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Entrepreneurial Strategies for the Survival of Small Business Enterprises in Uganda

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Rita Evelyn Kabatunzi

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Entrepreneurial Strategies for the Survival of Small Business Enterprises in Uganda

by

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MBA, University of Leicester, 2011

Bachelor of Laws, Makerere University, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2022

Abstract

Only 46% of small businesses in Uganda survive beyond 5 years, yet some small business owners lack entrepreneurial leadership strategies to innovate and sustain their businesses. The failure to sustain businesses can lead to employee loss of jobs and degrade individuals' economic prosperity. Grounded in the strategic entrepreneurship model, the purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore entrepreneurial leadership strategies small business owners in the travel and tourism industry in Kampala, Uganda use to innovate and sustain their businesses for more than 5 years. The participants comprised 5 small business owners who successfully sustained their businesses beyond 5 years. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, company documents, and observation. Yin's 5-step process was used to analyze the data. Five key themes emerged: strategic resource management, customer centricity, collaboration and partnership, online marketing, and owner-driven strategy. A key recommendation is that small business owners focus on the human touch that clients cannot experience from direct online services. The implications for positive social change include the potential for increased employment, improved standards of living within the local communities of small businesses, and, ultimately, economic prosperity.

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Dedication

I dedicate my doctoral study to my brother Ben Mugisa who transitioned to eternal glory while I was in the process of this doctoral duty. You came by many days just to remind me to breathe, to pray, and to encourage me. I will always remember how proudly you cheered me along on this journey. Thank you for being brave through your pain and heartache, knowing that you understood that I needed to finish what I started. You are forever in my heart, and I love you always.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem	1
Problem Statement	2
Purpose Statement.....	2
Nature of the Study	3
Research Question	4
Interview Questions	4
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Operational Definitions.....	6
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	7
Assumptions.....	7
Limitations	7
Delimitations.....	8
Significance of the Study	8
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	9
The Strategic Entrepreneurship Model (SEM)	11
The Resource-Based Theory (RBT)	13
Alternative Theories.....	14

Entrepreneurship and Innovation	18
Innovation in Small Enterprises (SEs)	48
SE Innovation in Uganda	57
Transition	60
Section 2: The Project	61
Purpose Statement	61
Role of the Researcher	62
Participants	63
Research Method and Design	66
Research Method	66
Research Design	68
Population and Sampling	69
Ethical Research	71
Data Collection Instruments	73
Data Collection Technique	78
Data Organization Technique	83
Data Analysis	85
Reliability and Validity	89
Validity	90
Reliability	93
Transition and Summary	94

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change	95
Presentation of the Findings.....	96
Themes	96
Customer Centricity	98
Online Marketing	112
Strategic Management of Resources.....	115
Owner-driven Strategies	126
Collaboration and Partnerships.....	144
Applications to Professional Practice	157
Implications for Social Change.....	158
Recommendations for Action	159
Recommendations for Further Research.....	163
Reflections	164
Conclusion	165
References.....	167
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	200
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	202
Appendix C: Summary of the Generation of Codes	203

List of Tables

Table 1 <i>Literature Review Source Count</i>	11
Table 2 <i>Manuscript Source Count</i>	11

List of Figures

Figure 1 A Model for Strategic Entrepreneurship in SEs 12

Figure 2 *Interview Theme Summary* 97

Figure 3 *All References Summary* 97

Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) drive economic growth (Block et al., 2017; OECD/Eurostat, 2018) and foster innovation, wealth, and job creation in Uganda (Uganda Investment Authority [UIA], 2020). Uganda boasts a nascent private sector dominated by micro, small, and medium Enterprises (MSMEs; AFDB, 2017) at 93%, 4% of which are small enterprises (SEs) dominant in the formal sector (Financial Sector Deepening Uganda [FSDU], 2017). MSMEs contribute 18% to the gross domestic product, yet 28% do not survive beyond a year, and a majority (54%) fail to survive beyond 5 years (Ministry of Trade, Industry & Cooperatives Uganda [MTIC], 2019). Entrepreneurial competencies and innovation are limited, and management is informal (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Uganda [MoFPED], 2019).

Background of the Problem

Entrepreneurial capability is critical to the survival and competitiveness of SEs (Aksoy, 2017) and economic growth (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). Despite this critical role, research into entrepreneurial capabilities is limited (Abaho et al., 2017; Lubowa et al., 2020). Findings from this multiple case study into SE owners' entrepreneurial leadership strategies used to drive innovation for business growth and survivability may provide helpful insights. These insights could positively impact entrepreneurial behavior (Bercu & Lupu, 2020), increase SE survivability which is key in an increasingly competitive East African region (AFDB, 2017), and could aid recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Problem Statement

Entrepreneurial leadership is central to SE growth, driving competitiveness and enhancing capabilities for sustainable business growth (Harrison et al., 2018). SEs in Uganda employ over 2.5 million people, produce 80% of manufactured output, and contribute 20% to the gross domestic product. Uganda ranks highly for entrepreneurship, yet a majority (54%) fail to survive beyond five years and 28% of SMEs are less than a year old (MTIC, 2019). The general business problem is that most SE leaders in Kampala, Uganda lack entrepreneurial leadership strategies, which negatively affects their businesses' sustainability. The specific business problem is that some SE owners in Kampala, Uganda lack entrepreneurial leadership strategies to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study of small enterprises was to explore the entrepreneurial leadership strategies owners of small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda, adopted to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of five SEs with fewer than 50 employees who successfully implemented entrepreneurial leadership strategies to drive innovation to sustain their businesses. Participants were owners of the enterprises. Quality business practices increase the likelihood of SE survival and growth in developing economies (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2017). The findings of this study could provide valuable insights for SE owners into the strategies that sustain businesses and therefore contribute

to communities' socioeconomic development through job creation and an increased tax base.

Nature of the Study

I adopted the qualitative method, which is well suited for exploratory research to facilitate in-depth inquiry and provide rich, fresh insights from participants' first-hand experiences (Denscombe, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Yin, 2018). A quantitative researcher analyzes numerical data (Goertzen, 2017), testing hypotheses to examine and establish relationships (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). The quantitative method tests hypotheses and analyzes relationships between independent and dependent variables. It is focused on 'how many' or 'how much' rather than questions about 'what,' 'how' or 'why' of a phenomenon (Lune & Berg, 2017). The mixed method combines aspects of qualitative and quantitative methods (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017; Ogilvie & McCrudden, 2017). Researchers apply the mixed method where qualitative or quantitative methods would not address a research question sufficiently (Goertzen, 2017). Therefore, the qualitative approach was best suited to address my research question and the most appropriate methodology for my study.

The most common research designs adopted for a qualitative study are the case study, phenomenology, and ethnography (Bengtsson, 2016). The case study design is commonly used for academic qualitative research bounded by time and place to provide holistic, in-depth analysis and understanding of a real-life contemporary issue (Rashid et al., 2019; Yin, 2018). Researchers use the multiple case study design to achieve

generalizations (Gaikwad, 2017; Lune & Berg, 2017; Yin, 2018) and broadly theorize through comparison and contrast to facilitate the reliability of findings (Heale & Twycross, 2017). A phenomenological design focuses on the meaning of subjective experience (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019; Merriam & Grenier, 2019), which is not the focus of my study. The ethnography design focuses on the description and interpretation of the culture of a group (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). It is applied to derive insights into interactions among participants in specific cultural groups and their natural environment (Percy et al., 2015), which is not the objective of my study and, therefore, not suitable for my study. I adopted the multiple case study design to explore the phenomena within and across five SEs in the travel and tourism industry.

