitive advantage in the marketplace (Davis, 2017). The entrepreneurial spirit of the owner can drive motivation, positively impact communication, and support adaptive organizations. An owner that possesses entrepreneurial character can recognize opportunities and transform these opportunities into a business activity, ultimately influencing the success of the venture.

Inimitability: Inimitability is a strategy that cannot be imitated or copied by another organization (Tabares et al., 2015). In an organization, inimitability describes resources and capabilities that are uniquely extraordinary and cannot be copied or equaled by the competitor.

Sustainable construction: This is a new approach in the building sector that improves the way people live and build. It aims to meet present-day needs for housing, working environments, and infrastructure without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Juanzon & Muhi, 2017). Sustainable construction has grown in recent years, and with the growth came challenges and problems that managers need to be capable of resolving for business sustenance.

Strategic management: The formulation and implementation of the major goals and initiatives taken by an organization's top management based on consideration of resources and an assessment of internal and external environments in which the organization operates is known as strategic management (Nason & Wiklund, 2018). Strategic management provides the overall direction of the organization and involves specifying the organization's objectives, developing policies, and plans to achieve those objectives.

Triple bottom line: This is an accounting framework that emphasizes economic profitability, social responsibility, and environmental concerns as the 3 most important components of a firm's strategic decision-making process (Geels et al., 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are something the researcher accepts as true without concrete proof (Ellis & Levy, 2019). Assumptions in this study include that participants provided adequate and truthful responses to the interview questions. Participant input must be assumed to be true to allow data analysis (Warren & Szostek, 2015). Another assumption is that the sample used in the study is representative of the construction population within central Georgia and that the financial data is an accurate reflection of the business economic status.

Limitations

Limitations refer to the potential weaknesses of the study that are beyond the researcher's scope (McPhedran et al., 2018). The limitations of this study include both financial limitations and time limitations. As a novice researcher and an employee of another organization, I did not have sufficient funds nor time to conduct wide-scale research. Another limitation may have been that participants provided incorrect responses due to lack of trust in me. The participants may have seen me as an outsider and an educated person who may not have their needs at heart. Many people do not believe in the confidentiality and anonymity of research. Therefore, potential participants do not want to participate in surveys and interviews, and participants may not reply to every question (Warren & Szostek, 2015).

Delimitations

When a researcher decides on what to include in their study and what not to include, it is referred to as delimitations of the study (McPhedran et al., 2018). The delimitations are, therefore, the boundaries set by the researcher. The delimitations show the criteria of participants enrolled in the study and the geographical focus and method used in the study (McPhedran et al.,

2018). I focused on exploring strategies small business construction owners use within central Georgia, only. Focusing on construction companies only allows me to generalize on exploring strategies for construction companies to help reduce the high failure rate faced by construction companies.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The study may have value to the practice of business because the findings have identified strategies that small construction business owners can implement for the success and sustenance of their businesses beyond 5 years. Small business firms with fewer than 500 workers accounted for 99.7% of those businesses. Firms with fewer than 20 workers made up to 89.4% of businesses according to the 2014 U.S. Census Bureau data (SBA, 2016). Small business growth increased by 95,000 jobs in December of 2016 (ADP Small Business Report, 2016). Therefore, small business construction owners need to understand the strategies needed to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The potential benefits of following the strategies that are necessary to maintain their companies might result in increased sustainability and profitability of their companies.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential for the continued sustenance of small businesses, the creation of job opportunities in the small business sector, and the growth of the local economy. Small business owners may increase their corporate social responsibility activities with continued success. Small business owners may focus on reducing waste by getting involved in community clean up campaigns. Small construction business owners may educate the community on the effects of soil conservation on the environment.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore sustainability strategies that owners of small construction businesses in central Georgia, use to remain operational beyond 5 years. This review of the professional and academic literature provides an overview of the general topic of small business strategies and the specific problem of business factors that positively impact small business performance. This literature review had the intent to inform about the developments in the field, establish researcher credibility, identify the need for additional research, and set the current study within the context of past research. It also identified inconsistencies, such as gaps in research, conflicts in previous studies, and open questions left from other studies (Kivimaa & Kern (2016).

The first part of the literature consists of the discussion of the RBT theory and its relationships to small business success. The discussion of the RBT includes a review of alternative theories to RBT and the pros and cons of the RBT theory. The discussion is followed by providing an understanding of the small business under study by providing definitions of small businesses and small business owners. I explained the different types of small businesses and how the qualitative methods have been used in the research to study, along with the factors that affect small businesses is presented.

I provided an analysis of the importance of small businesses to the development of central Georgia community and the United States at large and presented challenges hampering the growth and survival of small businesses, specifically, small construction businesses. My review of the literature may help future researchers and other stakeholders to gain an understanding of the topics of my research by identifying, summarizing, comparing, contrasting, and synthesizing credible, peer-reviewed, published studies through analysis of themes and sub-themes. The

sources of this review include forty articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals, ten textbooks and fifty-six published research materials, and dissertations published between 2015 and 2020.

For the literature review, the business and management sections of the Walden University Library were reviewed. Most of the peer-reviewed articles reviewed were available in the Pro Quest database. Other databases used in the search included Science Direct, Emerald Management, Business Source Complete, SAGE, and Google Scholar. The government databases utilized were from the National Institutes of Health, the central Georgia government, and the U.S. Small Business Administration. The keywords and phrases used in the searches included *Literature review purpose, Resource-Based theory, entrepreneurship, small business definition and meaning, small business owners, small construction businesses, small business success factors and failures, and growth of small construction businesses in Atlanta, GA.*

Resource-Based Theory

RBT, also referred to as resource-based view (RBV) has been recognized as the most effective approach in strategic management. Nason and Wiklund (2018) illustrated how Barney (2008) described RBT as a tenant that meets valuable, rare, inimitable, and no substitutable criteria (VRIN). Barney and Clark (2007) developed the RBT from Penrose's (1959) theory on growth that states that the growth of firms connects with the attempts of a group of human beings to do something. Penrose (1959) viewed firms as a collection of both physical and human resources, which are a bundle of potential services (Soni, 2015). Resource endowments are useful for developing products, services, and strategies.

In comparison with the RBT is the dynamic capabilities theory, another conceptual framework, useful in analyzing the factors that affect the sustenance of small businesses beyond 5

years. The dynamic capabilities theory takes the bottom-up approach to resources and capabilities as compared to the RBT approach that focuses on a top-down approach (Zardini et al., 2016). The dynamic capabilities theory illustrates how managers should manage their relationships with employees. Managing the employees will allow people to discuss positive and negative interplays between existing infrastructure and organizational needs. Examining the interactions will create lasting relationships between employees and managers that will foster company growth. The contingency approach is another conceptual framework that is in comparison to the RBT. The contingency approach claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation. It instead looks at the causal effect of action and states that the optimal course of action is contingent upon the internal and external situation. Proposed by Fiedler (1972) the contingency theory is widely used, for example, in analyzing the effects of the supply chain on an organization based on both the leadership personality and the situation in which that leader operates (Northouse, 2015).

Although firms may operate in similar environments, their performance differs due to the different resources and capabilities within the firm. McDowell et al. (2014) used the RBT to show that competitive advantage develops when one's resources and competencies are unique and hard to produce (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). In McDowell et al.'s (2014) study on owner and nonowner managers, the authors determined that successful organizations use both tangible and nontangible resources such as capital, equipment, and specialized knowledge to maintain a competitive advantage. Owner talents and skills are essential in the success of the business. Nason and Wiklund (2018) mentioned that unique expertise or technical capabilities may allow for the development of new products or the entry into new markets while firms lacking the valuable resources cannot pursue similar growth.

The use of RBT to illustrate the branding effectiveness by Osakwe (2016) was essential

and helpful in the research to show how small businesses can use the core values of their owners to create their core values to build a successful business. In the study on expert manager's influence on performance, Ipek (2018) concluded that export managers who save in diverse environments produce more heterogeneously allocated resources and capabilities among exporting firms in comparison to firms operating in domestic markets. Firms can create a competitive advantage using strategies, which cannot be followed by any current or future rivals. A single case study on a high-tech firm in the country of Columbia showed that original capabilities based on intellectual capital are crucial for the development of a born global company. Skills such as entrepreneurship, global vision, international market knowledge, teaching, management, IT capabilities, technological innovation, collaborative work, networks, and customer orientation are recurrent resources uniquely used by high tech companies (Tabares et al., 2015).

RBT reveals how branding to the value, rarity, inimitability, and organizational process attributes of an organization helps small businesses incorporate RBT characteristics to increase their competitive advantage. Building a corporate learning culture of learning, unlearning, and relearning of the resources is shown as a benefit as employees involved in the process will not tolerate failure (Osakwe, 2016). The organizational culture of learning and unlearning reveals in global markets where managers require employees to learn and relearn the ever-changing global markets and gain international experience. The international experience triggers early adoption on the internationalization of the global markets organization's gain on success abroad (Tabares et al., 2015). Bi (2017) used the RBV approach to show how technology, organization, environment (TOC) is related to the success of small businesses.

IT infrastructure represents the technology; business partnerships represent the

organization and customer power representing the environment influences, and the small businesses e-supply chain coordination, which then influences the small business performance. Williams (2016) applied a more robust and flexible analysis tool, the neural networks model, to predict better the factors most likely to influence business failure among small businesses in the high-tech sector. Williams (2016) used a RBV of the industry as a theoretical lens to view factors that cause business failure and states that high tech companies face a high failure rate due to lack of resources. Firms that have limited resources find it difficult to respond to changes in their environment. Once firms are no longer able to meet customer needs, they have no choice but to exit the market. The ability to respond faster to customer needs and keep up with customer needs changes increases the company's competitive advantage. Therefore, companies not only need abundant resources, but the resources must be hard to imitate, rare, and valuable for them to have a meaningful impact on the company's competitive advantage.

Ipek (2018) criticized the RBT for not representing a practically applicable approach, nor does the theory stand as sound theory; instead, the author sees the method as static. A review of the RBV theory shows that firms with excellent resources and capabilities will build up a basis for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. RBV suggests that the underlying unique competitive advantage of small businesses centers on the capacity to learn. Financial resources, entrepreneurial competency, marketing capabilities, technology usage, and knowledge sharing affect business success, and a lack of technology and equipment are impediments to small business success (Radzi et al., 2017). Also, the entrepreneurial spirit of the owner can drive motivation, positively impacting communication, and supporting adaptive organizations. An owner that possesses entrepreneurial character can recognize opportunities and transform these opportunities into a business activity ultimately influencing the success of the venture.

Theorists continually build theories or models to better understand, predict, and control a complex reality that generally exceeds the bounds of their rationality. Theory building in management, or any other discipline, may result in a never ending process (Luthans & Stewart, 1977). RBT also referred to as resource-based view (RBV) has been recognized as the most effective approach in strategic management. Nason and Wiklund (2018) illustrated how Barney (1991) described RBT as a tenant that meets valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable criteria (VRIN). Barney and Clark (2007) developed the RBT from Penrose's (1959) theory on growth that states that the growth of firms connects with the attempts of a group of human beings to do something. Penrose (1959) would view firms as a collection of both physical and human resources, which are a bundle of potential services (Soni, 2015). Resource endowments are useful for developing products, services, and strategies.

Limitations of the RBT Theory

Despite the use and application of the RBT, some researchers have criticized the theory for not emphasizing the costs related to the acquisition and development of resources (Liu & Liang, 2015). Some RBT critics argued that some resources associated with RBT, such as knowledge, can be inherently difficult for business practitioners to manipulate (Alonso et al., 2017). Some critics argue that the RBT concept is static and stagnant (Radzi et al., 2017). However, markets are dynamic, and firms evolve over time (Liu & Liang, 2015). Although RBT has become increasingly popular, some critics argue that resources in the context of the RBT theory are not well defined, inconsistent, and even contradictory across studies (Kemmerer et al., 2012). The lack of an adequate definition of resource for RBT studies can hinder empirical tests (Yang et al., 2017).

Critics have asserted that RBT places excessive emphasis on the internal aspect of an

organization, whereas external factors might also have an impact on firm performance, particularly in high velocity environments (Yang et al. 2017). Barney and Clark (2007) recommended caution when applying RBT because of the uncertainty of gauging internal resources of businesses. The research community has expressed wavering confidence in using RBT in empirical studies (Barney & Clark, 2007; Day, 2014; Kozlenkova et al., 2014; Nyberg et al., 2014; O'Donnell, 2014). Many scholars view RBT as suitable for multidimensional, multidisciplinary, and conceptual studies (Barney & Clark, 2007; Day, 2014; Kozlenkova et al., 2014; Nyberg et al., 2014). Applying RBT to applied business research is challenging because of the multifaceted nature of business enterprises. Given these challenges, Barney recommended further research to establish prototypes for the best use of the theory (Barney & Clark, 2007). Ipek (2018) criticized the RBT for not representing a practically applicable approach, with a sound theory; instead, the author sees the method as static.

Alternative Theories

In comparison to the RBT, alternative theories exist to analyze the success factors of small construction business firms. Alternative theories include the dynamic capabilities theory and the contingency approach theory.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Another conceptual framework useful in analyzing the factors that affect the sustenance of small businesses beyond 5 years is the dynamic capabilities theory. The dynamic capabilities theory takes the bottom-up approach to resources and capabilities as compared to the RBT approach that focuses on a top-down approach (Zardini et al., 2016). Researchers used dynamic capabilities theory to explain how managers should manage their relationships with employees. Managing the employees will allow people to discuss positive and negative interplays between

existing infrastructure and organizational needs. Examining the interactions will create lasting relationships between employees and managers that will foster company growth.

In the capability-based view, under the capability concept, many important magnitudes exist which bring dynamism in resource development (Monsur & Yoshi, 2012). In contrast to the RBV of a firm, an important conceptual emphasis of capability-based view includes a specific capability development in a firm that is more important than general capability (Monsur & Yoshi, 2012). The core of the capability-based view concept is the firm's leader's capability to upgrade by an evolutionary process involving several development stages.

Another core emphasis of the capability-based view concepts includes the capability of a firm's lifecycle. An additional important concept of the capability-based view in contrast to RBV is that firm's capability developments are coordinates of individual capability and organizational capability. Monsur and Yoshi (2012) believed that leaders of a firm can strive for diverse sorts of objectives to obtain a competitive advantage if their target and process are specific. However, the choice of RBV over the capability-based view of the firm for the study is because of the intent to explore the specific organizational sustainability strategies. The concept of capability-based view is a connection to the issue of teamwork and social capital which is not the interest of this study.

The Contingency Approach

The contingency approach is another conceptual framework that is in comparison to the RBT. The contingency approach claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation. It instead looks at the causal effect of action and states that the optimal course of action is contingent upon the internal and external situation. Luthans and Stewart (1977) founded the contingency theory approach and defines it as a contingency approach, which deals with functional relationships between explicitly and operationally defined system variables. i.e.,

situational, management, and performance criteria variables. Proposed by Fiedler (1972) the contingency theory is widely used, for example, in analyzing the effects of the supply chain on an organization based on both the leadership personality and the situation in which that leader operates Northouse (2015).

Although firms may operate in similar environments, their performance differs due to the different resources and capabilities within the firm. Longenecker and Pringle (1978) critiqued the contingency theory and suggested that the conventional view of contingency theorists is that the effective organization must change in response to antecedent changes in the environment i.e., there is a dependent relationship between the organizations and their environment or that the environment operates on the organization, which is not always the case, hence the basis of contingency theory as dependent on the environment is not the basis of this study.

Analysis of RBT as the Chosen Theory

The problems with the alternative methods have made the RBT more appealing for my study as shown in the analysis below:

McDowell et al. (2014) used the RBT to show that competitive advantage develops when one's resources and competencies are unique and hard to produce. In the McDowell et al. (2014) study on owner and nonowner managers, results showed that successful organizations use both tangible and nontangible resources such as capital, equipment, and specialized knowledge to maintain a competitive advantage. Owner talents and skills are essential in the success of the business. Nason and Wiklund (2018) mention that unique expertise or technical capabilities may allow for the development of new products or the entry into new markets while firms lacking the valuable resources will not be able to pursue similar growth.

The use of RBT to illustrate the branding effectiveness by Osakwe (2016) was essential

and helpful in the research to show how small businesses can use the core values of their owners to create their core values to build a successful business. In the study on expert manager's influence on performance, Ipek (2018) concluded that export managers who save in diverse environments produce more heterogeneously allocated resources and capabilities among exporting firms in comparison to firms operating in domestic markets. Firms can create a competitive advantage using strategies, which cannot be followed by any current or future rivals. A single case study on a high-tech firm in the country of Columbia showed that original capabilities based on intellectual capital are crucial for the development of a born global company. Skills such as entrepreneurship, global vision, international market knowledge, teaching, management, IT capabilities, technological innovation, collaborative work, networks, and customer orientation are recurrent resources uniquely used by high tech companies (Tabares et al., 2015).

RBT reveals how branding to the value, rarity, inimitability, and organizational process attributes of an organization helps small businesses incorporate RBT characteristics to increase their competitive advantage. Building a corporate learning culture of learning, unlearning, and relearning of the resources is shown as a benefit as employees involved in the process will not tolerate failure (Osakwe, 2016). The organizational culture of learning and unlearning reveals in global markets where managers require employees to learn and relearn the ever-changing global markets and gain international experience. The international experience triggers early adoption on the internationalization of the global markets organization's gain on success abroad (Tabares et al., 2015). Bi (2017) used the RBV approach to show how technology, organization, and environment (TOC) are related to the success of small businesses.

IT infrastructure represents the technology; business partnerships represent the

organization and customer power representing the environment influences, and the small businesses e-supply chain coordination, which then influences the small business performance. Williams (2016) applied a more robust and flexible analysis tool, the neural networks model, to predict better the factors most likely to influence business failure among small businesses in the high-tech sector.

Williams (2016) used a resource-based view of the industry as a theoretical lens to view factors that cause business failure and states that high tech companies face a high failure rate due to lack of resources. Firms that have limited resources find it difficult to respond to changes in their environment. Once firms are no longer able to meet customer needs, the companies have no choice but to exit the market. The ability to respond faster to customer needs and keep up with customer needs changes increases the company's competitive advantage. Therefore, companies not only need abundant resources, but the resources must be hard to imitate, rare, and valuable for them to have a meaningful impact on the company's competitive advantage.

A review of the RBV theory showed that firms with excellent resources and capabilities will build up a basis for gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. RBV suggests that the underlying unique competitive advantage of small businesses centers on the capacity to learn. Financial resources, entrepreneurial competency, marketing capabilities, technology usage, and knowledge sharing affect business success, and a lack of technology and equipment are impediments to small business success (Radzi et al., 2017). Also, the entrepreneurial spirit of the owner can drive motivation, positively impacting communication, and supporting adaptive organizations. An owner that possesses entrepreneurial character can recognize opportunities and transform these opportunities into a business activity ultimately influencing the success of the venture. Small construction business owners may benefit from using RBT if the small

construction business owner can adhere to the RBT concept, to promote business survival.

Small Business Definition

The growth of small enterprises is one of the essential criteria for assessing the rate of success for each country and government (International Conference on Computer Sciences and Convergence Information Technology, Computer Sciences and Convergence Information Technology (ICCIT, 2010). Given the importance of small business for an economy, the survival of these firms is an issue of constant concern. Research that can lead to the identification of those factors associated with survival is therefore of great interest to policymakers, owners, managers, and other stakeholders. In the ongoing emphasis to be competitive and survive, organizations need to continuously improve the goods and services to meet customers' and stakeholders' needs.

Small companies account for many construction companies in both the European Union and the U.S. There are different types of small businesses ranging from a small business with no employees to a small business with as many as 500 employees (SBA, 2016). The development of small business companies correlates with the development of good institutions, a sane community, trust, and optimism.

One of the theories that define small business formation is the theory of economic marginalization. The economic theory of marginalization states that negative factors that marginalize people make human beings more likely to start their businesses (Barkhatov et al., 2016). Small enterprises play a significant role in developing countries; these small enterprises are a critical and major source of employment and import and export earnings (Kemayel, 2015). Globally, construction projects are considered crucial in uplifting the social and economic development of the country (Juanzon & Muhi, 2017). It is, therefore, necessary to consider the importance of the construction industry. For that purpose, it is essential to determine the major

causes affecting the productivity of the mentioned industry. Sustainable construction has been growing in recent years, and with the growth came challenges and problems that managers need to be capable of resolving for business sustenance.