Research Question

What entrepreneurial leadership strategies do owners of small travel and tourism businesses in Kampala, Uganda, adopt to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What entrepreneurial leadership strategies have you used to successfully innovate and remain in business?
2. How did you assess the effectiveness of your entrepreneurial leadership strategies for innovation?
3. In what ways would you say these strategies contributed to innovation success?

4. Which were the most successful innovation strategies, and what were the benefits?
5. Based on your experience, what have been the key determinants within the organization and in the market for successful innovation at your firm?
6. What resources and capabilities have you successfully deployed to exploit opportunities for and respond to threats to your competitiveness?
7. Please describe your leadership style and, based upon your experience, in what ways would you say this style contributed to the innovation and success of your business?
8. What else can you share with me about the strategies you have found successful for catalyzing innovation to sustain your firm?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides a lens and context for research serving as a useful guide for critical research stages such as data collection and analysis to answer a specific research question (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). For this study, the composite conceptual framework was the strategic entrepreneurship model (SEM) developed by Ireland et al. (2003). SEM is grounded in the resource-based theory (RBT) advanced by Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991).

Strategic entrepreneurship is the simultaneous pursuit of opportunity and advantage through exploratory and exploitative activities to create value and achieve superior firm performance. The key constructs of the SEM model include: (a) an

entrepreneurial mindset, (b) an entrepreneurial culture, (c) entrepreneurial leadership, (d) strategic management of resources, and (e) use of creativity (Ireland et al., 2003; Mazzei, 2018). Entrepreneurs can integrate the simple constructs of the SEM into their business practices to innovate for sustained competitive advantage (Aksoy, 2017).

Firm resources are central to entrepreneurial innovation (Grimmer et al., 2017). The key constructs of RBT include identifying and exploiting unique firm resources and capabilities and implementing resource-related strategies for sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Campbell and Park (2017), De Massis et al. (2017), and Kellermanns et al. (2016) applied the RBT to explain resource-based advantage and competitiveness.

Entrepreneurial leadership research could improve entrepreneur capabilities (Aksoy, 2017) and address entrepreneur knowledge and skills gaps (Harrison et al., 2018). I, therefore, expected that the composite conceptual framework of SEM underpinned by the RBT would provide key insights for scholars and entrepreneurs into the successful entrepreneurial leadership strategies SE owners applied to innovate for the competitiveness and sustainability of their businesses. This could potentially improve how SE owners leverage resources.

Operational Definitions

Entrepreneur: A business owner who searches for, responds to, and exploits the opportunity in change, shifting economic resources from lower to higher productivity for greater yield (Drucker, 1985).

Firm Survival: The ability of an enterprise to perform consistently and exist for an extended period (Nkundabanyanga et al., 2020).

Innovation: Putting a new idea into practice related to products or services, production processes, marketing techniques, and organizational or managerial structures (Pucihar et al., 2019).

Small Enterprises (SEs): Enterprises with 5 to 49 employees with total assets between 10 million to 100 million Uganda Shillings (MTIC, 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts considered true, though unverified (Yin, 2018). In this study, I assumed that SE owners are entrepreneurs who contributed significantly to their businesses' sustainability and were knowledgeable about the strategies that sustained their businesses. I also assumed that participants would be available and willing to share their insights and provide unbiased, truthful, and in-depth responses. I further assumed that the case study design was the most appropriate for gaining the most relevant information and that the generalized information available regarding MSMEs was attributable to SEs.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses outside the researcher's control that could affect the study (Yin, 2018). Limitations are uncontrollable influences that may be shortcomings that affect the results. This study had three limitations. The first limitation was the small sample size. A small study sample could result in limited generalization of

information, which may not be reflective across industries, regions, or worldwide. The second limitation related to the dependency of this study on a single researcher with limited experience in qualitative research. The third limitation was the time-bound nature of the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries and restrictions that define the specific scope of a study (Qiu & Gullett, 2017). I restricted the study to five SEs in Kampala, Uganda that had survived for at least 5 years and fit the description of an SE by the MTIC (2019). Participants included owners of small tours and travel agencies in the service tourism sector. The risk was that the availability and willingness of these successful SE owners to share knowledge and experience could be limited. The value of their information depended on their ability to recall, disclose facts, and provide relevant documents accurately.

Significance of the Study

Entrepreneurship and innovation play a critical role in emerging economies. Innovation is a source of economic growth, which entrepreneurs fuel (Block et al., 2017). SEs need to innovate to compete and survive in Uganda's increasingly competitive business landscape as free trade continues to progress due to the East Africa integration (AFDB, 2017). Entrepreneurial leadership research findings could address gaps in entrepreneur knowledge and skills (Harrison et al., 2018) and potentially improve the innovation capabilities of entrepreneurs (Aksoy, 2017). The implications for positive

social change include the potential to provide a framework that SE owners could replicate to achieve business sustainability and economic growth (Bercu & Lupu, 2020; Makate et al., 2019). This could create jobs and reduce poverty within local communities (OECD, 2018).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the entrepreneurial leadership strategies that owners of small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda, adopt to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I conducted a literature review grounded in the conceptual framework to provide context to the research question into what entrepreneurial leadership strategies owners of small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda, adopt to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. A literature review facilitates a systematic research approach and is a means to identify relevant literature for evaluation. It is a means to study and interpret extant sources, providing a solid foundation for research questions to study a phenomenon under study (Fusch et al., 2017).

Through my review, analysis, and synthesis of the literature, I identified and discuss four main themes: (a) the SEM, (b) entrepreneurship and innovation, (c) innovation in SEs, and (d) SE innovation in Uganda. In discussing the conceptual framework of SEM, I also present information on RBT and alternative theories I did not use in my study such as entrepreneurship and dynamic capabilities. I also discussed the subthemes of the study as follows: (a) entrepreneurial orientation, (b) exploitative and

exploratory activities, (c) VRIN resources, (d) traits and behavioral perspectives of entrepreneurial leadership, and (d) constraints to innovation.

To comprehensively review the relevant and recent literature, I used academic journals, articles, scholarly books, research reports, government and organization publications, seminal works, and websites. The sources of information included Walden University databases, government databases, websites, and statistical reports on the study phenomenon. I used Google Scholar, Sage Premier, Emerald Insight, Science Direct, EBSCOHost, and ProQuest as primary databases for this study. I also searched for materials using Social Science Research Network and Elsevier. The keywords for my search were *small business strategies*, *small business failure*, *small business growth and survival*, *entrepreneurial innovation business strategies*, *entrepreneurship*, *strategic entrepreneurship*, *RBV theory*, and *resource-based view*.

Table 1 includes the details of references in the literature review. The literature review yielded 118 sources, with 91% of the references published between 2018 and 2022 and 90% from peer-reviewed sources. The breakdown of the frequency and percentage of all sources used in this study is in Table 1.

Table 1*Literature Review Source Count*

Literature type	Total	<5years	>5years	%<5years
Peer-reviewed journals	95	85	10	89%
Government sources and reports	6	6	0	100%
Books	4	0	4	0%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	13	12	1	92%
Total	118	103	15	86%

Table 2 includes the details of references in the study. The study yielded 199 sources, with 91% of the references published between 2018 and 2022 and 89% from peer-reviewed sources. The breakdown of the frequency and percentage of all sources used in this study is in Table 2.

Table 2*Manuscript Source Count*

Literature type	Total	<5years	>5years	%<5years
Peer-reviewed journals	161	148	13	91%
Government sources and reports	12	12	0	100%
Books	8	6	2	83%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	18	16	2	88%
Total	199	182	17	90%

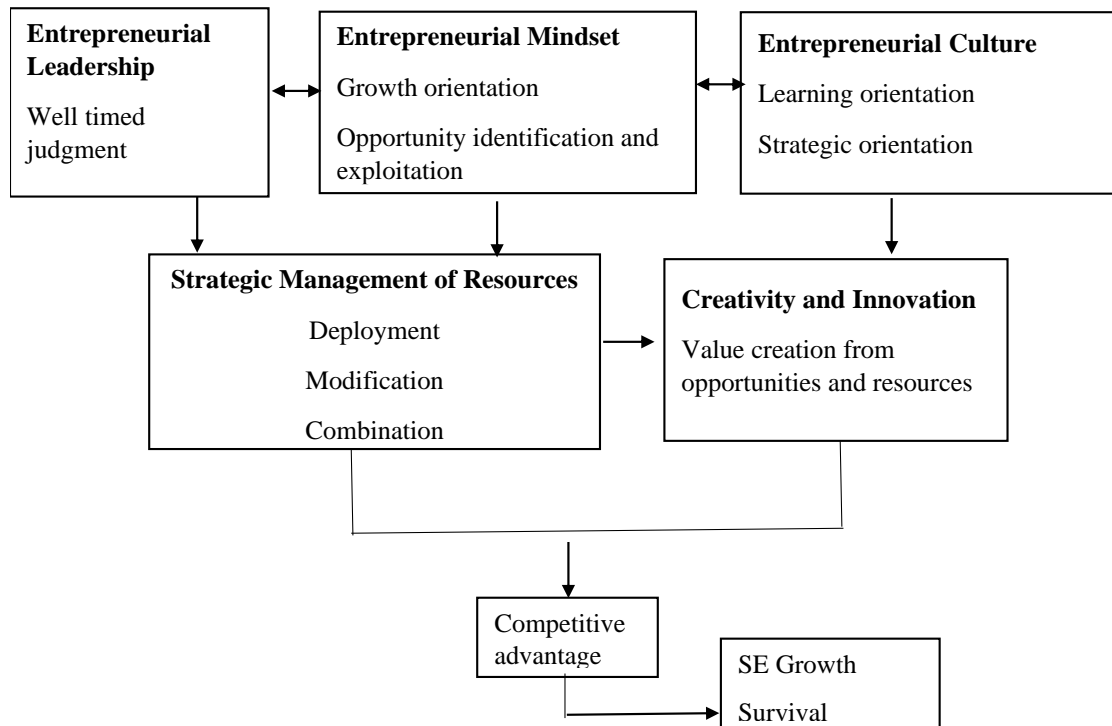
The Strategic Entrepreneurship Model (SEM)

Ireland et al. (2003) built on entrepreneurship and strategic resource management theories to advance the SEM. The SEM, grounded in the RBT advanced by Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991), was adopted as the conceptual framework for this study. The foundational idea of SEM is that wealth creation, firm survival, and sustainability are

achievable through innovation and strategic management of resources that can be creatively deployed and leveraged. The SEM informs business strategies and the identification of supportive behavior. Its constructs are useful measures for value creation and business performance.

Figure 1

A Model for Strategic Entrepreneurship in SEs



Note. Adapted from “A model of strategic entrepreneurship: The construct and its dimensions,” R. D Ireland, M. A., Hitt and D. G Sirmon, 2003, *Journal of Management*, 29(6), p.96. Copyright 2003 by Elsevier Inc.

Entrepreneurs must be able to identify and respond to opportunities and threats and appropriately modify resources with well-timed judgments and decisions

(Schumpeter, 1983). Strategic entrepreneurship, a means to value creation, and superior firm performance, is the simultaneous pursuit of opportunity and advantage through supportive exploratory and exploitative behavior. The key constructs of the SEM, as depicted in Figure 1, include (a) an entrepreneurial mindset, (b) an entrepreneurial culture, (c) entrepreneurial leadership, (d) strategic management of resources, and (e) use of creativity (Ireland et al., 2003; Mazzei, 2018).

The Resource-Based Theory (RBT)

Schumpeter (1983), building on the work of Penrose (1959), laid the foundation for the RBT with emphasis on the centrality of the entrepreneur and resources. Wernerfelt (1984) further advanced the theory, focusing on the centrality of strategic exploitation of resources. Barney (1991) later emphasized the centrality of heterogeneity and immobility of resources to attain sustained competitive advantage. The RBT provides insights into strategic management and deployment of resources (Wernerfelt, 1984) and applies to entrepreneurial practice. Entrepreneurship researchers have increasingly adopted the RBT (Kellermanns et al., 2016) to understand how SE leaders identify and strategically exploit resources for profitability, growth, and superior performance (Ferreira et al., 2019; Grimmer et al., 2017).

Valuable, Rare, Imperfectly Imitable, and Nonsubstitutable (VRIN) Resources

Resources drive firm growth, diversification, and innovation through new resource combinations to achieve growth and firm survival (Penrose, 1959). Resources leveraged for competitive advantage are heterogeneous and immobile compared to the

resources of a competitor. Heterogeneity is achieved in how resources are bundled, the extent of diversity, and immobility arising from private ownership (Wernerfelt, 1984). Heterogeneity is endogenous to experimentation with asset combinations and should be common practice or a component of the entrepreneurial process. In their application of the RBV, researchers should not presume its existence (Foss & Klein, 2020). Managerial capability is critical to innovating and extracting value from firm-level resources (Ireland et al., 2003).

The RBT is premised on the view that firms that possess and strategically deploy VRIN resources achieve sustained competitive advantage (Grimmer et al., 2017). A firm's internal resources are the foundational factor of sustainability. Firm-level resources, particularly valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and nonsubstitutable (VRIN) resources facilitate distinction from competitors with a resultant competitive advantage and are pivotal for innovation (Barney, 1991). VRIN resources support innovation facilitating differentiation and a defensive strategy against the entry of competitors (Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017).

Alternative Theories

The entrepreneurship and dynamic capabilities theories are alternative theories relevant to this study topic; however, I opted not to use either as a conceptual framework for my study.

Entrepreneurship Theory

Schumpeter (1983) and Casson (2005) developed the theory of entrepreneurship in modern times. Schumpeter (1983) asserted that innovation distinguished entrepreneurs from other SE owners. He further asserted that entrepreneurs identified and exploited opportunities that resulted in a first-mover competitive advantage. Despite the skepticism, the opportunity construct remains central to the contemporary study of entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurship theory hinged on the risk-taking nature of entrepreneurial leaders who proactively innovate with resultant new products, market entry, and wealth creation (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018).