A small business construction owner starts the business without anticipating the challenges that will come up with business management. Government mandates and regulations affect the cost and benefits decision making of management, among other effects. U.K. and Finland governments are examples that illustrate the impact of government policies on small companies. In both the U.K. and Finland, governments used incentives such as subsidies and tax exemptions to encourage companies to innovate new ways to reduce energy consumption (Kivimaa & Kern, 2016). The use of incentives enables companies to have access to resources that they will not otherwise be able to afford, hence allowing small companies to compete with mid to large organizations.

Bureaucracy may hinder the success of the business. Complex procedures to obtain approvals, overlooked high initial costs in startups on projects, unclear requirements of owners, employment constraints, and lack of available green materials and equipment can be critical in the success or failure of a project (Bon-Gang & Ming, 2018). Managers need to understand these critical risks and provide innovative ways to mitigate the risks to sustain their businesses for a long time. The implementation of effective leadership and quality management systems (QMS), especially in developing countries like Pakistan, may decrease many issues such as inadequate supervision, communication barriers among the administration members, lack of understanding, and standardization of construction activities within the small business construction industries (Akhund et al., 2018). Construction industries are therefore faced with a higher failure rate as compared to other small businesses due to their unique requirements.

Small companies are usually run by owner-managers who have multiple roles in administration, planning, accounting, bidding on tenders, and doing practical work with employees. Owners of small businesses' values and priorities affect the culture in the company as well as social relations and attitudes towards work and safety issues (Ozmec et al., 2015). Managers mostly overlook safety and risk issues in favor of more urgent, tangible tasks. The use of consultants to train workers on safety will improve the construction company's competitive advantage. (Machado et al. (2018). Consultants however are costly to hire, therefore small construction companies will end up forgoing hiring consultants where there is a need, increasing the susceptibility of business failure.

Success in a small business has both financial and non-financial effects. For example, the success of the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) schemes in Malaysia has reduced the migration of the young generation to big cities creating a positive social impact on the community (Radzi et al., 2017). Income generated by a small business under FELDA has indirectly increased the economic status of the settlers' families while reducing their dependency on agricultural commodities.

Small Business Types

Governments have come up with different programs to improve the success rate of small businesses and improve their sustenance. Government and the community realize the importance of small businesses in economic growth (Holger et al., 2017). Community colleges in Manitoba, Canada are financed by the government and given the mandate to work with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for the success of SMEs (Edmunds, 2017). Globalization and technological advancement have necessitated the need for small businesses to actively participate in research to find ways to adapt and be competitive in the global market using current

technology. Such research is relevant to SMEs and researchers alike to allow researchers to see barriers to their success and work on ways to overcome these obstacles.

Small business differs in size and form. Each country has its definition of what constitutes a small business. In the U.S, the small business administration is responsible for defining what constitutes a small business. The SBA (2016) determined small businesses regarding both numbers of employees and revenue, depending on the industry. However, generally, any business with less than 500 employees or \$7.5 million in revenue is considered a small business in the U.S. The European Union defines a small business as a company with less than 250 employees and an annual turnover of less than EUR 50 million (Eurostat, 2017). In Lebanon, which is a developing country, the World Bank shows that 90.2 % of small to medium-sized enterprises have no more than 5 employees (Kemayel, 2015). The different definitions may make it difficult to research different countries that have different ways of defining small businesses.

There are owner-managed small businesses and nonowner managed small businesses. McDowell et al. (2014) showed that owner-managed small companies have an internal focus on processes such as human resources, expenditure control, management, product efficiency, process improvement, and financial objectives, whereas nonowner-managers have an external focus such as on sales growth and finding new targets. Both internal and external focus is essential for small businesses to prosper and sustain their businesses. Therefore, owners need to include both nonowner managers and owner-managers in strategic review meetings to benefit from both sides (McDowell et al., 2014). Internal focus relates to the long-term goal focus of owners and the external focus on nonowner managers relates to the short-term profit-making.

Small Business Success Factors

Success factors can be viewed through different lenses. The term *triple bottom line* emphasizes economic profitability, social responsibility, and environmental concerns as the 3 most essential components of a firm's strategic decision-making process (De Clercq et al., 2018). When firms that face institutional adversity toward sustainability also operate in highly turbulent competitive markets, their propensity to engage in sustainable behaviors increases. Frequent changes in technology, customer demand, access to capital, or competitor responses create market gaps, which generate opportunities for alert firms to respond strategically (De Clercq et al., 2018). Increasing environmental uncertainty requires strategic choices to help a firm react to that uncertainty by differentiating itself from the pack.

There is a need to keep small construction owners motivated to adopt and adapt to change to maintain a competitive advantage. Motivating public and private construction firms to implement various management systems in their firms is not a simple job. Especially in developing countries such as Pakistan where the management system is a new practice, most of the construction firms are not aware of the benefits of the management system positive results from the implementation of a management system.

The type of organization also affects the success of supply chain integration. The number of supply chain members and their interconnectedness determines a supply chain's complexity. Centralized organizations are easier to integrate within their supply chain than decentralized organizations which require multiple supply chains (Flynn et al., 2016). The application of ISO 9001 (QMS) in the construction industry is a continuing development method, particularly in small construction firms (Akhund et al., 2018). Small business owners who quickly adapt to new technology will be more successful than those who shy away from new technology.

Innovation

Innovation is the development of a new idea. Managers need to review their strategies to allow for adaptation to new ideas and plans for running their businesses. Managers should not only adapt to new ideas but also follow up on the latest ideas implemented and own the idea to match their specific organization needs (Lichtenthaler, 2016). Strategic entrepreneurship in small businesses is required for a small company to maintain a competitive advantage. Strategic entrepreneurship involves the creation of competitive advantage through the identification of new opportunities (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). Small business owners have limited resources and often do not have personnel on hand to focus on innovation. Abdelkader and Abed (2016) used RBV as a theoretical framework for the review of the relationship between Information technology (IT) and the competitive advantage of a firm. Using multiple regression analysis, the author's findings showed that IT had become an essential element of a firm capability and a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

Another IT development is information and communications technology (ICT), a general term that consists of different equipment or programs that help to facilitate the communication, surrounding radios, TVs, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems as well as a variety of services and applications related with them (ICCIT, 2010). By using ICT companies in different business, sectors can improve their reputation among competitors. ICT adoption and usage are slow in the small business construction industry. A survey in a UK construction industry found out that most of the project information is currently stored using a mix of paper and electronic media (ICCIT, 2010). Only 1 in 6 projects surveyed were using electronic systems as the primary medium for information storage.

Destructive innovation is essential for both product and service-based organizations.

Destructive innovation refers to the implementation of new ideas and technology in the market (Lichtenthaler, 2016). An example of destructive innovation is the introduction of Netflix, which introduced movie watching via the internet, which put blockbuster out of business. Innovations such as thermal cracking and thermal reforming in the petroleum and petrochemical (PP) industries replaced atmospheric distillation enabling a refinery to yield 35% more gasoline per barrel of crude oil (Hassani et al., 2017).

The innovation of hydrocracking improved efficiency and environmental effects. These innovations build upon previous achievements allowing the PP industries to reduce production costs and therefore sustaining petroleum consumption and production. New entrants who bring in disruptive technology are likely to drive out incumbent businesses. Small business owners who strategize based on different policy mixes will succeed in getting more business if the small business owner maintains compliance with rules and regulations. However, through interviews and questionnaires among 35 Algerian firms from various sectors, Abdelkader and Abed (2016) found out that most managers believe that any performance advantage granted by IT will be short-lived due to easy duplication. Other companies will eventually duplicate these new entrants requiring them to invent new ways of doing business to stay abreast of their markets.

In Australia, Agile technology start-ups are developing forward-thinking, customer-centric online products, services, and business models, which are opening new risk markets for insurance. Insure-tech start-ups are using technology to tackle insurance in unique ways. For example, an Australian start-up, Evari, launched in 2017 as a fully digital small business insurance platform that connects to customers' cloud accounting systems enabling smoother business processes and improving the customer experience (Muldowney, 2017). New international markets are mostly technology-intensive and follow a different pattern in which the

markets regularly use new technologies and distinctive intangible assets as valuable resources and capabilities to become successful (Tabares et al., 2015). Cloud computing, a new form of innovation, provides benefits that include cost-effectiveness, reduction of the need and cost associated with on premise servers, making maintenance and expense of servers obsolete (Alamoudi & Alamoudi, 2016). Implementing cloud computing will allow an organization to practice lean business management allowing the small business owner to use funds for other organization needs.

The cloud is hosted online, reducing investment costs for small businesses. Technology staff can be reduced, making it only necessary to have a handful of employees or none for small companies hence also reducing overhead costs. Companies that implement cloud computing will see increased revenues due to less downtime from computer issues. Innovation has allowed firms to order and receive products and services through the Internet through e-supply. E-supply coordination refers to the firm's ability to use e-business technologies to deal with transactional activities ranging from gathering product information to post order follow up using fewer resources such as time and cost (Bi, 2018). E-supply has enhanced small businesses' sustenance as the small business owners can order materials in areas where it was geographically impossible to order. Small businesses need to secure firm e-supply to allow for the reduced cost of goods and reduced time for shipping of products.

IT can both improve the efficiency and effectiveness of innovation and drive innovation as well. Therefore, IT is seen as both an enabler and trigger of change for the success of the organization. Big data is a form of IT that can trigger unpredictable future innovation. Using big data analytics, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can mine massive volumes of semi structured data to improve website designs and implement effective cross-selling and

personalized product recommendation systems (Gandomi, & Haider, 2015). Big data predictive analytics (BDPA) can improve supply chain performance by enhancing visibility, resilience, robustness, and organizational performance (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). Zhang et al. (2016) in their bibliometric analysis of the role of IT in innovation findings showed that IT as an enabler of innovation spurs digital connectivity, which leverages communication and coordination among innovation actors and ensures efficiency and effectiveness of innovation.

In contrast, IT as an innovation trigger potentially emphasizes concepts and insights from technology development, marketing platforms, and standards to increased knowledge and heterogeneity. To be successful, small business owners need to use IT as both a trigger and an enabler of innovation to sustain their businesses. As an enabler of innovation, cloud technology allows a small business to grow without using traditional techniques, including servers, software, hardware, applications, and expensive information technology equipment (Alamoudi & Alamoudi, 2016). BDPA as a trigger of innovation can assist in reducing supply chain costs and achieving efficiency, responding faster to changing the environment, providing more power in supplier relationships with suppliers, and enhancing sales and operations planning capabilities (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). A small construction business owner that can cut down costs has a higher chance of maintaining sustainability than one that has high costs.

Small business owners must have a strategy on how to implement innovation to maintain a competitive advantage in their markets. For example, in Texas, where government rules are not conducive for small oil and gas miners, the small business owners use technology to access valuable information about oil, gas, and mineral deposits without the mineral owner's permission and incur no liability for trespass, so long as there was no physical entry upon the subject land (Duruigbo, 2018). Technology allows small business owners to maintain their competitive

advantage despite the rules being against them.

An effective feedback communication system will enable small business owners to get feedback from different stakeholders such as customers and vendors. Organization managers always make mistakes, and the use of an effective feedback system will prevent managers from repeating their mistakes and therefore reducing their susceptibility to failure. Feedback systems can also help the organization to concentrate on the central part of the business, based on the feedback received, to obtain superior additional values that drive the organization in the right direction to keep thriving and growing.

Innovation comes with challenges that may hinder the sustenance of a small business. For example, in cloud computing, security and privacy issues may arise. Hacking increases with cloud computing, and the reliance is on a third party to secure a company's information. The third party may not have the rules and regulations to meet security standards. Usually, in construction projects, feedback is gathered, and the assessment of the overall customer satisfaction is at the end of the project. Collecting feedback at the end of the project may contribute to the employees and owners missing vital information from the stakeholders. Feedback should be a continuous process throughout the project life.

Owner Education and Leadership Qualities

Leadership is one of the most critical and challenging aspects of human endeavor that no organization or country can grow more prominent than the vision of its leadership (Bambale et al., 2017). Understanding the effects of leadership on performance is important because some researchers view leadership as one of the fundamental driving forces for improving a firm's performance. Lückmann and Feldmann (2017) used an innovative research method to conduct a study of the world cafe with 31 practitioners in business process management. Results showed

that project integration, project controlling, and shareholder management enabled the success of business process management (BPM) in small to medium-sized organizations (SMEs).

The level of readiness and awareness of new business process improvement differs in different countries. For example, in the Philippines, the recognition and willingness of management in small construction industries to access new business processes are low (Juanzon & Muhi, 2017). Lean management, knowledge management, and total quality management (TQM) are the business process aspects that enable business success and sustenance (Lückmann & Feldmann, 2017). Machado et al. (2018) conducted a case study and showed that leaders obtain knowledge from formal and informal external sources and internal sources.

Sharing of expertise with both internal and external sources takes place formally and informally. The exchange and storage of knowledge are made possible by software, spreadsheets, reports, and files in Dropbox. Machado et al. (2018) showed that companies use internal light sources for knowledge creation and share information mainly in meetings. Machado et al. (2018) collected their data through interviews among engineers, entrepreneurs, and construction masters in small construction companies in Denmark. Also, a sound incentive system encourages employees to be productive and creative, fosters loyalty among those who are most productive, and stimulates innovation (Worsley, 2017). In a survey conducted among small construction owners in the European Union, the respondents realized that willingness to perform and dedication to the project objectives is an essential factor to project success.

Critical success factors in lean management are supportive leadership, a corporate strategy that is compatible with lean principles, and a long-term vision of continuous improvement - supportive elements and sufficient project funding, supportive organizational culture, and adequate skills and expertise. Knowledge management is essential because the

success of any project depends on successfully transferring know-how among stakeholders. Critical success factors for TQM are strategic, tactical, and operational factors, for example, the need for leadership and organizational culture top management support, continuous improvement, benchmarking and setting quality goals and policy, team building, employer involvement, and customer orientation of quality performance metrics. Small businesses that do not take advantage of these softer skills will not keep up with development and will stall growth within their companies.

In one study for ISO implementation in the Philippines, Juanzo and Muhi (2016) discovered that there are significant factors that will motivate SME-based construction firms in the Philippines to implement ISO 9001:2008, a quality management business process. The 3 factors include a requirement by their clients, qualification for bidding, and an increase in customer satisfaction. If the quality management business process such as the ISO: 2008 fails to meet these 3 factors, small construction owners are unlikely to adopt the new ISO system. Effective leadership is an essential source of management development and sustained competitive advantage for organizational performance improvement.

Leadership style is another factor that plays a significant role in enhancing or impeding the interest and commitment of the individuals in the organization. Different types of leadership include transformational leadership, which is concerned with engaging the hearts and minds of others. Transformational leaders motivate subordinates and appeal to their ideals and moral values by creating and representing an inspiring vision of the future. Transformational leaders take a real interest in the wellbeing of their employees. Most scholars view transformational leadership as the most effective type of leadership that will lead to the sustenance of an organization (Kavadias et al., 2017).

The next one is transactional leadership, which bases its assumption on the fact that employees' motivation comes from the best system of rewards and punishments. It motivates subordinates by appealing to their desires, based on instrumental economic transactions. Transactional leadership helps organizations achieve their current objectives more efficiently by linking job performance to valued rewards and by ensuring that employees have the resources needed to get the job done (Bambale et al., 2017). Transactional leaders can keep followers motivated for the short term through a system of rewards and punishment. This leadership style may have more effectiveness in situations where problems are simple and more defined.

The next leadership style is laissez-faire leadership, which is characterized by a total or general failure to take responsibilities for managing, and finally the Servant leadership management style. The servant leadership style includes serving others by working toward their development and wellbeing. Servant leadership is primarily a form of moral leadership that emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and sharing of power in decision making (Bambale et al., 2017). The type of leadership affects employee performance, which is considered the backbone of any organization as it leads to profitability and sustainability. An organization's success depends on employees' performance, and poor performance is detrimental to the organization's success.

Entrepreneurial orientation is another factor of leadership that affects the success of the business. Firm leaders with greater entrepreneurial orientation will tend to develop certain types of strategies and will influence performance differently. Entrepreneurial orientation is the processes, structures, and behaviors of firms characterized by innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). Hence, entrepreneurship is a strategic business concept that increases a firm's competitive advantage in

the marketplace. The owners of Genesis, a company that promotes and built tiny luxury homes, have changed the concept that buying small homes equates to cheap homes. Their entrepreneurial spirit has seen their company recognized by television and Genesis now have their show on HGTV (Bernard, 2017). Their type of businesses required that the company leadership emphasize branding a unique product that will appeal to rich people who are generally used to live in big houses. The owners are young; their youth brings enthusiasm and energy to addressing and tackling business issues (Bernard, 2017). As siblings, the owners promote their family's ethos of prioritizing relationships; their value system aligns with treating employees like family as well rather than like cogs in the system.

Education may be affected by the different leadership styles of the small construction business owner. McDowell et al. (2014) also reviewed the effects of education among both owners and nonowner -managers. McDowell et al. showed that most startup owners are well educated and consider their knowledge to be essential in all their business decisions. Such findings will encourage other owners to get their education to aid them together with their experience to strategically align their business plans for the success of their organizations (McDowell et al., 2014). The FELDA scheme in Malaysia provides training in human capital development, business management, finance, marketing, and product development, which has promoted the globalization of FELDA small businesses (Radzi et al., 2017). The education of the FELDA owners has yielded positive results in business sustenance.

Branding

There is a risk that, although small businesses are the backbone of the economy, there is the risk of being marginalized from the growing global marketplace as a result of their weak branding competitiveness. A growth aspiring small business should, therefore, seek unique ways

of crafting its business strategy around its brand-oriented norms (Osakwe, 2016). Companies, such as Airbnb, are said to have benefited from a valid business model. The Airbnb model is a branding strategy based on a need to link customers with cheaper accommodation when traveling (Kavadias et al., 2017).

The business model was formulated to provide a platform for people looking for accommodation to link with people who are willing to share a room or a house. There is no ownership or management of property by Airbnb, and therefore, there are reduced costs and reduced risk. The branding strategy is an asset sharing concept where travelers share costs of business operation with Airbnb. Usage-based pricing reduces costs as compared to purchasing items. The usage-based cost model is also used by Uber Company, which is a transportation business that brought in destructive technology which collapsed the taxi industry. Uber acts as a platform for customers and drivers to communicate with each other and in sharing costs with drivers creating a collaborative ecosystem and an agile and adaptive organization (Kavadias et al., 2017). Therefore, Uber branded itself by empowering the customer where the customer uses the Uber app to choose where to be picked up and the time.

Owners and managers need to understand business models. Most organizations' business models fail due to a lack of inward look at the current system and identifying how the organization relates and fit with the branding strategy (Foss & Saebi, 2017). Business models and new branding strategies should not be built in silos but should build off one another. Silos cause ambiguity in the view of the business model. Leaders find it challenging to link the business model of the organization to performance when faced with different information depending on the information received. Owners must be aware of the information collected to be able to use the information effectively.

Branding is enhanced when an organization aligns itself with vendors and other stakeholders that support its brand, forming a supply chain that ensures the supply of products and services. Supply chain members and their interconnectedness determine a supply chain's complexity. Supply chain integration is essential to a small business that may have difficulties integrating into their markets as big corporations monopolize these markets (Flynn et al., 2016). Small companies may not have the leverage to compete with monopolies; therefore, being a member of a supply chain integration can be used to eliminate supply chain uncertainties and monopolies by large organizations. The branding of products should not sacrifice the quality of the product. Construction companies should have awareness of the variety of their products and try to increase the quality of their project. In a survey conducted by ICCIT (2010) quality, time, cost, and safety were important customer satisfaction factors within the Malaysian construction industry in Kula Lumpur.

Marketing and Networking

Stagnation, a concept that refers to the organization losing momentum concerning revenues, market share, and other mission-critical indicators, can lead to small business failure. However, a small business owner that knows how to market their business and use networking to reduce the stagnation of their business will manage to sustain their businesses. Davis (2017) introduced the term bosspreneurs to describe an entrepreneur who can transcend from starting a business to successfully formulate written goals, targets, and quantifiable actions.

The effects of social media, word of mouth, and the use of the digital network are marketing capabilities positively related to business success and transcends a business to the next level. Marketing capabilities refer to a company's ability to utilize its tangible and intangible resources to understand involved consumers' needs and ultimately achieve superior brand

recognition (Radzi et al., 2017). Small businesses that use social media for marketing their products become more successful as compared to the ones that do not use social media. Small companies with little to no capital can utilize e-marketing to reach as many customers as possible at a lower price.

Business owners should emphasize both scoutings of new business through marketing campaigns and keeping the current customers through customer satisfaction strategies. Customer satisfaction can assist the business achievement in sustaining the competitive advantage. Customer satisfaction refers to knowing a customer's feelings after the customer purchase products or services and whether that specific product or service can meet the customer's satisfaction and expectation or not (ICCIT, 2010). The customers who do not reach their expectations and comfort become dissatisfied and will likely share their experience with others.

To maintain customer satisfaction in the construction industry, for example, the building project management needs collaboration of the project team and accurate managerial decisions to be more successful. Success requires the need for direct coordination between the customer and the construction industry. Coordination will provide customer's viewpoints and expectations, which help in building future planning and decision-making strategies allowing them to communicate effectively and efficiently the customer's needs. Stakeholder engagement can be a critical differentiator between the success and failure of a project. There is a need for adequate consultation with all stakeholders from planning to the completion of each project. An organization's success can depend on its ability to create the conditions and systems (formal and informal) that attract the best people to work for the organization.

To understand their customer satisfaction levels, small businesses are advised to communicate with their customers through social media such as Facebook page, Twitter, and

other social media accounts. Social media accounts will allow the small business owner to get to know their fans and integrate the feedback from the fans to sweeten the deal to turn the fans into customers and customers into repeat and loyal customers. Aggressive e-marketing has been proven to reach out to too many people through likes and other tools used to tag information on social media. In Australia, insurance companies are using social media and GPS to track customers during severe natural disasters, allowing insurance firms to be proactive and reach out to customers and tell them how the insurance company can help them (Muldowney, 2017). Aggressive e-marketing through social media has become an important tool for organizations to communicate with both current and potential customers.

Social media is also used to help investigate, assess, and decide on how insurable the incidents are. Social media can improve the startups to identify witnesses and gives access to a much fuller pool of data. Owners should be willing to learn business skills after business launching. Online customer satisfaction surveys such as the Online Customer Satisfaction Assessment Tool (OCSAT) is another tool that can be used to assess customers' ideas. OCSAT is a comprehensive tool intended to assist any construction company to understand and analyze the customers' ideas and needs based on dynamical surveys. OCSAT provides the host organization a set of useful reports and statistics that gauge the level of customer satisfaction. Assessing customers' ideas is not just used as a survey, but rather as a means to identify strengths and weaknesses of projects in points of view of customers and to put a required plan for improving customer satisfaction by filling up the gap (ICCIT, 2010). The discussion above shows that a small construction business owner has access to different technological tools that may help them sustain their business.

In a survey conducted on construction companies in Kular Lumpur, results show that

51.95% of the company's managers strongly agree about the importance of the customers for their business (ICCIT, 2010). Owners decided that it is easier to improve the satisfaction of their customers by using new technologies such as ICT because the organization can make a faster, more comfortable, and secure way to have a connection with their customers. Adaptation, creativity, and social interaction are essential in maintaining customer relations and adjusting to the needs of the customer (Ozmec et al., 2015). Social interaction may be enhanced through volunteering. Volunteering in the community is another approach that can be used by a small business to improve networks and enhance organization image. Davis (2017) suggested that small businesses should reach out to their community to get feedback on community needs and provide the needs to the community and use the opportunity to market their business to the community. Volunteering increases the organization's visibility within their community and improves relationships with the community they serve.

Environmental Uncertainty and Safety Strategies

Environmental uncertainty is when a condition is consistently changing within a business. Environmental uncertainty affects the competitive advantage of a business (Abdelkader & Abed, 2016). Environmental risk can come in the form of natural disasters such as hurricanes, fires, and earthquakes. Small businesses are not immune to natural disasters. Natural disasters can happen at any time and any place and is a subject of small enterprises to damage, destruction, and interruption that can influence the business's ability to carry on with the business operation. Small business owners need to have mitigating strategies that will allow them to bounce back from a natural disaster. Safety measures must be implemented to protect the employee in such a situation to reduce work-related injuries. Owners must share safety measures and communicate to ensure the safety of employees, customers, and businesses. Ozmec et al. (2015) showed that among

small construction workers in Denmark the lack of government policies on safety causes the small construction companies to have a reactionary and ad-hoc problem solving rather than proactive formalized systematic injury prevention programs.

Protection of business property can refer to both the long and short-term activities that small business owners take to reduce the risk of possible physical damage to the business. Hurricane Katrina caught most companies by surprise; the markets were not prepared for the strength of the hurricane, leading to the increased destruction of most firms (Josephson et al., n.d). Companies located in areas that are prone to see at least one hurricane a year should have a plan. Business owners should understand the pros and cons of where the business location and the business owner should know if the business is flexible and how flexible the business can be in handling hurricanes. Having a disaster plan can save a business in the long run (Josephson et al., n.d).

Although small businesses are an instrument to develop the middle class, make people more productive and independent by fighting unemployment, corruption has been a factor in the sustenance of small businesses. Countries such as Russia have a high corruption percept index (Barkhatov et al., 2016). Small business does not thrive where there is high corruption as compared to big companies that have a higher threshold of sustenance during these times. Corruption creates a situation of monopoly that can only be resolved through legislative systems; for example, Germany introduced a loner index system to curb crime. An understanding of the 4 macro trends of a supply chain that include Global population growth and human migration, interconnectedness and socio-economic leveling, climate change, and sustainability, and finally resource scarcity and conflicts will allow the supply chain member to focus on issues that affect the growth of the business (Goldsby et al., 2015). Building a robust supply chain will enhance a

company's disaster preparedness plan.

Another environmental issue that affects small construction firms is the political environment of the country. Oil and gas law in Texas simultaneously strips small mineral owners of their property freedom, while affording protection from uncompensated drainage (Duruigbo, 2018). In another sense, owners of small mineral interests are at the mercy of oil and gas producers who can drain their resources without compensation. These big oil and gas producers get protection from government laws. Therefore, in most oil and gas producing states, small mineral owners are forced into a pool with other owners to carry out oil and gas production known as compulsory pooling. Less developed countries, such as Mozambique, rely on aid from countries like China to fund their construction firms. These countries bring in their stipulations on how their funds are to be used and repaid. Small and medium construction companies in Mozambique are relatively insignificant to the political elite, giving the public administration few incentives to promote long-term capacity building in the construction sector (Wethal, 2017).

There is a need for a clear policy among donors and donees. For example, in Ethiopia, a clear policy of donors and government is the most critical success factor. About 70% of respondents surveyed by Bayiley and Teklu (2016) mentioned that government policies are crucial in the success of construction projects. The respondents underscored that if the policy of the donors and government is not clear toward a specific project, it would be hard to expect success. The project success measured against the achievement of the project owner's strategic organizational objectives and goals, as well as the satisfaction of the users and key stakeholders' needs where the needs relate to the project's final product (Bayiley & Teklu, 2016). Focusing on the stakeholders will allow business owners to understand the needs of the stakeholders thereby increasing the organization's sustainability.

A small business owner can benefit from understanding the interconnectedness and socio-economic of their environment by understanding that the world has become global with competition coming from across the globe. The flattening of the world can also bring business when other parts of the world seek products and services that were previously unknown or inaccessible to them. Building relations with suppliers from other parts of the world can reduce costs for small businesses. Managers need to be proactive in handling resource scarcity and conflicts and be inclined to adjust to requests for new products or changes in raw materials. When Nokia and Ericson's supplier's storages caught fire, both companies found themselves with no raw materials. Nokia was proactive in finding new ways of manufacturing their products, whereas Erickson was caught without a strategy to handle the unexpected change. Nokia's market share increased, whereas Erickson eventually ran out of business (Goldsby et al., 2015). Being proactive helped sustain Nokia's business for many years to come.

Access to Capital

Some self-employed individuals create their businesses due to a lack of employment within their community. These small businesses face financial problems due to a lack of credibility. In Europe, for example, Italy, companies wait on average 3.24 years for credit evaluation, and in Germany and France, the wait can be about 1.08 years. (Barkhatov et al., 2016). Long periods of waiting create the condition that negates the necessary liquidity to pay all expenditures such as wages or raw materials leading small businesses to dissolve eventually. In South Africa, Holger et al. (2017) showed how access to finance opportunities for small business retailers in South Africa is challenging. Small business owners' access to finance from banks and other financing institutions is limited because entrepreneurs lack the financial knowledge to acquire finance.

Banks, when deciding on credit applications, rely heavily on financial information provided by these entrepreneurs with limited finance knowledge. In Malaysia, The FELDA scheme started as a land development agency formed to eradicate poverty in rural Malaysia, but it has grown to be a global corporate player through the provision of interest-free loans to small businesses to purchase equipment and machinery. Zeleke (2015) worked on a five-year study to observe how small business success is affected by access to government financial services. The South African Small enterprise development Agency (SEDA) is a government agency that provides both financial and non-financial services to small to medium size companies.

Financial services offered the included provision of large orders of supplies in addition to receiving finance to run their businesses. Non-financial services included training services. SEDA was created to mitigate the high failure rate of small businesses, which was at 60% due to lack of access to finance and entrepreneurial skills. The Gauteng province in Pretoria, South Africa where the study was conducted, shows that the small business that received financing were able to sustain their businesses for a longer time as compared to the ones who did not receive government financing. Zeleke (2015) described how it is difficult for small businesses to get financing from micro-financing institutions at reasonable rates. Also, red tape, bureaucracy, and corruption stifle access to capital for these small business owners who then stifle the growth of small businesses. In Mozambique, the Exim Bank's concessional loans are contingent upon the procurement of Chinese mechanical, electronic products, complete sets of equipment, technology, and service, and other goods by the borrowing country (Wethel, 2018). The contingencies are a deterrent to business success. The requirements are mostly stringent and difficult to adhere to at the same time growing the business.

Consequently, Chinese contractors get the awards for the contracts, which stipulated that

at least 50% of the loan is used to procure Chinese materials. In the case of the road projects in Mozambique, the main contractor was a Chinese company even though local small construction companies were bidding lower process than the Chinese. Mozambican stakeholders seem accustomed to the practice when dealing with China, which has led to the high failure of small business firms due to lack of access to ExZim's financing loans. The lack of financing has led other small businesses to default on their tax obligations and opted to use the funds for business operations. The business savings from tax evasion is believed to be an internally funding path.

Maintaining an entrepreneurial spirit through both difficult and good times is a quality that is required for small construction business owners. Ilirjan and Rudina (2017) showed how small businesses must maintain an entrepreneurial spirit to be more competitive, but the limited financing prevents the maintenance of the entrepreneurial spirit. The restrictions on small firms financing on Albanian small businesses often make them orientate more toward an internal generation of funds, which also has few alternatives. As a way to domestic saving, companies often find tax evasion, which is not only a deviant and unethical behavior but also puts firms into many difficulties in the long run (Ilirjan & Rudina, 2017). Though this problem has always been present, it becomes more pressing during globalization as this process extends the range of opportunities to circumvent taxation while simultaneously reducing the risk of detection.

Small Business and the Specific Business Problem

Small business tends to provide an environment that is conducive to generate knowledge due to their size. Also, closer social relationships of employees result in good communication flows that foster knowledge sharing. Timely access to technology industry knowledge and insights into the latest technological breakthrough will boost the sustenance of small businesses. An owner who promotes ingenuity through interaction with customers, vendors, and customers is

likely to succeed (Davis, 2015). Mastering different communication styles is another factor that shows how an organization can reduce stagnation.

An owner is more effective when he or she understands that his or her communication style is contingent on the situation, an important aspect, especially when communicating with employees. Various factors are responsible for the success of small businesses beyond 5 years. Zeleke (2015) provided recommendations for SEDA to establish a comprehensive database of small to medium companies operating the footwear and textile business, the business researched by the author, to ensure proper assistance to newly formed businesses, provide training on vocational and entrepreneurial skills, mentorship and supervisory support and monitor and evaluate viability regularly. Zeleke (2015) also recommended universities and research centers participate in small business success by creating academic programs geared towards small business management.

These recommendations are great in enhancing business competitive advantage and growth. QMS systems, such as ISO 9000 companies, have the benefits of reducing rework and lowering the cost of operational work in small construction companies. Quality management also reduces customer complaints, delivering the project on time without any schedule delay, and using resources efficiently to show excellent quality. Applying QMS, therefore, reduces time, cost, and wastage, rework, and decreases customer complaints (Juanzon & Muhi, 2017). Business owners working in unstable environments need to sufficiently understand and full-heartedly imbibe the African common cultural characteristic of Ubuntu, reflected through high levels of group solidarity, paternalistic leadership, and human-oriented leadership (Bayiley & Teklu, 2016). Equally important is knowledge of the negative legacy resulting from colonial dominance: the culture of corruption, poverty, tribalism, and violence. Thus, it is wise for project managers

working in such contexts to respect and appeal to the indigenous cultural values to successfully overcome the complex challenges.

Transition

In Section 1, I introduced the specific business problem of my study. The focus of this research was to determine the success factors that lead to the sustenance of a business beyond 5 years. Exploring small business success strategies among small business construction owners may shed light on the adequacy of strategies needed to succeed in business. Also included in this section are the Nature of the Study, the Research Question, and the Conceptual Framework.

The operational definitions were an introduction to the key terms used in this proposal, while the Significance of the Study highlighted how this study fits the research continuum. The intent was to explore small business construction owners' experiences in managing their business in the United States, specifically, small business strategies used to succeed in business. The discussions included in the literature review related to the knowledge and skills owners of small businesses need to succeed in business and the effects of access to capital in central Georgia.

In Section 2, I outlined the research plan, discussed the research methodology, and justify my reason for selecting the qualitative research design. I then provided a discussion on reliability and validity as related to the research study. In Section 3, I included an introduction to the study, discussed the purpose of the study, the research question, a summary of the findings, and provided a detailed explanation of the outcomes of this study. As well, Section 3 includes the presentation of the study findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further study, my reflections, and a conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I explain the research purpose and research process. The section contains information about the research methodology and the reasons for selecting a qualitative, multiple case study. There is a discussion about the population, sample, and participants that will supply the data. I discussed the data collection process, the instrument and technique that I used, and how I organized and analyzed the data. Section 2 concludes with a discussion about the reliability and validity of the data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore sustainability strategies that owners of small construction businesses use to remain operational beyond 5 years. The target population consists of 5 small construction company owners in central Georgia, Georgia. These owners of small construction companies have consistently operated their businesses for more than 5 years. The results of my study may lead to positive social change by equipping small business owners with information on sustainability strategies that may lead to increased profitability to remain operational beyond 5 years. Small business owners who sustain beyond 5 years may increase job growth in the construction business sector to offer employment opportunities to local community members. Prolonged sustenance and success may also allow small business employees and owners to become involved in the community through increased voluntary work within their community.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is essential. As the primary instrument, I put all biases aside and reviewed the study information with an open mind. A researcher should be reflexive of their analysis of the study and use an impartial voice in interpreting the results

(O'Sullivan, 2016). As the researcher, I controlled the interview to guide the participants through the research. Managing the discussion requires the researcher to maintain an authoritative voice throughout the interview, combined with an interactive and interpretive tone (O'Sullivan, 2016). As the researcher, I was an active listener who understood what the participants were conveying and asked probing questions if the information provided was not precise (Girod et al., 2017). Listening to researchers creates trust with participants and encourages them to provide necessary information. I knew when and how to set the interview to avoid environments considered by participants as invasive. A researcher should practice triangulation in formulating their studies to ensure reliability and validity.

I used an interview protocol to collect the data from participants. Interviews allowed me to get accurate information. Participants usually put more trust in a face-to-face interview than questionnaires and other indirect ways of collecting data. A researcher must be ethical in conducting their research. As the researcher, I must be familiar with the 3 ethical standards provided in the Belmont report to ensure that research is free from moral concerns. I adhered to the ethical standards by showing respect to the participant, being beneficent, and being just throughout the interview. The researcher's intent should always be for the good of the subject or participant (Belmont Report, 1978). I explained the procedure to the participants, including payments involved, and provided consent forms in writing describing the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time. When conducting the research study, I explained any relationships and interests with the topic and maintained truthfulness and confidentiality from the beginning to the end of the research process.

A researcher may decide to research a particular issue due to past experiences with the research topic or participants. As an example, Girod et al. (2017) was compelled by the high

turnover rate of both clinical and nonclinical faculties at one academic medical center. Girod et al. embarked on a study to find the reasons why the faculty was leaving the institution at a higher rate. Girod et al. were faculty members at the institution and were familiar with the topic, allowing them to notice the school's high rate of faculty turnover. My interest in researching small businesses is because I work as a consultant for small businesses, including small construction companies. I hear their concerns regularly and see how most of them do not have the knowledge and capacity to sustain their businesses for more extended periods. I became interested in studying why the firms fail to help them understand other small construction companies' success factors to sustain their business beyond 5 years. My clients are mainly in the central Georgia area, which was the focus of my study. I avoided bias within the region by conducting studies on small construction companies that are not my clients.

Participants

Choosing a research participant requires the researcher first to describe the eligibility criteria for the participants. The researcher also needs to outline strategies to gain access to the participants and establish a working relationship with the participants. Finally, the participants must align with the research question (Yin, 2018). I selected small business construction owners who have been operating their businesses for more than 5 years from a list found on the SBA website. Participants were small business owners who employ less than 10 employees within central Georgia and implemented sustainability strategies.

Gaining trust from the participants starts with the selection process. By explaining the research process and how they can access the results at the end helped to build a relationship with the participants. I followed up with phone calls to confirm participants' understanding of informed consent and any questions regarding the study.

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore sustainability strategies that owners of small construction businesses use to remain operational beyond 5 years. I interviewed 5 small business construction owners and reviewed documents related to the business enterprise that support and augment interview data. Following a thorough review of research designs, I selected a qualitative multiple case study design as an appropriate research approach to address the research question.

Research Method

There are 3 types of research methods in academic research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore *how* and *why* about a phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Based on this study's purpose, which is to explore strategies small construction business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years, the qualitative approach was appropriate for this study as the primary function of a qualitative method is to understand human behavior (House, 2018).

Qualitative research is the systematic collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation of people's words from conversations, written texts, or visual forms about a social phenomenon experienced by individuals in their natural setting (House, 2018; Yin, 2018). My focus is on human experiences, and I presented my findings in narrative form. The nature of this research study was exploratory, which makes a qualitative research methodology the appropriate method for my research. My selection of the type of study was based on 2 issues: the problem driving the study and the data available to the researcher (House, 2018). Researchers use qualitative research to develop an understanding of a phenomenon through the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon (House, 2018; Robson & McCartan, 2016).

If the purpose of my research was to examine the relationship between variables, I would have selected the quantitative method to measure the variables and analyze the data using statistical procedures. The quantitative method is based on numerical data and statistical calculations. However, for this study, I would not be able to extract the in-depth participant perspectives that could lead me to an answer about the strategies that new small business owners used to start, operate, and sustain a small business for more than 5 years. Mixed methods are a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods used to extend a researcher's understanding of the research problem. If I were to select mixed methods, I would use the qualitative approach to understand the problem by understanding people's experiences. I would make assumptions based on the qualitative findings and validate my assumptions through quantitative research. My situation as a novice researcher did not make the selection of mixed methods a logical choice. I may not have the skills and training required to complete a mixed methods research study mainly due to the timing issue. A researcher needs more time to complete a mixed-method study (House, 2018; Robson & McCartan, 2016), a component that was not available within the time frame of my study.

Research Design

Research design is the plan that logically links the research questions with the data collected and analyzed in a research study (Yin, 2018). I explored the 3 significant qualitative research designs, phenomenology, ethnography, and case study (Yin, 2018), to determine the most suitable plan for my research study. The focus of a phenomenological design is to gain an understanding of how humans view themselves and the world around them (Robson & McCartan, 2016). It is the best approach to use if a researcher wants to understand better what an experience means to a particular group of people (Ledford et al., 2019). Ingham-Broomfield (2015)

recommended phenomenological as the design to use if a researcher was planning to examine the human lived experiences attributed to a phenomenon. I did not select the phenomenological design because I was not planning to explore the human lived experiences attributed to a phenomenon.

The focus of an ethnographic research design is to gain a detailed description, analysis, and interpretation of the culture-sharing group (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Ethnographic research involves going *into the field* and staying there for an extended period, usually 2 or more years (Robson & McCartan, 2016). I did not select an ethnographic design because I was not exploring the shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language within a cultural group from the inside, intending to present or explain it to people who are not part of the culture (Ledford et al., 2019).