Casson (2005) posited that the simplicity of the theory facilitated a comprehensive synthesis of the economic and managerial perspectives of the firm, providing a practical, useful, and integrative framework for the study of firm success and failure. However, they advocated a greater focus on the role of the entrepreneur rather than what they regarded as a misplaced mystification of opportunity.

While the focus on entrepreneurial discovery, evaluation, and exploitation continues to grow, Davidsson (2017) advocated reconceptualization of entrepreneurship in a broader context of the opportunity construct to include external enablers, new venture ideas, and opportunity confidence. Foss and Klein (2020) recently asserted that the focus on opportunity generation is an oversimplification of entrepreneurship and opportunity advantage which should be abandoned. They asserted that what researchers

and practitioners believe to be opportunity creation is simply the generation of good business ideas that are still dependent on an uncertain outcome.

Foss and Klein (2020) argued for a judgment-based view of entrepreneurship and against arguments of pre-existence of opportunities. They argued that entrepreneurship was well evaluated, bold and incisive action amidst the uncertainty and argued for a more natural link between entrepreneurship and resources rather than the extant opportunity construct. The judgment-based view is premised on the multi-dimensional nature of entrepreneurship (Patriotta & Siegel, 2019). Davidsson et al. (2020) asserted that the external enabler perspective was a better framework for theory than the discovery theory grounded on objective preexistent opportunities.

Alvarez and Barney (2020) argued for the centrality of the opportunity construct; however, they acknowledged that researchers needed to justify assumptions related to the construct. In furtherance of the social capital and networking theory, Leitch and Volery (2017), like Danso et al. (2016), emphasized the criticality and value of entrepreneurial networks and collaboration to acquire resources and information, to minimize the impact of uncertainty and risk-taking. Opportunity identification should be supported by the entrepreneur's decision to exploit the opportunity facilitated by ecologies of innovation (EoI) (Kuckertz et al., 2017; Shamsudeen et al., 2017).

Patriotta and Siegel (2019) asserted that entrepreneurship is more than economics. It is a multi-dimensional practice influenced by organizational, institutional, market environment context and constraints. They asserted that cultural context impacts

entrepreneurial choices, judgment, decisions, and actions, including resource allocation. The entrepreneurship theory has continued to evolve however the primary focus on the entrepreneur does not fully encompass the concept of strategic entrepreneurship. It is therefore not suitable for this study.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Teece (2019) described the dynamic capabilities theory as a nuanced approach to strategic management useful for a deeper and richer understanding of the nature of the business enterprise and its management in line with evolutionary and behavioral economics. This theory provides insights into firm growth, organizing for innovation, and competitiveness. Entrepreneurs can leverage dynamic capabilities to innovate by combining competencies and assets for exploitation (Foss & Saebi, 2018). These capabilities are particularly critical for radical innovation (Inigo et al., 2017). Strategic in nature and developed through discovery, knowledge generation, and learning (Teece, 2019), dynamic capabilities may be clustered as follows: sensing an external change, seizing new opportunities, and transforming organizations (Schoemaker et al., 2018).

While useful for SEs owing to its emphasis on identifying and exploiting existing rather than new resources, the dynamic capabilities framework is arguably less critical for SEs in a stable environment inclined to incremental innovation. Therefore, it is limited in applicability to SE innovation in emerging economies, which is the focus of this study. It is therefore not an appropriate framework to address the research question.

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Entrepreneurship provides the means for creating new ventures for commercialization, job opportunities, increased productivity, and new or revitalized, diversified markets. Entrepreneurship provides the opportunity for innovation through the creative destruction of existing products, processes, and practices to facilitate the exploitation of opportunities for profit and wealth through the unique deployment of resources and capabilities (Esfandiar et al., 2019; Mazzei, 2018) aided by opportunity recognition (Ireland et al., 2003; Teece, 2019). Entrepreneurship catalyzes economic development (Bercu & Lupu, 2020; Kuratko & Morris, 2017) and firm growth (Drucker, 1985; Harrison et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurship is the bridge between innovation and commercialization (Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANODE), 2018). Entrepreneurial competencies drive firm performance and competitiveness, increase resource capabilities, and serve as a driving force for the entrepreneurial pursuit of opportunities and resources. The ability to innovate, a willingness to take risks, and exploit market opportunities are key to competitiveness and growth (Abaho et al., 2017).

Drucker (1985) and Schumpeter (1983) viewed innovation as adding new economic value to resources. Innovation is characterized by a significant difference in a product, process, or combination of both, new or improved consumer yield and value (OECD/Eurostat, 2018). Innovation facilitates growth and entry into new markets, therefore, competitiveness (Cooper et al., 2016; Marom et al., 2019) through new

creations or improving existing products or services (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018; Padilha & Gomes, 2016; Ukpabio et al., 2017).

A product or service new to the firm is an innovation within the firm, even if it already exists in the market (Fu et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs could effectively combine existing resources to create or manufacture new goods or services, processes, means of distribution, or create a new organization. Innovation improves the likelihood of enterprise value generation and responsiveness to market challenges and customer demands (Mihret & Shumetie, 2017). Novel combinations of production factors are core to innovation and central to wealth creation (Schumpeter, 1983). The Schumpeterian (1983) innovation view, a common view of innovation in the modern market (Block et al., 2017), centered around creative destruction and disruption of markets.

Drucker (1985) emphasized the systematic, purposeful nature of innovation and new creation beyond improvement or modification achieved through the combination or conversion of material assets or configuration of existing resources. Arguably, this systematic approach may be less prevalent in SEs. These are typically focused on day-to-day operations (Faherty & Stephens, 2016; Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017) and may not be purposeful toward innovation. The systematic approach suited to exploitative, incremental innovation may be more successful in SEs operating in a stable business environment where rapid, frequent, and fast-paced change is absent.

Entrepreneurial Mindset

An entrepreneurial mindset facilitates recognition, identification, and alertness to seize opportunities for competitive advantage (Casson, 2005; Drucker, 1985). It aids innovation by providing meaning in the context of ambiguity or limited information (Ireland et al., 2003), a context in which SEs often operate. The entrepreneurial context for innovation is often ambiguous and uncertain. Entrepreneurial decisions are therefore characteristically experiential. Judgment is critical in entrepreneurial choice, opportunity recognition, and exploitation (Patriotta & Siegel, 2019).

Opportunities may be internal or external to the SE. Drucker (2002) identified seven key internal and external sources of opportunity, including unexpected success, failure, external events such as industry or market structure, incongruities between expectations and results with a positive perspective toward shortfalls, and exploitation of process needs. Opportunity includes a response to industry and market changes such as demographic changes, changes in perception, and new knowledge. Knowledge, ingenuity, and focus backed by diligence, persistence, and commitment are key.

Davidsson (2017) advocated a distinction between external conditions and subjective perceptions asserting that entrepreneurs operate in a broad context in identifying opportunities. External entrepreneurial enablers are single, distinct, external circumstances, and market conditions central to the results of entrepreneurial action (Foss & Klein, 2020). These temporarily trigger new ventures regardless of the entrepreneur type and include regulatory changes, technological breakthroughs, and demographic

shifts. They impact entrepreneurs either positively or negatively contingent on space, time, location-dependent on product, industry, and geographical location (Davidsson et al., 2020).

Cooper et al. (2016), Ireland et al. (2003), and Tchamyu (2017) encouraged entrepreneurs to explore new opportunities to grow and sustain their businesses. Recognition of opportunities requires alertness to and active search for potential business opportunities and information gathering on new ideas on products or services (Cho & Linderman, 2020). This must be supported by an entrepreneur's decision to exploit the opportunity (Kuckertz et al., 2017; Shamsudeen et al., 2017) through product or service development based on the perceived entrepreneurial opportunity (Kuckertz et al., 2017). While opportunity alone is not a means to superior strategy, the combination of thought and action is a means to entrepreneurial competitiveness through interdependent activities that create and capture value (Eisenhardt & Bingham, 2017).

Ireland et al. (2003) acknowledged that opportunity recognition, while critical to strategic entrepreneurship, could negatively impact the attainment of sustained competitiveness. Views on the opportunity construct remain wide and varied as to whether opportunities preexist identification or are created by entrepreneurial orientation facilitated by creativity and social skill (Davidsson, 2017; Foss & Klein, 2020; Packard, 2017) or its relevance. Cooper et al. (2016) emphasized the strategic importance of opportunity identification and asserted that pre-existent opportunities take shape through innovation. Wood (2017) asserted that the opportunity construct is representative of

entrepreneurship practice, including the cognitive and behavioral dynamics faced by entrepreneurs. Toms et al. (2020) asserted that entrepreneurship is a combination of opportunity recognition, discovered or created, and exploitation through mobilization of resources.

Davidsson (2017) and Foss and Klein (2020) argued for a departure from the opportunity construct. Davidsson (2017) asserted that overly confident entrepreneurs with a high propensity for subjective, over-evaluation of favourability of opportunities could take excessive risks as a basis for entrepreneurship. Esfandiar et al. (2019), however, asserted that desirability, ahead of opportunity, is the key determinant for the entrepreneurial pursuit of goals, and a heightened perception of opportunity exists only where the entrepreneur has the propensity to act on it. Cho and Linderman (2020) agreed with the argument that risk and uncertainty are business realities for SEs but also cautioned about the risk or erosion of competitive advantage arising from misinformed innovation decisions.

Exploratory and Exploitative Activities

Combining old and new ways of doing things to produce new products or services or products for existent or new customers is a means to achieve organizational objectives (Fiset & Dostaler, 2017). Ambidexterity is grounded in an organization's simultaneous embrace of stability and ambiguity (Felicio et al., 2019). It is based on the balanced exploitation of available resources, capabilities, and opportunities for growth and exploratory activities to pursue future business viability (Koryak et al., 2018; Wong et al.,

2017). In ambidexterity, both incremental and disruptive innovation are key (Zuraik & Kelly, 2019).

Exploration creates new opportunities and facilitates new market strategies, while exploitation improves firm performance by further penetrating existent markets through increased efficiencies. Exploration requires flexibility, while exploitation involves refining the existent for increased efficiency. Ambidexterity requires a specific organizational setup that may not be practical for SEs (Wenke et al., 2020), which could explain SE's inclination toward exploitative innovation. Exploratory activities facilitate disruptive innovation and exploitative activities incremental innovation (Felicio et al., 2019), with exploitation building for firm survival while exploratory for sustainability (Rod, 2019). Exploitation tends to be short-term with lower risk and uncertainty than exploration.

Ambidexterity offers an opportunity for sustained innovation; however, it presents a significant challenge for all sizes of organizations. It hinges on the continuous, disciplined, and balanced pursuit of two often conflicting types of activities for organizational innovation (Felicio et al., 2019). Discipline is critical for the simultaneous organizational achievement of innovation and control (Cembrero & Sáenz, 2018), change and stability, and agility and responsiveness. Entrepreneurs must build the capabilities to continually manage the ambidextrous approach's constantly conflicting demands and pressure, particularly the risk of stretching limited resources and a loss of strategic focus from exploitative strategies. A superior strategy depends on an SE capture of attractive

opportunities sooner, faster, and better than competitors. While opportunity alone is not a means to superior strategy, the combination of thought and action is a means to entrepreneurial competitiveness through interdependent activities that create and capture value (Eisenhardt & Bingham, 2017).

The style of a CEO has the greatest impact on whether a firm undertakes exploitative activities, while the organizational innovation climate most greatly influences exploration (Zuraik & Kelly, 2019). The Schumpeterian entrepreneur innovates to disrupt, cause or drive change in an existent market and is inclined to explorative activities in contrast to the Druckerian entrepreneur, who exploits rather than causes the change (Stefan & Bengtsson, 2017). Barney (1991) advocated a focus on either exploitative or exploratory activities to avoid strategic mediocrity. However, Koryak et al. (2018) asserted that a balanced pursuit of often contradictory demands of exploratory and exploitative activities is important for firm viability in the modern environment. The predominant resource-constrained nature of SEs led by necessity entrepreneurs rather than well-trained, agile, flexible, and astute entrepreneurs implies that SEs may be more suited to focus on either exploration or exploitation rather than ambidexterity. Innovation is often characterized by exploration and exploitation activities at different organizational stages (Stefan & Bengtsson, 2017).

Innovative entrepreneurship is exploratory. It is facilitated by entrepreneur socioeconomic and personality characteristics, such as academic education, technical background, and individual entrepreneur characteristics. Environmental context and

accessibility to substantial financial and specialized human resources from stakeholders, alliances, and networks through collaborative efforts are also important (Block et al., 2017). Rod (2019) found that firm Top Management (TMT) was positively related to innovation ambidexterity where diversity was induced through external managers and multiple generations. They asserted that SME family firms that simultaneously incrementally and radically innovate were more likely to sustain performance advantage and sustainability.

Entrepreneurial Culture

An entrepreneurial culture is evident in the appreciation for the value of opportunities, a propensity for recognition and seizure of opportunities supported by a climate of innovation and risk-taking (Cooper et al., 2016). Culture is multi-dimensional and comprises fundamental values, norms, motivations, perceptions, skills, practical knowledge, and daily routines. It is not easily identifiable in SEs where culture is blended with the individual practices and habits of the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is embedded in and fundamentally shaped by the organizational culture evident in values, informal norms, and cognitive frameworks. These shape the capacity to act and establish linkages with key external actors, serving as barriers or enablers of innovation. The impact and influence of culture on knowledge generation capacity and resource exchange are more significant in SMEs than in large firms (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017).

Aksoy (2017) asserted that an innovative culture could improve firm performance, enabling new product development fostered by creativity, teamwork, open

communication, and good employee relationships. Continuous pursuit of innovation is facilitated by an enabling, shared culture of innovation, proactivity, risk-taking, and understanding of the importance of innovation (Mazzei, 2018). The owner's philosophy, business origin, and employee learning experiences shape the values and beliefs of employees and managers and organizational culture (Schein & Schein, 2016). Organizational and managerial attributes jointly influence confidence to innovate in SEs. Innovation efficacy in SEs is varied depending on whether the SE is founder-led or not (Cooper et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a strategic orientation that drives entrepreneurial success. It is evidence of the entrepreneurial nature of an organization manifest in the: top management style, configuration of assets, and how it innovates (Wales et al., 2020), the recurrent pursuit of new opportunities, and bold, consistent entrepreneur decision-making to exploit identified opportunities regardless of resource constraint (Cooper et al., 2016) often amidst market uncertainty (Foss & Klein, 2020).