Research design is the process of turning research questions into projects (Robson & McCartan, 2016). There are 2 fundamental types of research questions: What is going on? And why is it going on? (Ledford et al., 2019). This research study answered the question through descriptive research. I used a descriptive analysis to describe the phenomenon and its characteristics.

A multiple case study design is the most appropriate design for this research study. Yin (2018) stated that the selection of a research design is based on 3 conditions: (a) the type of research question, (b) the amount of control the researcher has over the behavioral event, and (c) whether the focus is on contemporary or historical events. I selected the case study design for the following 3 reasons. First, my research question deals with how small business owners use business strategies to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. Second, I did not need to have control over the behavior event. I was able to collect data by interviewing

persons involved in the events. Third, I was examining contemporary events.

My 3 reasons met the conditions given by Yin (2018) for selecting a case study. Ridder (2017) defined a case study as a detailed description of a business situation. Researchers using the case study method rely on interviews with individuals with pre-defined characteristics (Cassell et al., 2018; Patton, 2015). The attributes would be those that the researchers have defined as belonging to the individuals that could provide information that would help answer the interview questions (Kristensen & Ravin, 2015). The sample I decided on is 5 small construction business owners in central Georgia. Using 5 business owners increases the possibility of direct replication and made my conclusions more acceptable because they result from multiple independent cases. The selection of a representative group for data collection is vital for valid and reliable results in a research study (Yin, 2018).

When an interviewer is no longer getting new information from additional interviews, the researcher has reached data saturation (Fusch et al., 2018). I ensured data saturation by contacting several other participants to be potential interviewees. I collected data until the topic of business strategies used by small business owners to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years were no longer producing new strategies that lead to organizational sustainability.

Population and Sampling

This multiple case study involves a population of 5 small business construction owners in the central region of Georgia who have sustained their business enterprises beyond 5 years after formation. The eligibility criteria for selecting participants for the sample was small business owners in the construction industry who have operated their businesses continuously for at least 5 years. Small business owners would know the business processes and strategies used in the operation of the business.

The research population is the extensive collection of individuals who focus on a scientific query (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Population refers to all the cases, and a sample is a selection from that population (Ridder, 2017). I did not interact with every member of the research population because it would be too expensive and time-consuming. I, therefore, used a sample, which is a subset of the research population. Sampling the population allowed me to conduct this study so that I was able to use the results to derive conclusions that could apply to the entire population. I conducted this research with the expectation that my findings would benefit the small business owner population globally.

There are 2 types of sampling plans: probability sampling and nonprobability sampling. Probability sampling is the selection of each participant that is not known. These include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, and multi-stage sampling (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The nonprobability sampling technique is the selection of the participants that is known. These include quota sampling, dimensional sampling, convenience sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling (Robson & McCartan, 2016). I used purposive sampling, which means that I selected the participants for this research study with a purpose in mind. The objective was to identify and select participants who could successfully use business strategies to operate their small businesses successfully. I chose the participants based on my expectations that the participants can inform and understand the research problem for this study (Ridder, 2017).

Qualitative methodologists cannot agree on the exact sample size needed for qualitative studies (Cassell et al., 2018). Boddy (2016) suggested looking at the research context to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. Even one case may be enough if the researcher takes a constructivist or in-depth qualitative approach (Boddy, 2016). Cassell et al.

(2018) suggested that a sample size of 12 would be enough if the researcher's goal is to understand the experience and collective perceptions of a phenomenon among a group of homogeneous individuals. Taylor et al. (2016) suggested that qualitative researchers continue to define their samples as their studies progress. Qualitative methodologists agree that it depends on the number required to achieve data saturation (Cassell et al., 2018). I used my judgment to acknowledge that I have reached data saturation. Data saturation is the point in data collection when nothing new is coming up (Fischer, 2015). I ensured data saturation by a thorough interview process until common themes started to repeat themselves.

The interviews were face-to-face and one-on-one. Face-to-face interviews make the interview a form of social interaction (Taylor et al., 2016). The interviewer should try to create an atmosphere in which the interviewee would feel comfortable talking (Taylor et al., 2016). I worked with each participant on the coordination of the interviews. Working with each participant involved agreeing on the time and place for the meetings. I conducted some discussions in the business's front office, some outside the business area, and others at an open, quiet public space near the participant's place of business as agreed by both the interviewee and myself. The public places were quiet enough so that the background noise did not interfere with the audio recordings. The seating design ensured that no people were sitting close enough to hear the interviews and far enough to observe social distancing. The locations were close to the participants' place of business, so that time away from the company was minimal. I ensured we adhered to safety rules and practice social distancing during the interview. I recommended the wearing of a mask and sitting at least 6 feet away from each other.

Ethical Research

There are various factors a researcher has when conducting a qualitative research study.

Ethical considerations are an essential aspect of conducting research. There are rules and regulations that researchers are required to follow when researching to provide broader protection of human studies and protect the researchers from liability. I obtained the Walden University Institution Review Board (IRB) approval before the field research, thereby ensuring compliance with the ethical standard to protect human participants in research. My IRB approval number is 09-18-20-0506852, with an expiry date of 17 September 2021. In this study, I observed and applied the 3 ethical standards of respect, beneficence, and justice in dealing with the human subjects of this research, as suggested in Belmont Report (1979).

Each participant received a letter of invitation to participate through email. The invitation letter included an explanation of the purpose of the study and the informed consent form (ICF) for participants to read and give consent. The informed consent form included contact information, sponsoring institution, the objective of this research, any probable risks, a statement that participation in this study is voluntary, and an explanation that any participant could withdraw at any time from this study. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions or discuss concerns about the research or the informed consent form. Participants were able to append their signatures on the consent form. I collected the consent forms in person. I included the informed consent form in the interview questions. The ICF consisted of the statement that the researcher will record the interview. I recorded the interview as an additional source of data collection in addition to the notes that I took during the interview. Recording the interview as well allowed me to have the information I would have missed when taking notes.

For research involving human subjects, researchers must observe the ethical standards and obtain informed consent from participants (Yin, 2018). I called and spoke with participants by phone to arrange a meeting date, time, and place and reconfirmed the appointment a day ahead

of schedule via email. Before starting the interview, I reminded each participant that their participation was voluntary and provided the participants with an opportunity to opt-out of the study, ask any questions, or request clarity on any concerns before starting the interview. Before beginning the interview, I reminded participants that they could still opt out of the interview at any time during the interview in compliance with the Belmont's (1978) respect for others ethical standard. I ensured that there were no psychological, legal, or other physical factors that will pose a risk to the safety or well-being of any participant, based on the nature of the study and interview questions. The risks foreseen in this study were that participants may take the time to attend the meeting and may experience discomfort or fatigue while providing answers to the 6 questions in the hour-long interviews. These components of an informed consent form comply with the recommendations for ethical research involving human participants and the requirements for informed consent (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015).

A participant can withdraw from this study by giving notice of intention to withdraw in person or by completing and signing the withdrawal form. The participant can sign the withdrawal form without any penalty. I did not have any participants to withdraw and exclude, however I was ready to immediately destroy data collected from any participant who wished to withdraw. There were no payments to participants. Payments could introduce sampling bias (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). I plan to send a two to four-page summary of the results and findings of this study to participants by email upon the conclusion of this study.

I applied the utmost care throughout all stages of the study to protect and preserve the rights and the privacy of participants, as recommended by Yin (2018). To protect participants' privacy rights and exercise acceptable standards for the confidentiality procedures for human subjects (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015), all data collected will be confidential and not used for any

purposes outside of this research. All electronic data will remain on a drive with a local access code and be deleted permanently after 5 years. I stored all written data, including the invitation to participants containing the participants' contact information, in a physically secured cupboard with restricted access and will shred these documents after 5 years.

The explanations to participants included protecting the confidentiality of the individuals and their businesses, consistent with the published recommendations for confidentiality procedures noted by Wallace and Sheldon (2015). I will ensure that published documents will not contain names or any other identifiable information about the participants or their business enterprises to protect the confidentiality of participants. The written representations of the participants will be labeled P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, and business enterprises will be marked as R1, R2, R3, R4, and R5.

Data Collection Instruments

I was the data collection instrument for my research study. I collected data through in-depth semistructured interviews and company documents in the form of balance sheets, profit & loss statements, and cash flow statements. As a human instrument in a scientific inquiry, my goal was to produce the most accurate results possible. It was crucial for me to clearly and intelligently document and understand my biases and how they could influence me when I collected and analyzed the data (Yin, 2018). As a human instrument, I bring my predispositions, assumptions, and beliefs to the research setting (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Reflexivity is the awareness that a researcher has his or her background, values, and previous experiences with a phenomenon that can impact the research process (Berger, 2015; Yin, 2018). A challenge as a novice researcher is not to allow predispositions, assumptions, and beliefs to interfere with understanding the phenomenon the researcher is studying (House, 2018). Robson and MacCartan (2016)

recommended using mindfulness and reflexivity to help a researcher be present with awareness, acceptance, and attention. Wallace and Sheldon (2015) supported self-regulation by identifying desired goals and formulating a clear implementation plan to attain the goals.

Researchers use interviews to explore the participants' experiences through a series of questions and answers (House, 2018). I asked each participant 6 open-ended questions during the one-on-one, face-to-face interview to explore the sustainability strategies that the new small business owner uses to sustain his/her business beyond the first 5 years of operation. The interviews were semi structured. I used an interview protocol with predetermined questions and potential follow-up questions. Semi structured interviews allow researchers to seek clarification when participant answers are not clear (Yin, 2018). If a topic arises during the interview that the predetermined questions do not cover but is relevant to the research, the semi structured format of the discussion will allow a researcher to deviate from the predetermined questions to pursue the new topic (Edmunds, 2017). I asked probing follow up questions to understand more on the responses provided in the first 6 questions.

A researcher uses semi structured interviews to gain the participants' perspectives, expectations, and assumptions while building rapport (Silverman, 2017; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Right, open-ended questions can get the participants to respond with lengthy answers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Ridder (2017) recommended that researchers spend time trying to determine what a good question would resemble. Yin (2018) emphasized that semi structured interviews can solicit both retrospective and real-time accounts from those that experienced the phenomenon. The quality of the interview questions determines the quality of the data collected, which in turn determines the quality of the research study (Ridder, 2017).

In addition to the responses from the interviews, I collected company documents such as

annual balance sheets, cash flow statements, profit and loss reports, and press releases where available. The business reports enabled me to determine the type of business strategies in place during a specific period. I evaluated the effectiveness of the business strategies by looking at the financial statements for the same period. Robson and McCartan (2016) cautioned researchers about documents produced outside of the research context. Before mining company documents for data, researchers must ascertain how and for what purpose the company created the business reports and financial statements (O'Leary, 2014; Robson & McCartan, 2016).

I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the data I collect through the interviews. Varpio et al. (2017) described member checking as informant feedback, respondent validation, or dependability checking. Researchers conduct member checking by sending data or results to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Varpio et al., 2017). The participant comments served as a check on the viability of the interpretation of the researcher. I transcribed verbatim the audio recordings of the interviews. I went over the transcripts and omitted fillers and repetitions. Harvey (2015) found that transcripts that did not have the fillers and repetitions helped to remove some of the negative impacts of the participants regarding the fluency and clarity of their speech. Each transcript will list the interview questions and the participant's answers to the questions. I sent the participants an email explaining the process of member checking and attach the transcript of their interview to review. Through member checking, participants check their answers and give feedback about their accuracy so that the transcripts would accurately represent the participants' perspectives or experiences (Birt et al., n.d.; Harvey 2015; Kornbluh, 2015; Thomas, 2017).

Data Collection Technique

The most popular approaches to data collection for qualitative research include

questionnaires, participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and analyzing audio-visual materials and documents (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The data collection for this research study was semi structured interviews and company documents such as profit and loss and balance sheet ledgers. I interviewed 5 small construction business owners who have operated their businesses for more than 5 years.

An interview protocol is helpful to maximize the time spent with the interviewee by ensuring that the interaction is both practical and ethical (Doody & Doody, 2015). I used the interview protocol to guide the interview process. I created a formalized set of interview questions provided under the interview questions, which I read aloud individually to each of the participants. I used an audio recorder during the interview to record the questions and responses. I used my audio recorder since it is small and compact and will not distract the participants or make them feel uncomfortable. I used my audio recorder for the interviews and carefully checked if the device was operational, and made sure the battery was fully charged before each interview. I also had my smartphone as a backup for recording the interviews. I used my smartphone to record one of the interviews. I have password protection and dual authentication on my cellphone to ensure the recordings are secure. I uploaded the recordings to my password protected iCloud for further protection. I started the interview process with demographic questions to have a background of the company information under the assumption that the participant's perspective would unfold as the interview progresses. Castillo-Montoya (2016) calls these initial questions the introductory questions. The opening questions include questions regarding background and education.

I then moved to the transition questions. The transition questions are those listed as my interview questions, such as "What strategies have you used to sustain your business beyond 5

years? These questions link the preliminary questions to the critical questions of the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The key questions are those that ask about operating the small business and specific business strategies. To conduct a good discussion, I set aside what I thought I knew and asked the participant to explain further the meaning of their answers which is an approach recommended by Taylor et al. (2016). Another method the authors suggested is to rephrase the participant's response and ask for confirmation (Taylor et al., 2016).

I ended the interviews with the closing questions. Closing questions provide an opportunity for the participant to raise any issues not addressed (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The interview protocol kept me focused on the questions that would provide me with the data instrumental in answering the research question. I had 2 participants, P1 and P3, who were extroverts and had so much to share. The interview protocol helped to stay focused and to keep the interview within the hour. I collected a large amount of information during the average interview session of one hour. Morse (2015b) emphasized that researchers must understand and interpret the participants correctly. I enhanced the reliability of the interview data through member checking. I presented each of the participants with the transcript of his/her interview and solicited comments, corrections, and any additional information available to me.

To have an effective interview protocol, I made sure that the research question was straightforward, developed a checklist of the questions to be asked during the interview, and clearly expressed the purpose of the interview. Christie et al. (2015) referred to the interview protocol as an essential instrument that needs to be handled correctly to ensure validity and reliability of the results. I ensured that I started each interview with a neutral question to facilitate the free flow of information. I used open-ended questions so that the respondent can choose their answer without limitations to yes or no answers. I also limited the content of each question to a

single idea to avoid confusion. I also avoided influencing the participant by asking leading questions, ask the respondent to repeat and clarify when I did not understand a response. I avoided assumptions, passed judgment, avoided irrelevant discussions, and kept the interview within the agreed time. At the end of the interview, I summarized the points and asked the respondent if the summary is correct.

In addition to the recording of the interviews, I wrote notes during the meetings. I informed the participants ahead of time that in addition to the tapes, I was going to take notes as well, which helped me in analyzing the data that I collected. Notes also helped me capture those moments where I needed to ask probing questions to understand the transition questions' responses. Christie et al. (2015) conducted a study on the impact of researcher note-taking during an interview session. Their findings provide me with a further understanding of how the participants would view me as I took notes during the interviews.

It is essential to learn that note-taking will not affect the interviewee's perception of competency and professionalism (Christie et al., 2015). I took notes on the nonverbal reactions of the participants that I observed during the interview. I also documented details about the setting and conditions for the interviews in the notes. I kept track of the research notes using the coding system, i.e., setting up files, which I identified with the same unique participant identification codes. I reviewed the interview notes containing my participant observations after each interview and recorded them onto electronic files. I protected the electronic data with security passwords.

In addition to the interviews with the small business owners, I collected data about the small businesses through their company documents. Before the on-site review of the company documents, I distributed an information packet and consent form. The information package contained details about the documents that I requested for review and how I planned to use the

information. I also provided details about how I safeguarded the documents during the research and how I handled the disposal of the documents once I extracted the data. I also collected publicly accessible information about the small businesses I obtained from newspaper articles and websites such as financial times and Google.

Data Organization Technique

Good data organization is the foundation of any research project. Data organization is important to my research study because it enabled me to easily retrieve information whenever I needed it throughout the research process.

Effective data organization enabled me to retrieve the data for analysis and eventually for presentation and reporting purposes. If the data were not well-organized, I might have misplaced data that might have been important to the research study results. The use of data organization is to retrieve, from a mass of information, the information that is relevant to the research question (Zhang & Scheib, 2015). Even after completing my research study, I may have to access the data and retrieve it for the reconstruction of the research project, for responding to an audit, or to use it in further research. It is vital to adhere to the research requirements of retaining the data in a locked container for 5 years.

I made entries into an electronic research journal, both before and after each interview. I used the reflective journal to record my mood when starting the interview and the same after the interview. The electronic journal provided a medium to collect the ideas and insights I gained while conducting the interviews. Zhang and Scheib (2015) discovered that reflective journals offer evidence from which researchers can conclude the research. Researchers use reflective journals to address and even guard against bias in research (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Reflective writing gives an awareness of the thought processes for the researcher to monitor and

control so that there is no impact on the results of the research study (Pearce & Sowa, 2018).

I will ensure data transcripts, interview notes, research journals, tables, graphs, and worksheets in hard copy format are retained for 5 years in a locked fireproof storage cabinet. I also secured the audio micro-SDHC card and USB flash drives of the raw data used in the data analysis in the fireproof storage cabinet. I am the only person who has access to the storage cabinet.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the search for patterns in the data, interpreting those patterns, and deciding what the trends mean (Bernard & Ryan, 2016). The researcher has a central role in analyzing and interpreting the data (Yin, 2018). The researcher's responsibility is to process the data in a meaningful and valuable manner (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Data analysis brings order and structure to a mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The data analysis strategy I used is the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has the following steps: identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clark, 2006). The thematic analysis strategy allowed me to identify, code, categorize and label the data set. I was able to identify patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to my research question.

Thematic analysis has 6 steps per Braun and Clark (2006). Step one involves familiarizing yourself with the data. As a researcher, I reviewed notes taken from the meetings, reviewed the recordings from the interviews, and collected information from financial statements such as income statements and balance sheets. The volume, complexity, and varied formats of qualitative data (e.g., audio recordings, transcriptions, documents, and field notes) often lack consistent structure; however, all are useful and imperative for conducting a comprehensive

analysis (Dey, 1993). To become immersed in the data involves the repeated reading of the data actively, searching for meanings and patterns. Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended that researchers read through the entire data set at least once before beginning coding. Reading through the whole data set brings out ideas and identification of possible patterns that may be shaped as researchers become familiar with all aspects of their data. I examined the data in as many ways as possible not to miss any themes or patterns. McPhedran et al. (2018) created a tool for researchers to capture information about the different categories or themes under research. As a researcher enters information onto the grid, it will reveal new categories and themes when repeating information and again in the source material (McPhedran et al., 2018).

The second phase is called generating initial codes. The second phase begins once researchers have read and familiarized themselves with the data, having ideas about the data and what is interesting about them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A code in qualitative data analysis is a word or short phrase that captures the essence of the data (Saldana, 2016). A code aims to bring together the data about a significant theme (Taylor et al., 2016). Taylor et al., suggested that researchers code both the positive and negative incidents for an idea. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) suggested that a researcher begins with a *start list* of categories or themes derived from the research question. After I familiarized myself with the data, I developed a preliminary set of codes based on my collected information. The codes on the list were not mutually exclusive, and I expected to have multiple coding for some of the data at the preliminary stages of data coding.

I used an Excel spreadsheet to log all raw data and detail my progress in collecting and converting raw data to text that I subsequently analyzed in NVivo (Table 1). Nvivo 11 software enabled me to work efficiently with complex coding schemes and large amounts of text, facilitating both depth and sophistication of analysis. The software created models and graphs to

visualize the connections in the data. The data analysis process is time-consuming (Evers, 2016). Familiarizing myself with NVivo was time consuming and challenging. However, I attended training and learned to use the capabilities within the NVivo software to speed up the data analysis process.

While observation notes and member checked documents were efficiently coded in NVivo, the financial documents came in multiple forms (Word, Excel, and PDF) and without a consistent structure. The numerous forms posed additional challenges and often required additional formatting to the documents. I coded and labeled all or parts of the data. Saldana (2016) emphasized that it was not the quantity of the data that was important but the quality of the data. I aimed to code the information if it is salient to the research question. The codes enabled me to arrange the data in a systematic order. Qualitative researchers use computer software to help them organize and interpret their data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

The third phase is called searching for themes. The third phase begins when all data have been initially coded and collated, and a list of the different codes identified across the data set has been developed. This phase involves sorting and collating all the potentially relevant coded data extracts into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone. I grouped the codes with the same label to form a theme. By dividing, grouping, reorganizing, and linking the data, the researcher generates meaning and develops explanations from the data (Saldana, 2016).