A strong EO is evident in support of innovation through resource allocation, high risk for competitive market advantage, and embracing change. The culture of a high EO enterprise supports employee acquisition of knowledge, experimentation, and development. EO impacts SME strategic approach. Innovativeness is evident in the process of generating new ideas, innovative products or services, and experimentation achieved through proactiveness in the anticipation and response to future market

demands to enjoy a first-mover competitive advantage. Innovation in an entrepreneurial organization is supported by risk-taking and adequate investment in new ideas or ventures (Singh et al., 2021).

Risk-taking firms are bold and involved in risky activities, accepting occasional failure to achieve firm objectives. They innovate more and sometimes radically. Risk is central to entrepreneurial performance (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016). However, risk should be calculated, and entrepreneurs in the pursuit of opportunity should avoid overexposure. Risk-taking should be smart, not impulsive, with some likelihood of gain. Entrepreneurs should consider present and future impact, resource requirements, and availability (Leitch & Volery, 2017).

Strategic orientation is evident in the extent to which opportunities in a firm's environment drive its strategy, and firms are distinguished by the extent to which strategic decisions are driven by opportunity rather than resource constraint (Cooper et al., 2016). Hernandez-Linares et al. (2018) found that not all EOs were equally important in Spanish SMEs. Proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy were more significant to risk-taking, while innovativeness and higher orientation to learning in family businesses.

Lopez-Fernandez et al. (2016), in their study into the determinants of innovation decisions in Spanish SME family enterprises, found that strategic orientation influenced innovation decisions. Prospectors, often market leaders and willing investors, were the most innovative, while defenders focused on market niching through improved efficiency

and effectiveness. Analyzers, often middle-market occupants, acted cautiously, benchmarking competitors for new ideas, while reactors did not develop any functional capability to achieve competitive advantage. They attributed their findings to the long-term nature of innovation decisions, the need for stability, and customer indifference to innovation. They found that external strategic focus is associated with higher performance for younger firms and internal strategic focus with higher performance for more mature firms. Planning is critical for the prospector, defender, and analyzer SEs (Grimmer et al., 2018).

O'Dwyer and Gilmore (2019) emphasized the centrality of market orientation for successful SME innovation and the need for a customer and competitor-centric approach, including appreciation of the impact of the networks, competencies, and experiential learning of competitor SMEs. Customer focus is positively related to innovation performance. It informs product development or services to meet customer demands and expectations, resulting in superior value (Ha et al., 2018). Creating and sharing knowledge, innovation, and adaptability to customer needs are central to SEs (Shibia & Barako, 2017). Opportunity exploitation co-evolves from the close interaction between employees and customers in a collaborative learning network improving resource combination (Kuckertz et al., 2017).

Koryak et al. (2018) emphasized the criticality of Top management for SE strategic decision-making. He echoed Barney's (1991) emphasis on the criticality of managerial capability for strategic management of resources, including optimization and

leveraging them for competitive advantage. In SEs, management rather than technical skills and founder capabilities are critical growth and survival factors (Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017). Managers should focus on promoting innovation through proper HR management backed by policies that promote productivity, collaboration, and creativity, lower turnover, and increase morale (Mazzei, 2018). SMEs managers should adopt and embed daily routines and work practices that encourage innovation to embed an enterprise innovation spirit in the firm. These include focusing on employee learning and the ability to transform and apply new knowledge and technologies (Zhai et al., 2018).

Padilha and Gomes (2016) found that the impact of innovation culture on SMEs was similar regardless of size. Structure and behaviors fostered innovation, particularly decision-making process formalization, the flexibility of working structure, working in teams, appreciation of ideas, and updating knowledge on product innovation performance. Given the competitive environment, they determined that freedom to be creative and teamwork were essential for organizational innovation in SMEs in the Italian textile industry. The German Mittelstand SMEs adopted an inclusive employee culture in decision-making with flatter structures resulting in employees' strong commitment and tacit know-how retention (De Massis et al., 2017).

Flexibility is central to disruptive innovation aided by a flexible structure, dynamic organizational culture in adapting structures and processes, exploratory, experiential rules, transformational leadership, horizontal communication and empowerment, disruptive learning, and relational skills and capabilities. On the other

hand, incremental innovation is operationalized by standardization and routine aided by a centralized structure, organizational culture of stable structures and processes, routinized rules, transactional leadership, vertical communication, hierarchical relations, culture, and accountability (Felicio et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Leadership is central to business transformation, competitiveness, and sustainability across the world, regardless of the economy. Leadership success in recent times has been ascribed to the skills of individuals. Leadership comprises power, traits, and behavior that influence followers and the organization. Leaders influence employees' behavior, performance, attitude, and motivation. In turn, this directly influences how the organization performs (Donkor & Dongmei, 2018). A leader shapes organizational culture impacting the strategic approach adopted when searching for new opportunities (Schein & Schein, 2016).

Entrepreneurs introduce or exploit opportunities to commercialize on change and innovate aided by the strategic deployment of existing or new resources or capabilities (Drucker, 1985; Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016; McDowell et al., 2018; Schumpeter, 1983) for a premium price (Foss & Klein, 2020). Foss and Klein (2020) provide a useful contemporary definition of an entrepreneur as an individual who aims to combine heterogeneous resources to pursue profit under uncertainty and often has a different perception from everyone else. SE managers tend to view innovation as a cost rather than an opportunity, especially when results are not immediate (Cooper et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial leaders influence others to nurture the right culture and management of resources to drive the pursuit of advantage (Harrison et al., 2018; Ireland et al., 2003). Entrepreneurial behavior can be evidenced by attitude, skills, and competencies, including leadership, risk management, creativity, and personal control. The ability to turn ideas into action through innovation underpinned by creativity is a mark of entrepreneurial competence (Bercu & Lupu, 2020).

Traits Perspective. Entrepreneurs were initially described by personality or character traits with factors such as gender, level of education, age, and work experience. In Uganda, start-up success was linked to the owner's business experience, age, education, and ideas (Buyinza et al., 2017). In Zimbabwe, successful innovation has been linked to age, marital status, and years of education (Makate et al., 2019; Nyoni & Bonga, 2018), while Barasa et al. (2017) argued that the work experience of SE owners positively impacts the growth of firms. SE owner capabilities amassed from years of experience and knowledge are a means to innovation for advantage (Fernández-Esquinas et al., 2017; Jogaratnam, 2018; Kearney et al., 2018; Makate et al., 2019). Business experience, intrinsic motivation, and resilience are principal innovation enablers (Mihret & Shumetie, 2017).

Entrepreneurs possess superior skills in sensing and seizing entrepreneurial opportunities, and their capability to create additional wealth distinguishes them from other business leaders. Ferreira de Lara and Regina Neves Guimarães (2018) asserted that owner characteristics are important, which aligned with arguments focusing on attitude

and personality beyond just business practices (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2017). Zaech and Baldegger (2017) asserted that while at the start-up stage, the qualifications and experiences of a founder-CEO are key for strategic guidance and direction, skills and competencies become more central beyond this stage to sustain the business.