The fourth phase involves reviewing themes. The fourth phase begins once a set of themes has been devised, and they now require refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I reviewed the coded data extracts for each theme to consider whether they appear to form a coherent pattern.

I also reviewed to see if the same theme is presented differently, for example, some participants referred to networking as knowing and keeping your circle. Participant 4 mentioned that "we have a buddy system where we call each other for new developments, cheap supplies or work that needs to be bid on." I deleted overlapping themes. I tested the theme development by constantly referring to the raw data to ensure I include all important information.

Phase 5 includes defining and naming themes. During the fifth phase, researchers determine what aspect of the data each theme captures and identify what is of interest about them and why (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I wrote a detailed analysis of the theme and identified a story that each theme tells. After organizing and reorganizing the themes, I came up with the following themes: (a) strategic management, (b) application of business strategies, (c) strategic business processes (Table 1). The sixth and final phase of thematic analysis is producing the report. My reporting is on the themes identified during data analysis using the thematic analysis. I identified 3 major themes with 7 subthemes. The 3 major themes were: strategic management, application of business strategies, and strategic business processes. My reporting on the themes is presented in the presentation of findings section.

Triangulation is a qualitative strategy researchers use to test the validity of data using multiple methods or data sources (Lopatina et al. (n.d.). There are 4 types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) methodological triangulation (Morse, 2015; Patton, 2015). Researchers use a variety of data sources for data triangulation (Patton, 2015). Data triangulation is when data is collected at different times or different sources. I used data triangulation in my study to collect data from 5 different small business owners in 5 different locations. Collecting data from various sources allowed me to see any similarities or differences in the responses to enable me to answer my research question.

Another type of triangulation is Investigator triangulation. Investigator triangulation refers to the participation of several different researchers in a single study (Patton, 2015). Researcher triangulation does not apply to my research study because I am the only researcher for this study. Theory triangulation involves using multiple perspectives to interpret the data (Patton, 2015). Theory triangulation does not apply to my research study because I explained the data solely from the standpoint of the RBT theory. Methodological triangulation includes multiple methods of data collection to study an event to gain a comprehensive view of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Methodological triangulation applies to my research study because I used more than 2 methods to collect my data. Methodological triangulation collects data from a combination of more than 2 methods (Hussein, 2015). I used methodological triangulation to compare findings from my interviews with supplemental company documents given to me by the participants, such as the income statement and balance sheets.

The data collected through interviews provided information about the business strategies used. At the same time, the company documents show the financial condition of the companies when the small business owners used a specific strategy. Yin (2018) cautioned researchers about using company documents describing them as not always accurate and not always free from bias. The use of 2 different data sources may result in one of 3 outcomes: (a) convergent, (b) complementary, or (c) divergent or contradictory (Sherika, 2017). Convergent is when both methods lead to the same conclusions to increase validity through verification. Complementary is when the differing results supplement the individual results, thereby highlighting different aspects of the phenomenon.

Divergent or contradictory results from the 2 methods can lead to new insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Sherika, 2017). Patton (2015) mentioned that different data

sources might yield necessarily the same results but with slight differences due to the sensitivity different methods have to real-world nuances. Patton (2015) encouraged researchers to learn the inconsistencies in findings from various sources of data. Therefore, I provided details about the data sources I used in the study. I compared the results from each method and described how I integrated the data to arrive at the study results.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are essential components of all research (Zanh & Scheib, 2015). A qualitative researcher addresses the validity and reliability of a study when planning the design, analyzing results, and interpreting the findings (Yin, 2018). Research studies have numerous significant elements, but the rigors with which the researchers conduct the investigations are a priority to support the quality of the research findings (Pierce & Sowa, 2018). Various concepts used to support the rigor of a qualitative research study include credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). These concepts are explained in detail in the following paragraphs. Qualitative research study depends on subjective, interpretive, and contextual data that scrutinize and question the findings. Thus, researchers need to ensure the reliability and validity of their research findings, as explained in the next section.

Reliability

Reliability refers to whether you get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once. Reliability in qualitative research is the extent to which researchers consistently produce stable and dependable findings (Velu et al., 2018). Dependability of the study refers to the consistency of the data achieved by providing transparency during data collection, coding, and analysis, to ensure readers may trace the results (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). Velu et al. (2018) discussed that reliability was one of the fundamental elements

involving the data and the findings in any research study.

To assess the credibility of a qualitative research study necessitates evaluating the reliability of the study's findings to support the soundness and integrity of the conclusions (Yin, 2018). Researchers used instruments in a qualitative study to obtain reliability through repeatability or dependability of measurement (Velu et al., 2018). The qualitative research concept was for the researcher to achieve dependable results, reflecting the stability of the data and minimizing errors and bias in a study (Gunasekaran et al., 2017).

Validity

The validity of a study relates to the extent to which the research instrument accurately reflects the underlying issue or phenomenon intended to be measured (Long, 2015). Therefore, validity refers to the suitability of the tools, processes, and data collected for analyzing the research question (Leung, 2015), linked to honesty, authenticity, and credibility of the research data (Leonidou et al., 2015). Validity also refers to the integrity, credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the findings of the data collected (Barkhatov et al., 2016). Validity also provides the rationale of claims, implications, and conclusions discovered in the research study (Leighton-Daly, 2017).

Thus, I used the information to check and verify that the study meets the requirements of validity and reliability. Data saturation occurs when the ability to acquire a collection of data provided no more additional new information, and further coding was no longer feasible (Fusch et al., 2018). According to Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014), the researchers' probability of reaching data saturation increased using document review from secondary sources. The public domain housed documents that were ready for inspection (Silverman, 2013). Interviews provided much of the data collected for this study.

Other data came from the general information available on the business websites and the documents provided by the businesses participating in the research study. Reaching data saturation is vital as reaching data saturation increases the dependability and validity of the research study (House, 2018; Velu et al., 2018). Thus, I interviewed the 5 participants until no additional new information occurs. I gave each participant a copy of the summary of their interview to review and member check to verify the validity and accuracy of the interview before starting the data analysis.

Dependability

The term dependability implies the steadiness of data over similar circumstances (House, 2018). Dependability involves evaluating information resulting and construing from the study participants in a rational and traceable approach (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Dependability is similar to the concept of reliability in quantitative research in which the qualitative researchers use dependability to imply the stability of the research data (Barkhatov et al., 2016). A research study is dependable when another researcher agrees with the decision trails at each phase of a research process (O'Sullivan, 2015).

Researchers' address of dependability, an audit trail of field notes, memo writing, and reflexive notes is suitable (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Furthermore, dependability includes using an audit trail concept for analyzing the inquiry process and establishing the trustworthiness of the research results (House, 2018). Audit trails are a systematic and logical record-keeping procedure for all the researchers' events and conclusions through validating the collected, organized, and analyzed information post data saturation (El Hussein et al., 2015; House, 2018).

Researchers use audit trail rigor to outline the decisions made during the research process as the basis for achieving the methodology and interpretation judgments (Barkhatov et al., 2016).

I will provide the transcripts from the participants' narrative contributions during the interview sessions and ask the participants to verify the accuracy of the information. According to Harvey (2015), member checking involves testing the data, analyzing categories, interpreting and concluding with participants supplying data as a significant process to ensure truthfulness and validity. House (2018) noted that judging dependability of a study needed a detailed evaluation of the participants for extended periods to identify, learn, and clarify any changes.

The audit trail also involved establishing the confirmability of the study (Harvey, 2015). To ensure the study's dependability, I used a journal to document all personal and field notes, recorded the participants' responses, and provided copies of the transcribed audio recordings of the interviewees for member checking purposes. Before researchers reaching data saturation, the collected data to evaluate the accuracy of the participants' interpretations of their views and experiences of the research phenomenon needs assurance (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Consequently, the concept of data saturation reveals content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015a).

Researchers use member checks to permit the participant to approve, authenticate, and explain the accuracy of the data collected to verify the data's credibility, as well as the rationality of supplemental interviews (Harvey, 2015). Member checking included verifying the participant's insight based on the researcher's interpretation of the responses to the interview question (Vance, 2015). The purpose for researchers to use the NVivo program is to facilitate coding, organizing, and placing the data into themes (Zamawe, 2015). According to Zamawe (2015), the NVivo software was also used by researchers to increase efficiency, improve accuracy and interpretation of the data through searching by electronic means, and sort data to obtain accurate and reliable results.

Furthermore, researchers using NVivo software may work more methodically and thoroughly than during the usual data analysis process. Though the NVivo software enhances the pace and accuracy of the data analysis process, the software program is not 100% accurate (Zamawe, 2015). Consequently, I reviewed the end manual assessment of the data to reduce the omission of the keywords and sentences to report any supplementary accuracy. Codes are the structural framework of the analysis suitable to the research question, and themes are common trends and patterns of fundamental importance tying the data together.

I conducted the coding procedure by creating a master list after the methodological review of the participants' responses. The review included identifying words used regularly, key terms, and phrases representing information about the research question and conceptual framework. According to Velu et al. (2018), the words and phrases were critical aspects of the qualitative research study. Starting with the master list, I sorted the initial codes into a more exact order or clusters by using a color-coded scheme to identify the words, key terms, and phrases. The researchers use color-coded themes to track and control the data for interpretation, a natural highlight of the themes, and sub-themes to aid researchers in the transition stages from research content to the data analysis (House, 2018). I continued conducting several more reviews of the data content to identify any omissions of the significant themes and subthemes.

Researchers use triangulation and audit trails to confirm reliability (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Yin, 2018). Methodical triangulation improves the reliability of the study by using multiple data sources to ensure the collection of comprehensive data in response to the research question. Robson and MacCartan (2016) noted that the audit trail includes a thorough review of the investigation process, including the data collection, analysis methods, and how the different themes emerge from the findings. Yin (2018) noted researchers support the reliability of the

results by using methodical triangulation from multiple sources of data. The various data collection methods will include collecting data through semi structured interviews and unpublished business documents. Researchers used member checking to allow methodical triangulation to improve the reliability of the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I used multiple sources of data to support the reliability of the findings of this study.

Barkhatov et al. (2016) stated that researchers use triangulation to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. Triangulation involves using a variety of sources of research data like interviews, focus group discussions, participant observations, and archival documents (House, 2018; Sherika, 2017). Before the researcher reached data saturation, the researcher strived to assure validity by processing the collected data used to assess the participant's interpretation of the views and experiences for the research phenomenon (House, 2018).

Reaching data saturation increases the reliability and validity of the research study (Rapport et al., 2018). Consequently, the concept of data saturation demonstrates content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015a). Thus, the researchers ensured to achieve data saturation to improve the quality of the research results (Barkhatov et al., 2016). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is achievable through the interview method and the number of interviews determined by the quality of responses received. Data replication implied the participants' responses were familiar but not substantially comparable (Morse, 2015b). I achieved data saturation by interviewing multiple participants using semi structured questions and collecting detailed information from their perspectives until the responses no longer provided any newer data.

Credibility

Credibility is the self-assurance and acceptance of the results (House, 2018). Elo et al.

(2014) discovered that credibility determines whether the information resulting from the study's findings was reasonable and supports the ideas drawn from the participants. Therefore, credibility is a process that includes participants scrutinizing the analysis and the collected data results for assessment to determine whether the analysis and the findings accurately reflect the participants' lived experiences (Birt et al., n.d.). Researchers in a qualitative research study can set the rigor of inquiry using sampling strategies, triangulation, members checking, conducting interviews, and employing peer-examinations (Harvey, 2015; Pearce & Sowa, 2018).

The suitable way to ensure credibility in the study is through triangulation and member checking. Using member checking, the participants read the transcription of interviews to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the record (Barkhatov et al., 2016). Researchers in the qualitative study uses prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking to improve the credibility of a study (Pierce & Sowa, 2018).

Consequently, I ensured credibility in this qualitative research study by conducting (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, and (c) prolonged engagement, as discussed in the subsections below.

Triangulation of data using multiple theories, materials, or methods to obtain corroborating evidence in a research study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Yin (2018) stated that researchers use the triangulation strategy with multiple data sources to provide a research study with credibility. O'Sullivan (2015) noted triangulation was an essential strategy to ensure data interpretation was credible and suggested qualitative research study researchers conduct member checks and use triangulation to improve the study's validity.

To ensure the credibility of the qualitative study, I used triangulation to mitigate bias by cross-examining the integrity of the participants' responses through data triangulation involving

the use of interviews and business documents. A researcher uses triangulation to compare multiple data sources and draw conclusions, and triangulation is used in different sources of data to support accurate analysis (O'Sullivan 2015; Ridder, 2017). To ensure the credibility of a completed case study, the use of methodological triangulation might provide a better comprehension of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Consequently, I used methodological triangulation and member checks for this study, as stated.

Member checking involves researchers returning to the participants with their interpretations of the interview questions responses for acknowledgment and assurance of the accuracy of the meaning (Fusch et al., 2018). Researchers ought to request the participants to review the verbatim transcription of their interview. To ensure member checking is suitable for this research study, I reviewed the information on the transcript reviews that required the participants to examine the verbatim transcription of their interview.

Leedy and Ormrod (2016) stated that member checks provide a more efficient validation than verbatim transcription as member checks ensure the interpretation of the researchers is accurate and truthful compared to verbatim (word-to-word) transcription. I conducted member checking by including the voices of respondents in the analysis and interpretation of the data to eliminate bias when analyzing and interpreting the findings. Member checks involve sending back the decoded data to the participants to evaluate their understanding and suggest possible changes.

Prolonged engagement- qualitative research data collection requires the researcher's complete involvement in the participants' world to gain an insight into the context of the study (Ridder, 2017). The researcher's extended time in the field improves the respondents' trust and provides a greater understanding of participants' culture and context (O'Sullivan, 2015). I ensured

complete involvement to acquire the participants' insight into the study by having enough time in the field to improve the trust of the respondents and provide a better understanding of participants' culture and circumstances.

Transferability

The quality and rigor of qualitative research study depend on dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Marcella & Rowley, 2015; Yin, 2018). In a qualitative study, transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative research findings are applied to other contexts (O'Sullivan, 2015).

Transferability necessitates a researcher to provide vivid explanations of every research process from data collection, the meaning of the study, and finalization of the report (Marcella & Rowley, 2015). Thus, I provided detailed explanations of the research process, the context of the study, and a final report meeting transferability requirements.

In qualitative research, transferability is vital for the study's findings to have meaning for persons and readers not participating in the study (O'Sullivan, 2015). Transferability is used as a method to determine the exchange of researchers' results, link their concluded study to other similar contexts while maintaining the meanings and deductions of their independent research (Ridder, 2017).

Qualitative studies are qualified for transferability standards when the findings generate meaning to others not involved in the study and might relate their experiences to the results (O'Sullivan, 2015). The applicability of the findings to other occurrences and circumstances confirms the transferability of the results related to the phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Moreover, the transferability of the findings highlights substitute alternatives to the researchers on how the concepts and theories of the study could apply to other settings (Elo et al., 2014).

Leedy and Ormrod (2016) stated that naturalistic inquirers ought to show overall results by providing adequate textual information of the fieldwork observations to enable the confident transfer of the results. I gathered a detailed explanation of the phenomenon being investigated to allow a holistic understanding of the issues linked to the research problem.

The study includes the use of purposive sampling and use of data collection and analysis techniques for assessment of the transferability of the research results, including transcribing participants' responses, coding, and organizing data, conducting triangulation processes, and presenting the results in a logical and repeatability manner to determine the generalizations of the study (O'Sullivan, 2015; Ridder, 2017). Researchers use semistructured interviews to interpret information, capture data about the participants' thoughts, and make judgments (Marcella & Rowley, 2015).

Furthermore, researchers also use semi structured interviews to suit the requirements of the study when the interview process contains open-ended questions exclusive of fixed response categories, to seek a comprehensive perceptive of the answers to the questions and providing the researchers the freedom to follow-up with additional inquiries (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The interview protocol for this study is in the Appendix section. Using software for qualitative data analysis improved the portability of the qualitative data (Hays et al., 2016). The transferability of this study's findings to explore the strategies small construction business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years could have an application to numerous other small businesses. To ensure the transferability of potential future research, I kept detailed notes, record all interviews, and use NVivo 11 software to support the analysis of the data that help in describing the context of the research study.

Confirmability

In a qualitative research study, confirmability refers to the ability to demonstrate that research data represents the participants' responses and not the researchers' biased perspectives (El Hussein et al., 2015; O'Sullivan, 2015). The purpose of this study was to provide adequate information without bias, reflecting the participants' views. According to Barkhatov et al. (2016), methodological triangulation confirmed comparisons found in diverse data collection sources. Researchers used methodological triangulation and NVivo 11 software to help in confirmation of the quality, transferability, and reliability of all data.

According to Barkhatov et al. (2016), researchers closely link confirmability to dependability in referring to the neutrality and accuracy of the data. Maintaining an audit trail in data collection and analysis demonstrates skill in confirmability and comprehensive records of the approaches employed (Gunasekaran et al., 2017). Confirmability builds on the audit trail involving the use of field notes, personal notes, and journals (Harvey, 2015). I kept a complete audit trail of data gathering, member checking findings, analyzing the process, and conclusion to ensure confirmability. Researchers provide confirmability by enlightening the interpretation of the data collected during the study and supported the research results and not individual biases (Rapport et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Wallace and Sheldon (2015) noted that confirmability is the extent to which others substantiate the study results. Comprehensible and succinct record-keeping plus data preservation are essential components of research validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). O'Sullivan (2015) noted confirmability depended on the report of conclusion, interpretation, and illustration that the result was directly from study data. Achieving confirmability in this study requires maintaining a detailed audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity. As a business consultant for more

than ten years in small business healthcare, construction, hospitality, and customer service, there is a commonality with the research topic.

The confirmability during the report of the research results provides quotes from the participants to portray each emerging theme (O'Sullivan, 2015). According to Barkhatov et al. (2016), confirmability by audit trail rigor is attainable by outlining the decisions made throughout the research process. Thus, I used the audit trailing to establish the rigors of a study by providing the details of data analysis and some of the decisions leading to the results.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is the point at which a researcher can no longer identify any new themes or information to support the research phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). According to Barkhatov et al. (2016), researchers ought to ensure achievement of data saturation, to improve the quality of the research findings. Reaching data saturation increases the dependability and validity of the research study (Ridder, 2017).

According to Fusch and Ness (2015), researchers could achieve data saturation by using the interview method, and the number of interviews depended on the quality of responses received. To ensure reaching data saturation, I interviewed multiple participants by asking semi structured questions and collect detailed information from their perspectives until the repetition of answers fails to generate any newer data or themes. Data replication implies the participants' responses are common but not substantially similar (Morse, 2015b). I achieved data saturation through data replication, as well.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies that

small business owners in central Georgia use to sustain their construction businesses beyond 5 years after formation. Interview data and data from a review of company documents are the data triangulation methods used in this study. Purposeful sampling led to the selection of the 5 small construction business owners in central Georgia. I obtained approval from Walden University IRB to collect field data before the commencement of data collection. I recorded and transcribed in-person interviews. I analyzed data after data collection and organization with the aid of NVivo software to expedite the identification of similarities in data.

In Section 2, I reiterated the research objective, discussed details of my function as the researcher, the participants, and the elected research methodology and design with justifications for the choices. Section 2 continued with a portrayal of the population, the sampling method, and the research ethics. Next, I explained data collection and analysis techniques and concluded section 2 with an explanation of the methods and techniques for ensuring the reliability and validity of the study findings.

In Section 3, I start with a brief presentation of the study topic, including the research question. The section continues with an explanation of study findings, its applications to business practice, and implications for societal change. Recommendations based on the research results, suggestions for further research, and my reflections conclude section 3.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that small construction owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The data came from owner interviews and company documentation at five small construction companies in the central region of Georgia. The findings showed the factors that the owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Presentation of the Findings

My data collection involved 5 owners of small construction companies with less than 10 employees in the southeast region of the United States who successfully sustained their businesses for more than 5 years and who grossed less than \$5 million annually. According to Turner and Endres (2017), participants who have effective proactive business management experience about a researcher's study are beneficial for the researcher to interview. Researchers conduct semistructured interviews so the participants can elaborate on answers, ask questions to clarify meanings, and apply follow-up questions to gain valuable data (Powell & Eddleston, 2013).

I addressed my central research question of what strategies small construction owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I conducted 5 interviews that formed the foundation for this project and answered my central research question. Using my interview protocol, I asked each participant 6 questions listed in Appendix C.

Humberd and Rouse (2016) explained the importance of a strong mentorship relationship built on common ground. P2 explained the importance of growing, teaching, and learning from your customers. P5 said, "Advertising gets me in the door, but relationships get the customers to

call me back.” It is important for both parties to benefit and see value in one another. P4 mentioned how it was difficult for them to get customers at the beginning of the business because people did not know him; however, as he continued to meet with people in the area, they started to trust him and were asking for his services on mulch, bricks, and sand.

I also reviewed business daily sales records, weekly reports, and audited accounts for those who made them available. Results from this study may be of assistance for owners of small businesses, both new and existing ones, who would like to develop and implement strategies for business longevity. P3 financial records reflect the constant theme from the owners that access to capital was a significant barrier to their success. The first 2 years of operation showed a struggling business. The owner advised that it was through connections that he could finally get some financing for his capacity building. P3 noted that financial prowess helped him to get over a difficult time. He said:

It is the same formula for us as a small business. Getting financing is difficult. I do have a lot of people who call for orders, but I do not have a truck that can deliver the building materials to them because my truck broke down.

Small business owners' access to finance from banks and other financing institutions is limited because entrepreneurs lack the financial knowledge to acquire finance. Accessing bank loans is difficult for small business owners because they normally do not have good credit and do not have enough collateral to acquire the loans. P3 had to rent a truck most of the time to either deliver materials or perform landscaping

After completing the interviews, I member checked my interpretations with participants and then analyzed the data collected from 5 small business owners to conduct data saturation. I reached data saturation when the interview data and supporting documentation such as literature

and company documentation became repetitive, and no additional information was apparent. From my analyses, I developed themes that support my conceptual framework. The themes were developed by reviewing the common responses from the business owners. My themes are (a) strategic management, (b) application of business strategies, (c) strategic business processes, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

<i>Relationship Between Success Strategies and Themes</i>			
Subthemes coding	Success strategies		
	Strategic planning	Application of business strategies	Strategic business processes
Leadership style	X		
Access to capital	X		
Specialization	X		
Financial management	X		
Resource allocation			X
Inventory management			X
Customer satisfaction		X	
Community relationships		X	
Networking		X	
Capacity building			X
Communication		X	
Creativity and innovation			X

Theme 1: Strategic Management

The first theme category that emerged involved the importance of management strategies for business management. Strategic management involved sub themes such as leadership style, access to capital and financial management, and specialization of work. Charismatic and innovative thinking are unique qualities. Charismatic leaders are viewed more positively and often succeed in sustaining their organizations for a long time. Charismatic and innovative leaders are able to implement a business model that will lead and attract other stakeholders. All participants owed their success to good leadership styles and 80% to the specialization of work.

All participants described themselves as leaders who like to get the work done by creating good working conditions for their employees. They encouraged open communication with their employees. P2 stated, “My employees can walk in my office anytime to discuss about issues. I ask my employees to talk to me about any feedback they receive from customers and how they feel about working for me.” P3 stated, “We know how to manage our employees to bring out results.” He talked about his upbringing that led him to always treat others with dignity. They also mentioned that “Our employees are experts at what they do, and we try to give them the best chance to succeed because when they go to a job site, we are able to get the job done faster using their experience.”

The small business owners interviewed were experts in their fields in construction. The sizes of their organization were potentially beneficial because it helped them be the best at what they do. Omri et al. (2015) found increasing specialization also increases innovation in an organization, which leads to greater profitability. P1 explained how they continue to grow in their specialty by focusing on a niche area:

We wanted to grow in the construction field, so I first researched why we were not growing in particular areas. From there, I attended small business meetings and met other small business owners. I met with one of our general contractors, who connected me to a training institute where I learned more about my business. Our next goal is to develop an apprenticeship program through high schools and tech schools to grow the industry.

Such inimitable leadership qualities are hard to replicate. As illustrated by Alvarez and Busenitz (2001), “It didn't hurt to have Steve Jobs, a charismatic, innovative thinker as Apple's CEO for many years. Apple, pursuing a different business model focused on their strategic resources, has succeeded with years of record profit.”

Based on organizational documentation and the interviews, the participants seemed to have different specializations and leadership styles, but the idea was the same. All the participants are focused on opportunities for growth but still focus on the specialty of the business. Focusing on both allows the business to grow but also protects the company from overexpansion.

Access to capital and financial management- resources as a critical strategy for business longevity. All 5 interviewed participants mentioned access to capital as an essential strategy that small business owners in the construction industry used to sustain the business over 5 years. Other research supports the importance of access to capital, such as Robinson (2017), who posited that small business owners with access to capital have a higher likelihood of achieving business success and sustainable business. Small business owners with access to capital possess a valuable and rare resource due to the relatively high cost of starting and running a business. However, small business owners often use internal funding to fund their business while initiating new ventures (Bates & Robb, 2016). In the event that the small business owners cannot generate funding from internal resources, the owner will have to opt for external resources (Bruton et al., 2015). Inadequate capital to invest is one of the obstacles in the sustainability of many small businesses (Gumel, 2017).

Another obstacle for small business owners is that they do not easily access funding from formal financial institutions (Fowowe, 2017; Kusi et al., 2015; Magaisa & Matipira, 2017). Small business owners' ability to access financial resources is one of the key factors in ensuring business success and sustainability (Gai & Minniti, 2015). Madu (2016) indicated that lack of financial support contributes to small business failures. Acquiring financial resources decreases the possibility of small business closure and contributes to small business sustainability (Greene et al., 2015; Khelil, 2015). Therefore, getting adequate capital is one of the key business

preparatory strategies that financial resource availability facilitates access to other resources for business performance (Chicksand, 2015; Robinson, 2017). P1 noted:

Startup costs for a construction company are higher than usual due to the large quantity you need to purchase beforehand. I had to borrow money from family members to maintain inventory, and I almost did not make it to 5 years.

Small business owners' inability to access capital aligns with the view of Bates and Robb (2016). They argued that financial resources from formal financial institutions are not readily available to small business owners because the banks are reluctant to offer financial capital to small business owners, especially those starting up businesses. Participants in Robinson's (2017) study linked financial institutions' reluctance to avail credits to small business owners with the lack of collateral. P3 mentioned that:

The strategy I used in the first 5 years of business to mitigate the problem of limited financial resources was suppliers' credit facility use. I would get the products from suppliers, sell the product first, and agree on repaying them after the sale. P3's statement is reiterated by most small business owners who end up resorting to getting high interest rate financing due to lack of funding from banks. The high interest rates may limit company's profits which may lead to failure of the organization.

P3 also mentioned getting adequate capital as an important strategy for small business sustainability for longer than 5 years in the construction industry. P3 said, "One of the big challenges in running a construction business is getting adequate capital because the business requires a huge amount of capital if you are to satisfy the customers properly."

Theme 2: Application of Business Strategies

Application of business strategies includes the sub themes customer satisfaction, community relationships, networking, and communication.

Customer Satisfaction and Community Relationships

The second emerged group of themes are related to customer satisfaction and retention strategies. Customers promote positive feedback between customers. Mandal (2016) opined that such customers are the firm's relationship capital. Mandal described the importance of customers on any business concerning the sale of the business. The value of a business at the time of selling the business includes the plant, machinery, brand name, customer base, and the number and value of the customers who will do business with the firm (Mandal, 2016). Small business owners often make significant leaps in their thinking, leading to innovative ideas that are not always very linear and factually based. Alvarez and Busenitz (2001) refer to the small business owner's way of thinking as heuristics-based logic, which allows small business owners to think and learn faster. Those small business owners who used heuristic based logic possess unique characteristics that are not easily imitable. The ability to maintain customer satisfaction and community relationships is related to RBT as it can only be successful when the intangible skill is unique and not easily imitable. As indicated by P1:

My customers are my number one priority. I want them to keep coming back and spread the word such that when they come in, I give them all the attention and will do all I can to make sure I meet their needs.

Finding new customers is an expensive investment requiring a lot of time, energy, money, and resources (Mandal, 2016). In addition, the more you spend in search of new customers, the more you eat your profit. Thus, it is worth investing more in satisfying and retaining the existing

customers once they are in. P1 also said, “I would rather spend time looking for the materials that the customer wants so I can keep them rather than spending time and money looking for new customers because getting new customers is costly.”

Other small businesses in the construction industry which are with the business perimeters can also help with sustainability. Through other businesses, small business owners can satisfy the customers without having the supplies in their stores. P2 said:

I have always been seeing my neighbors as helping weapons because in the event that the customer place order of some supplies I do not have, I just go to my neighbor as if I’m taking the supplies from my store.

This is especially true for small business owners with minimal capital who cannot keep a good range of products. The circumstances require the business owner to become strategic. When a customer wants a particular item that they do not have, instead of telling the customer that they do not have the item, they quickly run to their neighbor and get the item. Such qualities are not common among all small business owners.

P2 emphasized, “Once you let the customer go to another shop, it will be difficult to call him back.” P3 linked the existence of other small businesses in the construction industry with the importance of cooperation with other small business owners in the same industry. Cooperation with neighboring shop owners is also a strategy of making the competition a non-issue.

Friendships, Networking, and Communication

The ability to network with customers and stakeholders may significantly impact the sustainability of the business (Robinson, 2017). Networking and relationship with customers are similar to relationship marketing, which according to Šonková and Grabowska (2015), is an ideal

tool to target and personalize customers. Nwachukwu (2018) and Robinson (2017) recognized the importance of networking and relationship building in business sustainability.

According to Robinson (2017), there are significant advantages to raising small business owners' ability to build relationships and networking to increase the number of customers. Moreover, Gretzinger et al. (2018) and Gretzinger and Leik (2017) posited that small business owners' networking ability has an impact on the survival of small businesses. Gai and Minniti (2015) asserted that small business owners might improve the process of organizing collaboration out of the business relationship and networking. Respondents mentioned networking and building relationship with building contractors, plumbers, and electricians as a strategy for sustainability of the small businesses in the construction industry for longer than 5 years.

From the participants' point of view, networking with many building contractors, general contractors, plumbers, and masonry was one of the items participants mentioned as a strategy for managing competition and sustainability of the business. The participants' views are in line with Izogo and Ogbo (2015) who commented that ability to network helps business, which P3 mentioned that "It was hard for me to get business when I moved to this area, however after building relationships with other consecrators, suppliers and the neighborhood, business started to grow as they got to know me." Results of the study by Omrane (2015) also validated how vital networking is in achieving business success and sustainability. All participants in this study confirmed the importance of networking in the sustainability of small businesses in the construction industry.

P3 mentioned that:

Friendships with contractors helped me to keep on moving with the business sustainably in the first 5 years and to date. I made friends out of doing business and kept

communicating to them, asking them if there would be anything I could deliver to them.

Warren (2016), in his study to explore small business strategies for sustainability beyond 10 years, also revealed building relationships as amongst the emerged themes. P5 said, "Our relationships in the construction industry are also a strategy for competition because we know many stakeholders who can also act as our marketing windows."

Theme 3: Strategic Business Processes

Strategic business processes include sub themes resource allocation, inventory management, and capacity building.

The sub themes are interconnected and reviewed together. Capacity building is an intentional process by which individuals and organizations obtain, improve and retain the skills, knowledge, tools and equipment and other resources needed to do their jobs competently (Connolly & York, 2002). Sixty percent of the participants expressed the importance of capacity building, resource allocation and inventory management. RBT stresses the merit of an old saying: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Edwards, 2014). Specifically, it is also essential to recognize that overall strategic resources are often created by taking several strategies and resources that each could be copied and bundling them together in a way that is difficult to duplicate. P5 used different strategies to create a product that focused on resource allocation, inventory management and capacity building that will be costly for other small business owners to implement. P5 mentioned that "Proper resource allocation and inventory management were essential to determine the future direction of the organization." P5 mentioned that "I had to implement an electronic inventory management system to allow proper accounting for inventory. Before I was using manual counting on inventory and guesswork and was always running out of inventory."

The capacity building allowed the participants to train employees extensively and constantly. P5 mentioned that extensive training of employees was significant in building the company's brand. He offered weekly, quarterly and yearly training to discuss specific needs and how to grow the organization. P5 mentioned, "The training is specific to the needs of the individual and the goals of the organization." A study conducted by Donkor (2011) revealed that the determinants of business failure in the perspective of small construction businesses in the Ghanaian construction industry include assigning incompetent project leaders at the site. By offering training to its employees, the participants were able to assign competent personnel to the job sites.

Almost all participants mentioned all the sub themes one way or another as a success factor in maintaining their business beyond 5years. Table 2 below shows the number of participants who related the subthemes as their success strategy. Small business owners who wish to achieve long-term competitive advantages should place a premium on nurturing and developing their firms' strategic resources to sustain their businesses for a long time. This aligns with RBT that for an organization to be successful, they need to possess valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and nonsubstitutable resources.

Table 2

Number of Participants Relating the Subtheme to Their Success

Sub theme codes	Number of participants	Percentage
Leadership style	5	100

Access to capital	5	100
Specialization	4	80
Financial management	5	100
Resource allocation	3	60
Inventory management	3	60
Customer satisfaction	5	100
Community relationships	2	40
Networking	5	100
Capacity building	3	60
Communication	5	100
Creativity and innovation	4	80

P4 mentioned how his buddy system "allowed him to get jobs that he may not have the knowledge of if it was not for his buddies." Jones et al. (2015) expressed the importance of growing relationships and brand awareness through social media. P5 mentioned how his connections on Facebook and Twitter helped him market his business and get contacts from the business. He noted that "I am still on Facebook mainly because of my business connections. Customers often message me requesting prices for certain things or how to resolve issues," which confirmed Jones et al. (2015) assertion that customer relationships with the organization have a direct relationship to sales.

Relevance to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was RBT formulated by Barney in 1991. I used the RBT to understand strategies small construction business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Barney (1991) stated that for resources to hold potential as sources of sustainable competitive advantage, a company's resources must be valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and not substitutable (VRIN). Nason and Wikland (2015) further elaborated that VRIN resources exploit unique growth opportunities and protect first mover advantages within the industry.

Small construction business owners venture into ownership due to several reasons. One reason is to make a profit that allows them to sustain their business for a long time (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019). Creating and maintaining profitability in a competitive market requires unique, rare, and inimitable strategies, as shown in my study results. Small business owners have individual-specific resources that facilitate recognizing new opportunities and assemble resources for their business. These specific resources become clear when P3 mentioned that he always tries to form relationships with other small business owners to understand how other small construction business owners operate and create those lasting relationships. P3's ability to interact with other small business owners managed to sustain his business beyond 5 years by learning from them and getting referrals for his organization. P3 is a charismatic and innovative leader who understands that success for a business requires forming social boundaries with other small business owners and not becoming rivalries. Such characteristics are unique and hard to implicate. P1 believes keeping the customers you have is cheaper than getting new ones. P1, therefore, focuses on customer service that keeps its customers happy and becomes regular customers. This approach has allowed P1 to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

Customer satisfaction skills are a rare strategy that can make or break an organization,

aligning with the RBT theory. People management is a critical success factor for every organization, and managers worldwide rate human resources as one of the most challenging and complex tasks (Kaufman, 2015). P2 mentioned the importance of employee satisfaction and teamwork. P2 realized that they play an integral role in promoting collaboration within the organization as a small business owner. Happy employees bring success to an organization. RBT has been hugely influential across all management areas, and most researchers agree that it is the central pillar of theory in the human resources management field. (Kaufman, 2015).

My study focuses on strategic resources, from opportunity recognition to organizing these resources into a firm and creating heterogeneous outputs through the firms that are superior to the market. The themes identified in my study are strategic management, application of business strategy, and business processes. These themes have sub themes, namely (a) financial management, (b) access to capital, (c) specialization and leadership style, and (d) project management. (e) community relationships, (f) meeting customer's needs, (g) communication and networking, (h) building a sense of confidence, trust, and loyalty for customers (i) capacity building, (j) creativity and innovation, (k) resource allocation, and inventory management. The themes and subthemes tie directly to the success strategies mentioned in RBT. Barney and Clarke (2007) stated that RBT starts with a perfectly competitive market and works out design and competitive advantage implications. The themes in my study show how each small business owner uses RBT's rare, unique, inimitable, and expensive to duplicate resources to maintain competitiveness and therefore sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Thus, strategic management, application of business strategy, and business processes are uniquely related to success strategies referenced in the RBT theory. Hence for an organization to be successful, they need to possess rare, inimitable, unique, and nonsubstitutable resources, as mentioned in the RBT theory formulated by Barney (1991).

Applications to Professional Practice

In this study, I provided insights on issues affecting the performance of the small construction industry in the Southern region of the United States. In the research findings, I facilitated identifying the primary drivers of sustenance, which help diagnose business performance challenges in small business owners operating in the construction industry (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019). It was evident that the firms' intangible and tangible resources were fundamental for small business owners' ability to sustain business operations for longer than 5 years. Intangible resources included the development of relationships. All participants identified building and growing relationships, whether internal or external, as crucial contributing factors to the success of their organizations.

Small business owners can benefit from this study by seeing the importance of internal and external relationships and implementing strategies to strengthen these relationships. Internally, more robust relationships were proven by the participants' organizational documentation to reduce the turnover of key employees, and favorable external relationships have a direct link to sales and return service. The participants who shared their experience in this study were in business for over 5 years. The findings are pertinent and demonstrated relevance to the success of the 5 participants in this study. Thus, the new or existing business may consider the valuable information in their need to sustain businesses for longer than 5 years.

During the years in business operation, the participants have contributed to the local economy in many terms, including creating employment for the citizens of central Georgia. Additionally, small business owners can benefit from specialization in their field. All 5 participants expressed the importance of growth in their specialty and not straying far from what has made them successful. P2 mentioned that he only deals with structural engineering

subcontracting. He said the leading contractors in structural construction know him because he is an expert in the business. Additional evidence and strategies can help strengthen small businesses. By using these findings, other small business owners can improve their business performance.

Small business owners may desire to remember the prominence of identifying success strategies before embarking on businesses and good customer relationship strategies that ensured customer satisfaction and retention. P2 expressed the importance of accurately calculating costs as compared to revenues to determine if a new strategy is successful. Some organizations focus too much on the revenues without truly digging into all the costs associated with a strategy. P5 expressed the importance of growing the industry but still focusing on what breeds success.

The data analysis revealed themes in 3 strategic groups with twelve subthemes that contributed to small business success in the construction industry's shown in table 1 above. The first category of the subthemes related to strategic management strategies entailed (a) financial management, (b) access to capital, (c) specialization and leadership style, and (d) project management. The second category of themes related to the application of business strategies included (a) community relationships, (b) meeting customer's needs, (e) communication and networking, as well as (f) building a sense of confidence, trust, and loyalty for customers. The third category named strategic business processes consisted of (a) capacity building, (b) creativity and innovation, (c) resource allocation, and inventory management.

Successful small business owners who identified sustainability strategies prior to business establishment prevented failure before starting the business. Those who developed and implemented strategies to ensure customer satisfaction and retention ensured repeated sales, profitability, and sustainability. Effective resource allocation through the implementation of

proper strategic planning of activities ensured that human, material, plant, and equipment and financial resources are equally allocated to various business processes to increase satisfactory performance (Kumar & Suresh 2019).

Implications for Social Change

Based on extensive research findings through interviews and documentation, the primary implications of social change may be individual organizational behavior. Positive social change may be accomplished through owners of small business construction companies applying proper leadership strategies to build unique relationships with all stakeholders. These personal relationships directly impact the organization's sustenance and communities affected by the business. Small businesses employ over 59% of the U.S. population, but only 50% and 25% of small construction businesses survive beyond the first 5 years (Small Business Administration, 2017a).

The findings in the National Benefit Services (NBS) (2016) indicated that out of 154,618 surveyed enterprises, 82,238 (53.19%) did not reach 5 years of operations from startups. Thus, validated findings by many researchers that many small businesses fail before reaching 5 years (Johnson & Parker, 1994). Business failure goes together with the disappearance of jobs (Osarumwense, 2020). Khelil (2016) validated Robinson's concern by explaining how extensive the effect of small business failure to the business owners, employees, the local community, and the state economy at large by examining the different configurations that can occur in failing entrepreneurs. The implications of positive social change may include the potential for the continued sustenance of small businesses, the creation of job opportunities in the small business sector, and the growth of the local economy. Small business owners may increase their corporate social responsibility activities with continued success. Small business owners may focus on

reducing waste by getting involved in community clean up campaigns. Small construction business owners may educate the community on the effects of soil conservation on the environment.