Block et al. (2017) asserted that owner-specific characteristics might sustain the strategy. Exposito and Sanchis-Llopis (2019), in their study of SMEs in Spain, found a minimal impact of entrepreneur characteristics on business performance indicators. They found a strong positive relationship between innovation and performance in SMEs led by younger entrepreneurs but no significant impact from education levels. However, Bercu and Lupu (2020) found a positive impact of education levels on entrepreneurial success in Eastern Europe.

Entrepreneurial characteristics underpin entrepreneurial intention and determine firm performance (Smith, 2017). SEs tend to rely strongly on entrepreneur-related attributes and capabilities, including alertness, insights, and the ability to coordinate resources (Ireland et al., 2003). Isaga (2018), in a study of SME performance in Tanzania, found that entrepreneur personality traits significantly influence SME performance through cognitive characteristics. They defined personality traits related to entrepreneurship tasks such as the need for achievement, locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, innovativeness, risk-taking propensity, and self-efficacy. Entrepreneurial alertness, attitude toward entrepreneurship, cognitive styles, and entrepreneurial motivation were central characteristics of entrepreneur assessments and judgment.

Harrison et al. (2018) explored this in their study into the importance of entrepreneurial leadership skills in firm success in the retail pharmacy sector in Nigeria. They found that entrepreneurs who possessed and leveraged diverse capabilities such as opportunity recognition and exploitation skills, technical/business and interpersonal skills were distinct from other business leaders. They asserted that indiscriminate application of Western leadership concepts in emerging economies would fail. They emphasized leadership roles rather than style and found that entrepreneurial leaders understood specific functional areas within and beyond their business and stretched to other areas of complexity.

Entrepreneurship research is increasingly focused away from traits to behavior and motivations of entrepreneurs in an entrepreneurial cognitive approach to explaining entrepreneurial behavior. This approach is built on the cognizance that multiple factors mediate personality traits and entrepreneurial performance; therefore, traits alone cannot explain action though traits increase the likelihood of certain actions (Isaga, 2018). As Smith (2017) argued, traits often associated with successful entrepreneurs are applied more to compare successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs than for insight into the distinctiveness between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs.

Behavioral Perspective. The behavioral approach to leadership focuses on a leader's role and behavior rather than the characteristics (Donkor & Dongmei, 2018). The entrepreneur is a decision-maker who creates benefits by using resources in a new or different way, adaptable to change (Drucker, 1985; Kellermanns et al., 2016;

Schumpeter, 1983). Judgment decision-making involves synthesizing and exploiting information and is a central entrepreneurial characteristic (Casson, 2005). Entrepreneurs habitually innovate—Schumpeter (1983) and Drucker (1985) both associated entrepreneurship with innovativeness. Innovation is the differentiator between any SE owner and an entrepreneur (Barasa et al., 2017); however, the innovation approach of an SE founder and a nonfounder manager will differ (Cooper et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurs are effective managers (Leitch & Volery, 2017), business savvy, and great networkers (Turner & Endres, 2017). They are leaders accountable for decision-making, problem-solving, strategic thinking, and creating an organizational culture for team unity and trust (Mumford et al., 2017). They mobilize and allocate resources and often form new markets (Casson, 2005; Leitch & Volery, 2017). While resources, competencies, and skills are a prerequisite for innovation and competitiveness, even the possession of the VRIN resources without managerial competencies to extract value (Barasa et al., 2017) does not offer a competitive advantage. Resource constraints in SEs could be mitigated by an appropriate entrepreneurial mindset and leadership orientation (Imran et al., 2019). Managerial and owner education, collaboration, and stakeholder relationship-building capabilities with clients and service providers are key to identifying and leveraging external knowledge and linkages (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017).

Entrepreneurs are skilled at adapting to change, responsive to threats who habitually innovate, and taking a strategic risk to exploit identified opportunities to

deliver customer value. They generate ideas, question assumptions, are emotionally intelligent, interested in self and team development, manage risks and enable innovation (Harrison et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs make decisions in uncertain business environments by learning from their experiences. They are responsible, divergent thinkers, and economically oriented with sharp focus (Drucker, 1985; Harrison et al., 2018). Entrepreneurial capabilities are essential in industrial contexts (Casson, 2005).

Schumpeter (1983) discredited the view of the entrepreneur as one who takes on the risk. He argued that risk-taking is inherent in ownership, not necessarily in entrepreneurship, and therefore not a differentiator. Drucker (1985) asserted that entrepreneurship is no riskier than any other venture. Risk-taking behavior remains useful as a differentiator of leadership capability because some business leaders are risk-averse, impacting the leveraging of opportunities available for innovation. In their study of Ghanaian SMEs, Danso et al. (2016) found that high entrepreneurial risk-taking propensity enhances firm performance and asserted that entrepreneur risk-taking propensity is a key variable and personality trait for an entrepreneur. They asserted that the distinction lies in the leader's ability to prospect on the value of the opportunity, evaluating risks against prospects against various reference points to inform the decision.

Eisenhardt and Bingham (2017) asserted that strategic entrepreneurs shape their field and industry and are capable of a broad perspective of the firm beyond their own firm's industry and were exploitative of their knowledge and clarity on the roles of different firms types. They are focused beyond competitors to substitutes,

complementors, buyers, and suppliers and were cognizant of the strategic value of alliances and acquisitions. These entrepreneurs are experimenters at low cost with high impact, are ecosystems focused, and maintain flexible systems and organizational structures to facilitate adaptability, agility, and responsiveness to capture unexpected, short-lived opportunities.

Entrepreneurial motivation is critical in entrepreneur behavior and decisions, including opportunity identification. It is multi-dimensional. Personal factors such as motivation, aptitude, a tendency to take risks, and a predisposition to innovation underpin the success of entrepreneurship. It may also be influenced by social factors such as family, expectations, or institutional support (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). Personality, family, culture, nature of followers, availability of resources, and experience may influence entrepreneur behavior (Harrison et al., 2018; Werner et al., 2017). While some individuals are motivated to pursue a business opportunity and, therefore, are more innovative, some businesses are borne from necessity. Necessity entrepreneurs lead many SMEs in Uganda who are given to informality. The entrepreneur is characterized principally by innovative behavior employing strategic management business practices for advantage. Therefore, the strategic entrepreneurship model may be most relevant for the entrepreneur, not all SE owners.

Jones et al. (2018) asserted that entrepreneurial behavior is a construct of context cumulatively influenced by economic, legal, political, and social attributes of organizational, industry, and societal contexts on entrepreneurial behavior. These either

facilitate or hinder strategies, including seizing opportunities. They asserted that positive and negative entrepreneurial outcomes were differentiable based on social, economic, and psychological factors, including gender and religion. Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2018) asserted that past experiences may influence entrepreneur strategic decisions, actions or inactions, and behavior; however, Esfandiar et al. (2019) asserted that social norms do not influence entrepreneurial goals.