By implementing successful relationship and specialization strategies, small business owners in the construction industry may sustain their organizations. As construction companies build stronger relationships internally and externally, other small business owners may learn these strategies through the examples set by other successful organizations. The study's goal was to explore the success factors that small business owners in the construction industry in Georgia used to sustain business operations for longer than 5 years. Strategies that owners of successful small businesses in the construction industry used to sustain business operations for longer than 5 years are open to other small business owners interested in sustaining their businesses for longer than 5 years.

The study results may contribute to the growing body of literature concerning the success of small businesses in the construction industry. After the recession, new small business owners need to develop strategies to sustain their organization beyond the 5-year threshold to give themselves the best chance at long-term survival. These strategies may aid in the future development of more substantial small businesses. Stronger businesses can create a more vital workforce and potentially a more robust economy in another recession. Strategies resulted from the study could help businesses endurance for longer than 5 years. Furthermore, the owners of small construction businesses may apply the information and the strategies revealed from the study and hence contribute to social change.

The study results are an empowerment tool for the small business owners' enhanced ability to sustain their businesses and, hence helping the local communities. Also, the study could

help small business owners' upsurge in decision-making and timely overcome possible hurdles. The study may provide an understanding that supports the progress and preservation of small businesses in the construction industry. Information and strategies about the small construction companies' success factors can benefit other small business owners' sustainability. Thus, ensuring continued ability to survive and hence positive outcome on local economies in the country. Small business is an essential part of each community and the benefits of sustainability have far-accomplishment effects on the economy. Thus, Gandy (2015) and Hyer and Lussier (2017) urged small business owners to adopt effective business strategies. The primary focus of the study was on success factors, which permitted a unique indulgence of business sustainability in the construction industry.

Recommendations for Action

Owners of small businesses tend to learn from each other (Emrich, 2015). Thus, owners of small businesses aspiring to venture into the construction industry who review the information and findings of the study may adapt to the successful strategies identified in this study more confidently and will take hands-on action to support their businesses. Recommendations from this study should be beneficial to existing and future owners of small businesses in the construction industry.

Based on the 3 themes identified through methodological triangulation of semi structured interviews, analysis of literature, and document review, I recommend the small business owners in the construction industry use training on the development of internal and external relationships. Internal relationships can aid in developing more substantial organizations, and external connections can build the brand, grow the leaders, or strengthen customer relationships with the organization. I also recommend they build their credit to be more accessible for the credit union

and bank loans. I also recommend they have a relationship with banks so that when loans such as the government CORVID based CARES act become available, they will be able to get loan approval from their banks.

It is critical that small construction business owners make a head start developing and implementing strategies that drive business more robust and resistant. Thus, developing and implementing survival and sustainability strategies is crucial in ensuring small construction business longevity beyond 5 years (Ifekwem & Adedamola, 2016)

Small businesses in many countries create more than half of the workforce in the private sector (SBA, 2016). Therefore, small business owners are duty bound to sustain business operations in a sustainable competitive advantage manner. Small business owners can benefit directly from training. SBA offers training for small business construction owners on project management, bidding projects, and providing connections needed to strengthen organizations through strategy development. Additionally, small business construction owners may learn from one another through networking in developing strategies that work in different areas. I plan to provide training to small business owners and tackle the main themes from the study as training agendas. I also plan to disseminate the study results through presentations at the small business conferences where I am already a participating member.

I will develop an article for publication in a professional journal to publish the findings of the study. The objective is to share knowledge and insights with the business and academic community for enhancing opportunities for many owners of small businesses in the construction industry to increase the percentage rate of successful owners who sustain business operations beyond 5years.

Recommendations for Further Research

I recommend that future research aim at paying attention to a larger population sample and geographic base for cross-validation. The primary limitation of this research study was the sample size limited to 5 owners of small businesses in the central Georgia construction industry. Using only owners of small businesses located in central Georgia restricted the quality of the response because strategies used by the small construction business owners located in central Georgia may not be the same as those in other geographical locations. I was also constrained with time, such that the I had to confine myself to only one geographical location of the state of Georgia.

The third and final limitation was the population for the study which was limited to the construction industry rather than the entire sector of small businesses. The sample size of 5 small business construction owners limited the study and hampered the quality of the outcomes. As a result, the comments are not typical of small construction business owners universally in this case. Therefore, future researchers should involve a more comprehensive sample size to enhance the quality of the findings. Furthermore, I confined myself to the construction industry rather than the entire sector of small businesses. Responses from the owners of small businesses operating in the construction industry may not assist small business owners operating in other industries. Other researchers may also consider the service industry, which also faces the inability to sustain business operations for longer than 5 years. Thus, I recommend future research to consider industries other than the construction industry, including the service industry. For comparison, further researchers could include other regions such as the southern regions or the northern regions to compare the northern small construction industries and the southern small construction industries.

Reflections

I used a multiple case study to explore the success factors owners of small businesses in the construction industry used to sustain business operations for longer than 5 years. During recruiting participants and while undertaking the interview, I read about owners of small businesses in the construction industry and the success factors responsible for sustaining businesses for longer than 5 years. While I appreciate the SBA website for having full access to small business owners in central Georgia, I learned that researchers should not underrate the participants' recruitment process. It is so much involving with a lot of back and forth.

Finding owners of a small construction business who had time to participate in the study was a real struggle. I managed to contact twenty potential business owners by email, and I only received a response from 3 owners. I had to send another email to more potential participants to widen my sample pool. Ultimately, 5 participants provided their consent by signing the consent form and provided incredible insights to each question according to their skills and experiences. From the study findings, I revealed that small business owners who sustained businesses over 5 years are committed and with great patience about their business. Above all, the 5 successful owners of the small construction industry developed success strategies right from the beginning and were committed to walking over the strategies by implementing them. One great thing I learned is the meaning of competition. Owners of small businesses with inadequate capital like to be in the same area to support each other. I also learned that small construction owners tend to lean more towards people of their own culture. They support each other whenever the support is available and needed.

My last reflections are on a great job by the Walden university faculty members and the DBA program staff who offered insights that amplified my critical thinking and improved my

research skills. With the close guidance of the chair and committee members, I managed to create an interview protocol ethically administered the interview. I analyzed the data that produced the strategies that owners of small businesses in the construction industry used to sustain business operations for longer than 5 years. Despite the problematic moments experienced during the journey, the design of the doctoral process was a self-teacher that trained endurance and time management for organizing daily tasks. I achieved a healthy work-school-life balance throughout my journey. The advent of CORVID 19 made conducting interviews a bit challenging as there was a need to observe the social distancing rules during interviews. In the end, it was all worth it.

Conclusion

Sustaining a small business for longer than 5 years is not a one-time activity but rather a long-term determination calling for a great desire to move forward. Owners of small businesses need a strategy that links resources and capabilities for sustainable competitive advantage. Owning resources alone is not enough. Owners of small businesses should be able to strategize the access and use of the resources or competitive advantage.

Knowledge and insights from the owners of small construction businesses who sustained their businesses should be made available for other owners of small construction businesses or other industries of small businesses. However, many studies focused on the reasons for the failure of small businesses than the success factors.

Thus, I found it imperative that I undertook a study on the strategies that owners of small construction businesses used to sustain businesses for longer than 5 years from their startups. The study was also in support of what Robinson (2017) said in his study on African American businesses that strategies for financial stability and profitability that involve successful business strategies are beneficial to the business community as they contribute to the lessening failure rate

of similar businesses.

Furthermore, such researchers add to the body of knowledge and domain expertise about success factors that lead to the sustenance of small construction businesses. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the success factors that owners of small businesses in the construction industry in central Georgia used to sustain businesses for longer than 5 years. The unique ways that owners of small businesses in the construction industry in central Georgia used to identify, develop and operationalize the success strategies may assist the aspiring owners of small businesses in assimilating the strategies in their business endeavors. Some translated their intention to start a business and made the difficult decision of leaving paid up jobs and start a business (Rocha et al., 2015). According to Rocha et al. (2015), such individuals with such bold decisions achieved business longevity.

The participants for the study were 5 owners of small businesses in the construction industry who successfully operated their businesses for longer than 5 years. The overarching research question for the study was: What strategies do small business construction owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years? Each participant responded to 6 interview questions relating to the owner's respective experiences in developing and operationalizing the success strategies that survived beyond 5 years to address the research question. I coded the data assembled through interviews and reviews of company documents leading to several themes.

To make the subthemes more focused and reader friendly, I categorized the themes into 3 broad categories, namely: (a) themes related to business establishment strategies, (b) themes related to customer satisfaction and retention strategies, and (c) other sustainability related strategies. This study's findings identify business success strategies right from the business establishment stage are fundamental for small business survival, growth, and sustainability. The

results align with Modilim and Land (2017) conclusion in their study on the strategies for growing and sustaining small businesses. Modilim and Land (2017) called upon small business leaders to embark on strategic planning and preparation before implementing any business idea.

Therefore, it is essential for the owners of small businesses in the construction industry to develop and implement strategies that make business more robust, resistant, and hence sustainable for longer than 5 years. The findings aligned with Ifekwem and Adedamola (2016), who posited that developing and implementing survival and sustainability strategies is crucial in ensuring small business longevity beyond 5 years. Unfortunately, many owners of small businesses embark on businesses unprepared (Turner & Endres, 2017). Adequate preparations include the availability of appropriate business locations, access to adequate finances, human capability, and other internal resources (Mashenen & Rumanyika, 2014). Robinson (2017) argued that starting a business results from translating and putting into action an intention to do business. In translating, the intention is where strategy identification becomes imperative.

References

- Abdelkader, B., & Abed, B. (2016). The effect of information technology on competitive advantage of firm: The role of environmental uncertainty. *International Journal of Management Science and Technology Information*, 22, 16-38.
<http://www.naisit.org/journal/detail/id/1>
- Akhund, M. A., Memon, H. A., Imad, U. H., Siddiqui, F. H., & Khoso, A. R. (2018). Motivational factors for the implementation of ISO-9001 in construction firms of Pakistan. *Civil Engineering Journal*, 4, 2023-2033. <https://doi.org/10.28991/cej-03091135>
- Alamoudi, Y., & Alamoudi, W. (2016). Cloud computing-The future of business. *Journal of Information Systems Technology and Planning*, 8(19), 41-60.
<http://www.intellectbase.org/journals.php>
- Alonso, A.D. Bressan, A., & Sakellarios, N. (2017). Exploring innovation perceptions and practices among micro and small craft breweries: A three-country study. *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, 29, 140-158. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0432.00174>
- Alvarez, S.A. & Busenitz, L.W. (2001). The entrepreneurship of resource based theory. *Journal of Management*, 27, 755-775. <http://jom.sagepub.com/>
- Bambale, A. J., Girei, A. A., & Barwa, T. M. (2017). Leadership styles and workers' performance in small and medium scale industries in Adamawa State, Nigeria: A research model. *Journal of Economic Development, Management, IT, Finance & Marketing*, 9(2), 14-23. <https://gsmi-ijgb.com>

- Barkhatov, V., Pletnev, D., & Campa, A. (2016). Key success factors and barriers for small businesses: Comparative analysis. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 221(13th International Symposium in Management: Management During and After the Economic Crisis), 29-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.05.087>
- Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17, 99-120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
- Barney, J. B., & Clark, D. N. (2007). *Resource-based theory: Creating and sustaining competitive advantage*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.303>
- Bates, T., & Robb, A. (2016). Impacts of owner race and geographic context on access to small-business financing. *Economics Development Quarterly*, 30(2), 159-70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242415620484>
- Bayiley, Y. T., & Teklu, G. K. (2016). Success factors and criteria in the management of international development projects. *International Journal of Managing Projects on Business*, 9(3), 562-582. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMPB-06-2015-0046>
- Bernard, E. J. (2017). Tiny venture, big success. *Oregon Business Magazine*, 40(5), 30. <https://doi.org/10.22215/etd/2016-11406>
- Bi, R. (2017). E-supply chain coordination and SME performance: An empirical investigation. *Electronic Journal of Information Systems Evaluation*, 20(2), 76-84. <http://www.ejise.com/main.html>
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (n.d.). Member checking: A tool to enhance trustworthiness or merely a nod to validation? *Qualitative Health*

Research, 26(13), 1802-1811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732316654870>

Bloch, H., & Bhattacharya, M. (2016). Promotion of innovation and job growth in small and medium-sized enterprises in Australia: Evidence and policy issues. *Australian Economic Review*, 49(2), 192-199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8462.12164>

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 19, 426-432. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053>

Bon-Gang, H., & Ming, S. (2018). Management strategies and innovations: Important roles to sustainable construction. *Sustainability*, 10, 606. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10030606>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Bruton, G., Khavul, S., Siegel, D., & Wright, M. (2015). New financial alternatives in seeding entrepreneurship: Microfinance, crowdfunding, and peer to peer innovations. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 39(1), 9. <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12143>

Cassell, C., Cunliffe, A. L., & Grandy, G. (2018). The SAGE handbook of qualitative business and management research methods: Methods and challenges. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526430236>

Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report*, 21, 811-831. <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html>

Chicksand, D. (2015). Partnerships: The role that power plays in shaping collaborative buyer–supplier exchanges. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 48, 121-139.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.03.019>

Christie, C. D., Bemister, T. B., & Dobson, K. S. (2015). Record-informing and note-taking: A continuation of the debate about their impact on client perceptions. *Canadian Psychology*, 56(1), 118-122. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037860>

Connolly, P. & York, P. (2002). Evaluating capacity-building efforts for nonprofit organizations. 34(4): 33-39. *Organization Development Practitioner*, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1098214009352361>

Davis, B. A. (2017). 8 ways to foil small-business stagnation. *Wearables*, 26. <https://wearables.com>

De Clercq, D. Thongpapanl, N., & Voronov, M. (2018). Sustainability in the face of institutional adversity: Market turbulence, network embeddedness, and innovative orientation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148 437-455. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-3004-7>

Derico, S. P. (2017). The use of phenomenology in nursing education: An integrative review. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 38(6), E7-E11. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000000216>

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: A user friendly guide for social scientists*. Routledge

Drazin, R., & Van de Van, A. H. (1985). Alternative forms of fit in contingency theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30, 514-539 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392695>

Duruigbo, E. (2018). Small tract owners and shale gas drilling in Texas: Sanctity of property, holdout power or compulsory pooling. *Baylor Law Review*, 2, 527. <https://www.baylor.edu/law/review/>

- Edmunds, T. K. (2017). Perceived barriers to SME-college collaboration: The case of the Province of Manitoba. *College Quarterly*, 20(2). <http://collegequarterly.ca>
- Edwards. (2014) Mastering Strategic Management -1st Canadian Edition. Victoria: BCcampus. <https://opentextbc.ca/strategicmanagement/>
- El Hussein, M., Jakubec, S. L., & Osuji, J. (2015). Assessing the FACTS: A mnemonic for teaching and learning the rapid assessment of rigor in qualitative research studies. *Qualitative Report*, 20(8), 1182 <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss8/3>
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, K. (2014). *Qualitative Content Analysis*. *SAGE Open*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Emrich, K. J. (2015). Profitability and the financial strategies of the women-owned small enterprise (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3680364)
- Eurostat (2017). Structural business statistics. Small and medium sized enterprises. *European Commission*. <https://www.ec.europa.eu>.
- Evers, J. C. (2016). Elaborating on thick analysis: About thoroughness and creativity in qualitative analysis. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 17(1). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/>
- Fiedler, F. E. (1972). The Effects of leadership training and experience: A contingency model interpretation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17(4), 453-470. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393826>
- Flynn, B. B., Koufteros, X., & Lu, G. (2016). On theory in supply chain uncertainty and its

- implications for supply chain integration. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, 52(3), 3-27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jscm.12106>
- Foss, N.J. & Saebi, T. (2017). Fifteen years of research on business model innovation. How far have we come, and where should we go? *Journal of Management*, 43(1). 200-227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316675927>
- Fowowe, B. (2017). Access to finance and firm performance: Evidence from African countries. *Review of Development Finance*, 7(1),6-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rdf.2017.01.006>
- Fusch, P., Fusch, G. E., & Ness, L. R. (2018). Denzin's paradigm shift: Revisiting triangulation in qualitative research. *Journal of Social Change*, 10(1), 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.5590/JOSC.2018.10.1.02>
- Fusch, P. I. & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 20, 1408-1416. <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html>
- Gai, Y., & Minniti, M. (2015). External financing and the survival of black-owned startups in the US. *Eastern Econ J* 41, 387-410. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ej.2014.23>
- Gandomi, A., & Haider, M. (2015). Beyond the hype: Big data concepts, methods, and analytics. *International Journal of Information Management*, 2, 137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2014.10.007>
- Gandy, D. L. (2015). Small business strategies for company profitability and 147 sustainability (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3700959)
- Geels, F., Kern, F., Fuchs, G., Hinderer, N., Kungl, G., Mylan, J., Neukirch, M., & Wassermann,

- S. (2016). The enactment of socio-technical transition pathways: A reformulated typology and a comparative multi-level analysis of the German and UK low-carbon electricity transitions (1990-2014). *Research Policy*, 45, 896-913.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2016.01.015>
- Girod, S. C., Fassiotto, M., Menorca, R., Etzkowitz, H., & Wren, S. M. (2017). Reasons for faculty departures from an academic medical center: a survey and comparison across faculty lines. *BMC Medical Education*, 17(1), 8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-016-0830-y>
- Goldsby, T., Autry, C., & Bell, J. (2015). Thinking big! Incorporating macrotrends into supply chain planning and execution. *Foresight: The International Journal of Applied Forecasting*, 37, 13-6. <https://foresight.forecasters.org/>
- Greene, P., Brush, C., & Brown, T. (2015). Resources in small firms: An exploratory study. *Journal of Small Business Study*. 8(2), 25-40. <http://www.jsbs.org/>
- Gretzinger, S., & Leick, B. (2017). Brokerage-based value creation: The case of a Danish offshore business network. *IMP Journal*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMP-02-2016-0004>
- Gretzinger, S., Fietze, S., Brem, A., & Ogbonna, T. U. (2018). Small-scale entrepreneurship – understanding behaviors of aspiring entrepreneurs in a rural area. *Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal*, 28(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1108/CR-05-2017-0034>
- Gumel, B. I. (2017) Critical challenges facing small business enterprises in Nigeria: A

Literature Review. *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*. 8,796-808. <http://www.ijser.org>

Gunasekaran, A., Papadopoulos, T., Dubey, R., Wamba, S. F., Childe, S. J., Hazen, B., & Akter, S. (2017). Big data and predictive analytics for supply chain and organizational performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 308-317.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.08.004>

Harvey, L. (2015). Beyond member-checking: a dialogic approach to the research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38, 23-38.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487>

Hassan, H. (2017). Organizational factors affecting cloud computing adoption in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in service sector. *Procedia Computer Science*, 976-981.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.126>

Hassani, H., Silva, E. S., & Kaabi, A. A. (2017). The role of innovation and technology in sustaining the petroleum and petrochemical industry. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.03.003>

Hays, D. G., Wood, C., Dahl, H., & Kirk, J. A. (2016). Methodological rigor in journal of counseling & development qualitative research articles: A 15-Year Review. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 94(2), 172–183. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12074>

Howson, A. (2017). Qualitative research methods (sociology). Salem Press Encyclopedia

Holger J., S., Roger B., M., Juan-Pierré, B., & Jonathan, A. (2017). Access to finance problems for small retail businesses in South Africa: Comparative views from finance seekers (retailers) and finance providers (banks). *Banks and Bank Systems*, 12(2), 20-30.

[https://doi.org/10.21511/bbs.12\(2\).2017.02](https://doi.org/10.21511/bbs.12(2).2017.02)

House, J. (2018). Authentic vs elicited data and qualitative vs quantitative research methods in pragmatics: Overcoming 2 non-fruitful dichotomies. *System*, 75, 4-12.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/system>

Hyer, S., & Lussier, R. N. (2016). Why businesses succeed or fail: A study on small businesses in Pakistan. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 8, 82-100.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-03-2015-0020>

Ifekwem, N., & Adedamola, O. (2016). Survival strategies and sustainability of small and medium enterprises in the Oshondi-Isole local Government area of Lagos state. *Journal of Economics and Business*, 4, 103-118. <https://doi.org/10.1515/quseb-2016-0006>

Ilijarjan, L., & Rudina, L. (2017). Small business tax evasion, is there a case of internal finance?

Acta Universitatis Danubius: Oeconomica, 13(2), 45-54. <http://journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/oeconomica/index>

Ingham-Broomfield, R. (2015). A nurses' guide to qualitative research (online). *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 32(3), 34-40. <http://www.ajan.com.au>

Ipek, İ. (2018). The resource-based view within the export context: An integrative review of empirical studies. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 31(3), 157-179.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2017.1328630>

Izogo, E. E., & Ogba, I. (2015). Service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in automobile repair service sector. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 32(3), 250. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJQRM-05-2013-0075>

- Johnson, P., & Parker, S. (1994). The interrelationships between births and deaths. *Small Business Economics*, 6(4), 283-290. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01108395>
- Josephson, A., Marshall, M., & Schrank, H. (n.d). Assessing preparedness of small businesses for hurricane disasters: Analysis of pre-disaster owner, business and location characteristics. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 23, 25-35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2017.03.013>
- Juanzon, J. B. P., & Muhi, M. M. (2017). Significant factors to motivate small and medium enterprise (SME) construction firms in the Philippines to implement ISO9001:2008. *Procedia Engineering*, 171, 354. <https://doi.org/10.28991/cej-03091135>
- Kaufman, B.E. (2015) ‘The RBV theory foundation of strategic HRM: critical flaws, problems for research and practice, and an alternative economics paradigm’. *Human Resource Management Journal* 25: 4, 516–540. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12085>
- Kavadias, S., Ladas, K., & Loch, C. (2017). The transformative business. *Harvard Business Review*. 94(10), 94-98. <https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/pl/64212632/64212884/0d06dd48d2360ce2f39103e2f0fd3311>
- Kemmerer, B., Walter, J., Kellermanns, F. W., & Narayanan, V. K. (2012). A judgment-analysis perspective on entrepreneurs’ resource evaluations. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(8), 1102-1108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.08.023>
- Kemayel, L. (2015). Success factors of Lebanese SMEs: An empirical study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 195, 1123-1128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.158>
- Khelil, N. (2016). The many faces of entrepreneurial failure: Insights from an empirical

taxonomy. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 31(1), 72-94.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2015.08.001>

Kivimaa, P., & Kern, F. (2016). Creative destruction or mere niche support? Innovation policy mixes for sustainability transitions. *Research Policy*, 45(1), 205-217.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2015.09.008>

Kozlenkova, I., Samaha, S., & Palmatier, R. (2014). Resource-based theory in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 42(1), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-013-0336-7>

Kristensen, G. K., & Ravn, M. N. (2015). The voices heard and the voices silenced: recruitment processes in qualitative interview studies. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114567496>

Kumar, A., & Kumar, S. (2019). Need for big data technologies: A Review. 2019 2nd *International Conference on Signal Processing and Communication (ICSPC)*, *Signal Processing and Communication (ICSPC)*, 2019 2nd International Conference On, 343–347. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICSPC46172.2019.8976853>

Kusi, A., Opata, C. N., & Narh, T. J. (2015). Exploring the factors that hinder the growth and survival of small businesses in Ghana (A case study of small business within Kumasi Metropolitan Area). *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management* 02,705-723. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2015.511070>

Lambert, V., Glacken, M., & McCarron, M. (2011). Employing an ethnographic approach: Key characteristics. *Nurse Researcher*, 19, 17-24.

<https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2011.10.19.1.17.c8767>

- Lechner, C., & Gudmundsson, S. V. (2014). Entrepreneurial orientation, firm strategy and small firm performance. *International Small Business Journal*, 32(1), 36-60.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242612455034>
- Ledford, J. R. 1. J., Barton, E. E., Severini, K. E., & Zimmerman, K. N. (2019). A primer on single-case research designs: Contemporary use and analysis. *American Journal on Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities*, 124(1), 35-6. <https://doi.org/10.1352/1944-7558-124.1.35>
- Leighton-Daly, M. (2017). Certainty and financial crime control. *Journal of Financial Crime*, 24(4), 678
- Leonidou, L., Christodoulides, P., Kyrgidou, L., & Palihawadana, D. (2017). Internal drivers and performance consequences of small firm green business strategy: The moderating role of external forces. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 140(3), 585-606.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2670-9>
- Lichtenthaler, U. (2016). 5 steps to transforming innovation processes: Continually adjusting to new environments. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 37(5), 39-5.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-08-2015-0090>
- Lo, M.C., Wang, Y. C., Wah, C. R. J., & Ramayah, T. (2016). The critical success factors for organizational performance of SMEs in Malaysia: A partial least squares approach. *Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios / Review of Business Management*, 18(61), 370. <https://doi.org/10.7819/rbgn.v18i61.3058>
- Longenecker, J. G., & Pringle, C. D. (1978). The Illusion of Contingency Theory as a General Theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 3(3), 679-683.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1978.4305970>

Lopatina, E., Donald, F., DiCenso, A., Martin-Misener, R., Kilpatrick, K., Bryant-Lukosius, D., Carter, N., Reid, K., & Marshall, D. A. (n.d.). Considerations in the Economic Evaluation of Nurse Practitioners and Clinical Nurse Specialists Roles. *VALUE IN HEALTH*, 20(5), A316

Luthans, F. & Stewart, T. I. (1977). A general contingency theory of management.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1977.4409038>

Lückmann, P., & Feldmann, C. (2017). Success factors for business process improvement projects in small and medium sized enterprises – Empirical evidence. *Procedia Computer Science*, 121(CENTERIS 2017 - International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems / ProjMAN 2017 - International Conference on Project Management / HCist 2017 - International Conference on Health and Social Care Information Systems and Technologies, CENTERIS/ProjMAN/HCist 2017), 439-445.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.059>

Machado, H.P.V. Silva, G.S. & Bortolozzi, F. (2018). Knowledge in small companies in construction sector. *Informação & Informação*, 23(2), 493-519.

<https://doi.org/10.5433/1981-8920.2018v23n2p493>

Madu, M. E. (2016). Success strategies for small enterprise owners in Philadelphia,

Pennsylvania. (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations and theses database. (UMI No. 10017016)

Magaisa, G. M., & Matipira, L. (2017). Small and medium enterprises development in

- 142 Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Economy, Management, and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 11-20. www.tjournals.com
- Mandal, P. C. (2016). Customers retention in organizations A review. *International Journal of Applied research*, 2,770-772. <https://www.allresearchjournal.com>
- Marcella, M., & Rowley, S. (2015). An exploration of the extent to which project management tools and techniques can be applied across creative industries through a study of their application in the fashion industry in the North East of Scotland. *International Journal of Project Management*, 33(4), 735-746. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2014.12.002>
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc
- Mashenene, G. R., & Rumanyika, J. (2014). Business constraints and potential growth of small and medium enterprise in Tanzania: A review. *European journal of business and management*, 6(32), 72-79. www.iiste.org
- McDowell, W.C., Gibson, S.G., Aaron, J., Harris, M.L., and Lester, D.L. (2014). Analyzing the link between strategy and performance: Comparing small business owners and professional managers. *Journal of Business & Entrepreneurship*, 26(2), 45. <https://www2.stetson.edu/asbe/jbe/>
- McGrandle, J. (2017). Understanding diversity management in the public sector: A case for contingency theory. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 40(6), 526-537. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2015.1136942>
- McPhedran, S., Eriksson, L., Mazerolle, P., & Johnson, H. (2018). Victim-focused studies of intimate partner femicide: A critique of methodological challenges and limitations in

current research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 39, 61-66.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.02.005>

Modilim, P., & Land, D. (2017). Strategies for growing and sustaining successful small businesses. *International Journal of Business and General Management (IJBGM)*, 6, 57-62. www.iaset.us

Mohamad Radzi, K., Mohd Nor, M. N., & Ali, S. M. (2017). The impact of internal factors on small business success: A case of small enterprises under the FELDA scheme. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, 22(1), 27-55.

<https://doi.org/10.21315/aamj2017.22.1.2>

Monsur, S. M. T., & Yoshi, T. (2012). Improvement of firm performance by achieving competitive advantages through vertical integration in the apparel industry of Bangladesh. *Asian Economic and Financial Review*, 2, 687-712.

<http://www.aessweb.com>

Morse, J. M. (2015a). Analytic strategies and sample size. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(10), 1317–1318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315602867>

Morse, J. M. (2015b). 'Data were saturated'. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(5), 587–588.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315576699>

Mouton, F., Malan, M. M., Kimppa, K. K., & Venter, H. (2015). Necessity for ethics in social engineering research. *Computers & Security*, 55, 114-127.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cose.2015.09.001>

Muldowney, S. (2017). Embracing disruption. *Journal of the Australian & New Zealand Institute of Insurance & Finance*, 40(4), 14-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09695958.2017.1359614>

- Nason, R. S., & Wiklund, J. (2018). An assessment of resource-based theorizing on firm growth and suggestions for the future. *Journal of Management*, 44(1), 32-60.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206315610635>
- National Benefit Services (2016). <https://www.nbsbenefits.com>
- Northouse, P.G. (2015). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. (7th ed.) Sage.
- Nwachukwu, J. U. (2018). *Strategies for Sustaining Small Businesses in the U.S. Health Care Sector*. ProQuest Dissertations and theses. (Order No. 10790941)
- Nyberg, A. J., Moliterno, T. P., Hale, D., & Lepak, D. P. (2014). Resource-based perspectives on unit-level human capital a review and integration. *Journal of Management*, 40(1), 316-346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312458703>
- Omrane, A. (2015). Entrepreneurs' social capital and access to external resources: The effects of social skills. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*. 24(3). 357-382. <https://doi.org/10.1504/ijesb.2015.067463>
- Omri, A., Frikha, M., & Mohamed, A. (2015). An empirical investigation of factors affecting small business success. *Journal of Management Development*, 34(9), 1073–1093.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-07-2013-0088>
- Onkelinx, J., Manolova, T.S., & Edelman, L.F. (2015). Human capital and SME internationalization: Empirical evidence from Belgium. *International Small Business Journal*, 34, 818-37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242615591856>
- Osakwe, C. N. (2016). Crafting an effective brand oriented strategic framework for growth-aspiring small businesses: A conceptual study. *Qualitative Report*, 21(2), 163.

<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/>

Owenvbiugie Robinson Osarumwense. (2020). Job satisfaction and value creation: antidotes for business educators' job retention. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 9, 174-183.

<https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v9i1.688>

Ozmec, M. N., Karlsen, I. L., Kines, P., Andersen, L. P. S., & Nielsen, K. J. (2015). Negotiating safety practice in small construction companies. *Safety Science*, 71, 275-281.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2014.03.016>

O'Sullivan, D. (2015). Voicing others' voices: Spotlighting the researcher as narrator.

International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, 8(2), 211-222.

<https://www.iejee.com/index.php/IEJEE>

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Pearce, J. L. & Sowa, J. E. (2019). *Organizational behavior: Real research for public and non-profit managers*. Melvin and Leigh.

Penrose, E. T. (1959). *The theory of the growth of the firm*. New York: John Wiley.

Powell, G. N., & Eddleston, K. A. (2013). Linking family-to-business enrichment and support to entrepreneurial success: Do female and male entrepreneurs experience different outcomes? *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(2), 261–280.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2012.02.007>

Radzi, K. M., Nor, M., & Ali, S. M. (2017). The impact of internal factors on small business success: A case of small enterprises under the Felda scheme. *Asian Academy of*

Management Journal, 22, 27-55. <https://doi.org/10.21315/aamj2017.22.1.2>

- Rapport, F., Hutchings, H., Doel, M.A., Wells, B., Clement, C., Mellalieu, S., Shubin, S., Brown, D., Seah, R., Wright, S., & Sparkes, A. (2018). How Are university gyms used by staff and students? A mixed-method study exploring gym use, motivation, and communication in three UK gyms. *Societies*, 8(1), 15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc8010015>
- Ridder, H. G. (2017). The theory contribution of case study research designs. *Business Research*, 10(2), 281-05. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40685-017-0045-z>
- Robinson, J. T. (2017). African American small business strategies for financial stability and profitability. (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from ProQuest dissertations and theses database. (UMI No. 10637688)
- Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2016). Real world research (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Rocha, V., Carneiro, A., & Varum, C. A. (2015). Entry and exit dynamics of nascent business owners. *Small Business Economics*, 45(1), 63-84. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187015>
- Rucker, M. R. (2017). Workplace wellness strategies for small businesses. *International Journal of workplace health management*, 10(1), 55-68. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJWHM-07-2016-0054>
- Saldana, J. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sherika P., D. (2017). The use of phenomenology in nursing education: An integrative review. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 38(6), E7-E11
<https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000000216>
- Silverman, D. (2017). How was it for you? The interview society and the irresistible rise of the

(poorly analyzed) interview. *Qualitative Research*, 17, 144-158.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794116668231>

SME Corp (2016). SME Annual Report 2016/2016.

<http://www.smecorp.gov.my/index.php/en/sme-annual-report-2015-16>.

Šonková, T., & Grabowska, M. (2015). Customer engagement: Transactional vs.

relationship marketing. *Journal of International Studies*, 8(1)

<https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2015/8-1/17>

Soni, P. (2015). The theory of the growth of a firm. *Indian Institute of Management Business*

Internal. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198753940.003.0011>

Tabares, A., Alvarez, C., & Urbano, D. (2015). Born globals from the resource-based theory: A case study in Colombia. *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation*, 10(2), 154-

165. <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-27242015000200011>

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. L. (2016). Introduction to qualitative research methods (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

The Belmont report (1978). Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research. The Commission.

Turner, S., & Endres, A. (2017). Strategies for enhancing small business owners' success rates.

International Journal of Applied Management and Technology, 16(1), 34-49.

<https://doi.org/10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.0>

United States Bureau of Labor statistics. (2020 January, 27). *Establishment age and survival*

data. Table 5. Business employment dynamics. <https://www.bls.gov/bdm/bdmage.htm>

- U.S. Small Business Administration. (2016). Do economic, or industry factors affect business survival? Office of advocacy. <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Business-Survival.pdf>
- Using ICT to improve customer satisfaction in small and medium sized construction companies: A study among Malaysian construction SMEs. (2010). *5th International Conference on Computer Sciences and Convergence Information Technology, Computer Sciences and Convergence Information Technology (ICCIT), 2010 5th International Conference On*, 480. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICCIT.2010.5711104>
- United States (2016). ADP small business report: Small business employment increased by 95,000 jobs in December. Mena Report. Expanded Academic ASAP.
- Varpio, L., Ajjawi, R., Monrouxe, L. V., O'Brien, B. C., & Rees, C. E. (2017). Shedding the cobra effect: problematizing thematic emergence, triangulation, saturation and member checking. *Medical Education*, 51, 40-50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.13124>
- Vaughn, P., & Turner, C. (2016). Decoding via coding: Analyzing qualitative text data through thematic coding and survey methodologies. *Journal of Library Administration*, 56, 41-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2015.1105035>
- Veliu, L., Manxhari, M., Podvorica, N., Fejza, E., & Hyesni, V. (2018). Managing SMEs in a turbulent context: A Case study from a Kosovan manufacturing company. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 10(1), 155.
- Wallace M. & Sheldon N. (2015). Business research ethics: Participant observer perspectives. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 128(2), 267-277. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2102-2>.
- Warren, G. (2016). *Small business strategies for sustainability beyond 10 Years* ProQuest

Dissertations and theses database. Scholarworks. (UMI No. 10126199)

Warren, G., & Szostek, L. (2017). Small business strategies for sustainability beyond 10

years. Scholarworks. <https://doi.org/10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.07>

Wethal, U. (2017) Passive hosts or demanding stakeholders? Understanding Mozambique's

negotiating power in the face of China. *Forum for Development Studies*, 44(3), 493-516.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2017.1317660>

Williams, D. A. (2016). Can rural networks predict business failure? Evidence from small high

tech firms in the U.K. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 21(1), 1.

<https://doi.org/10.1142/S1084946716500059>

Wilson, E., Kenny, A., & Dickson-Swift, V. (2018). Ethical challenges in community-based

participatory research: A scoping review. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(2), 189-199.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317690721>

Worsley, L. M. (2017). Stakeholder-led project management: Changing the way we manage

projects. Business Expert Press.

Yang, C., Bossink, B., & Peverelli, P. (2017). High-tech start-up firm survival originating from a

combined use of internal resources. *Small Business Economics*, 49(4), 799-824.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-017-9858-6>

Yin, R. K. (2018). Case study research: Design and methods (6th ed.). Sage.

Zardini, A., Rossignoli, C., & Ricciardi, F. (2016). A bottom-up path for IT management success:

From infrastructure quality to competitive excellence. *Journal of Business Research*, 69

1747-752. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.049>

- Zamawe, F. C. (2015). The implication of using NVivo software in qualitative data analysis: Evidence-based reflections. *Malawi Medical Journal*, 27(1), 13.
<https://doi.org/10.4314/mmj.v27i1.4>
- Zelege, W. (2015). Risk factors for failure in small businesses in the footwear and textile industry of Gauteng Province, South Africa. *Risk Governance & Control: Financial Markets & Institutions*, 5(3-1), 114-125. <https://doi.org/10.22495/rgcv5i3c1art3>.
- Zhang, X., Chen, H., Wang, W., & Ordóñez de Pablos, P. (2016). What is the role of IT in innovation? A bibliometric analysis of research development in IT innovation. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 35(12), 1130-1143.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2016.1212403>
- Zhang, X. & Scheib, D. (2015) Lost in data jungle: A case study for organizing, publishing and preserving research data. https://ir.uiowa.edu/lib_pubs/170

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Research Protocol

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently a Doctoral Scholar at the Walden University, located in Atlanta, Georgia. I am pursuing my Doctor of Business Administration with a concentration in Information Technology. In order to complete my DBA, I am required to complete my Dissertation. The purpose of this case study is to identify strategies to sustain small construction businesses beyond the first 5 years of operation. The specific target population are small construction business owners who have been in business for more than 5 years and reside in the central Georgia. The title of the study is: "Strategies to sustain small construction businesses beyond the first 5 year of operation."

The researcher is asking the business owners to answer questions that may assist in the sustenance of small businesses the strategies they have implemented in their organization to sustain the business. I am inviting you for about an hour interview to answer questions on the strategies you have used to sustain your business.

Understanding the factors that affect business sustenance will assist small business owners in implementing strategies that will not only sustain their business but grow their business which will influence positive social change. Adopting best practices in business sustenance may eliminate business failure and hence contribute to the profitability and growth of the business.

Once you acknowledge receipt of this email, you will receive an Informed Consent form via DocuSign in about 2 days that will provide you more information on the study. You can review the form and if you agree to conduct the interview you may sign the consent form. The

form will automatically be sent back to me once you sign.

Sincerely,

Catherine Mukopfa - Doctoral Scholar at Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Date _____

Location _____

Interviewer _____

Interviewee _____

Orientation

Opening introduction and exchange of pleasantries

General Reminders to Participants

Purpose of the study

Reaffirm information shared will be confidential and used solely for the study's purpose.

Conversations will be recorded and handwritten notes taken during the interactions.

On completion of the transcription and analysis process, participants will complete a member checking exercise.

Participants

The targeted population will consist of 5 small construction business owners who have been in business for more than 5 years. I will choose 5 small business construction owners from a large sample of central Georgia small construction businesses.

Length of Interviews

Each interview will last approximately one hour. I will reserve the right to request follow-up

interviews for further clarification of participants' responses, if necessary, to achieve complete data saturation.

Research Question

What strategies do small business construction owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
2. What systems/functions have helped you to implement your strategies successfully?
3. How would you attribute the relevance of your background and education to your choice of the business strategy?
4. What are the 5 most important strategies you have used to sustain your business for the first 5 years?
5. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years?
6. What additional information can you share about the strategies that help sustain your business?

Closing

Thank the interviewee for their time and request permission to ask for a follow up question. I might request follow up interviews, if necessary, to achieve complete data saturation.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you used to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
2. What systems/functions have helped you to implement your strategies successfully?
3. How would you attribute the relevance of your background and education to your choice of the business strategy?
4. What are the 5 most important strategies you have used to sustain your business for the first 5 years?
5. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years?
6. What additional information can you share about the strategies that help sustain your business?