Drucker (1985) and Harrison et al. (2018) posited that entrepreneurial personality is learned, not innate; knowledge and experience can develop entrepreneurial skills and competencies. Entrepreneurial education transfers knowledge from successful entrepreneurs to develop skills and knowledge and, therefore, successful entrepreneurial behavior (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). SE leaders could be upskilled (Jones et al., 2018) through tailored training and mentorship, such as incubator and accelerator programs (ANODE, 2018). This approach has been adopted in emerging economies such as Uganda (Abaho et al., 2017), Ethiopia (Mihret & Shumetie, 2017), Kenya (Shibia & Barako, 2017), and Zimbabwe (Makate et al., 2019), where innovation is informal.

Leadership, particularly transformational leadership (TL), plays a crucial role in forming innovation capability, which is crucial for survival and sustained competitive advantage. TL is attained through intellectual stimulation, encouragement of openness, inspiration, and motivation of employee innovation behavior (Le & Lei, 2019). This aids creativity and innovation. Transformational leaders challenge the status quo. They are risk-takers, adaptable, effective communicators of vision, people developers, and team

workers (Zaech & Baldegger, 2017). Transformational leaders inspire employees beyond self-interest to the organizational vision (Durmusoglu et al., 2018).

Transformational leadership facilitates organizational innovation, particularly exploratory activities, fosters a learning climate, creates safety, openness, and divergent thinking, and empowers employees by allowing for mistakes. It influences the pursuit of organizational innovation, which an innovation climate moderates (Stefan & Bengtsson, 2017), and, where achievable, an innovative organizational culture. The transformational leadership style eases the negative impact of internal barriers related to service innovativeness (Durmusoglu et al., 2018).

Through vision, moral clarity, and motivation, CEO transformational leadership can help create an organizational climate that fosters innovation by opening communication channels and making it easier to advance new ideas. Therefore, organizational culture evolves and would take significantly longer than an organizational climate that could be more immediately influenced by CEO leadership to foster innovation. The structure is also critical (Zuraik & Kelly, 2019). Zaech and Baldegger (2017) found that transformational leadership behavior significantly and positively affected start-up performance. They also found that start-up size had a significant, positive, moderating effect on the relationship between transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, and performance, with a significant and positive effect in larger start-ups and a negative effect in smaller ones.

CEO transformational leadership has the greatest impact on innovation, directly influencing exploitative activities with indirect mediating influence on exploratory activities, for which it is particularly critical facilitated by an innovation culture (Zuraik & Kelly, 2019). The exploitative approach to innovation prevalent in SEs may thrive even in the absence of a visionary, transformational leader. Overconfident CEOs could increase the likelihood of imbalance in innovation ambidexterity (Wong et al., 2017). An overly confident business owner motivated by emotional rather than financial reasons is prone to unwarranted optimism with a heightened risk of miscalculation of a firm's ability or advantage and resultant excessive risk-taking (Baek & Neymotin, 2017).

The behavioral perspective draws on the existence of capabilities that influence entrepreneurial leadership. Opportunity, not necessity, drives entrepreneurship and innovation. Entrepreneurs are more than imitators or inventors; they are resilient in the face of obstacles. Entrepreneurial intention strongly predicts entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behavior impacted by personality traits, proactiveness, and dark side such as dominance, sense of superiority, and the need for overachievement (Wu et al., 2019). The dark aspects negatively affect the innovation climate and organizational culture, disempowering employees and stifling creativity.

The risks of dominant leaders exist in businesses of any size, particularly where a transformational leader exists. Gains, where an owner is highly competent and possesses strategizing capabilities, could compensate for the loss or risks from overdominance. Compared to larger firms' challenges arising from an over-dominant executive, owner

capabilities could be a source of proximate market and relational advantage for the SE (Kearney et al., 2018). Makate et al. (2019) found in Zimbabwe that the dynamic capabilities of firm owners resulted in tactics and recombination of resources that positively impacted innovation even in the informal sector with resultant business continuity, creation of wealth, and improved firm and sector performance. They also found that the number of years in informal business positively influenced innovation, leveraging the experience advantage and specialized resources.

The focus on an individual could result in the heroism of the leaders with an overreliance on their personal view for strategic direction and decisions on aspects such as innovation. Overreliance on an entrepreneur could result in a concentration of power and knowledge dependence on the founder's identity, capabilities, and cognitive abilities; this may result in excessive risk-taking or missed opportunities, particularly with a loss of a collaborative approach to strategy. The predominant characteristic of entrepreneurs is that they are right and everyone else is wrong (Foss and Klein, 2020).

Zaech and Baldegger (2017) and Harrison et al. (2018) advocated for leadership conducive to risk-taking and innovation in a flexible, situational leadership rather than a singular approach. Foss and Klein (2020) argued for focusing on the entrepreneurial team, not an entrepreneurial leader. They posited that the emphasis on opportunity continues to drive bias toward an emphasis on entrepreneurial traits with limited cognizance of the fact that entrepreneurship is a nonlinear, disorganized process built off

the interaction of many individuals willing to experiment with ideas and how to exploit them.

Strategic Management of Resources

Resources are central to entrepreneurial innovation and competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; De Massis et al., 2017; Grimmer et al., 2017; Ireland et al., 2003). They may be firm-specific, including capabilities (Imran et al., 2019), management skills, information, and tacit knowledge acquired over time or generations (De Massis et al., 2017; Grimmer et al., 2017). They may be physical, human, or organizational, including brand, trade contacts, capital, efficiency, or skilled employees (Wernerfelt, 1984).

Ownership, or the lack of resources, does not necessarily impede SE innovation if the resources are applied or combined in a non-imitable (Kellermanns et al., 2016). Firm-specific assets include permanently or semipermanently owned or controlled assets and collective organizational skills (Teece, 2019).

Information asymmetries aid entrepreneurial opportunity by aiding entrepreneurs in assessing the relative value of resources against potential future value if they were transformed from inputs into outputs (Ireland et al., 2003; Schumpeter, 1983). Resources may include knowledge or information, organizational processes, assets, and socially complex resources hinged on trust, relationship, and value-based attributes and brand (Barney, 1991). Resources may be tangible or intangible, including knowledge-based resources and skills, know-how, licenses and patents, a strong business base and relationships, reputation, and brand equity (Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017).

Accumulated experience in conducting business activities and available financial resources offer resource advantage, which could also arise from access to affiliate firms within a group that facilitates partnerships and collaborations (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018).

Resources, strategic and valuable, are enablers for the creation of firm value through innovation. Rare resources are unique and valuable and offer an advantage that competitors could not easily substitute with another resource to achieve the same advantage (De Massis et al., 2017).

SEs rely on internal assets for competitive advantage; therefore, entrepreneur appreciation of the strategic value and management of firm resources (Wernerfelt, 1984) is critical. Resource management involves maximum deployment and exploitation of available resources at a reduced cost. When aided by dynamic capabilities, bundling resources, structuring a resource portfolio, and clear resource management processes could facilitate the integration and reconfiguration of resources for advantage.

Leveraging capabilities such as bundling resources is a creative and entrepreneurial capability largely dependent on managerial decisions rather than on the strength of competitor capabilities (Ireland et al., 2003). Manager capabilities for identifying, managing, and coordinating resources are essential (Teece, 2019). Effective resource managers create significant value by leveraging capabilities to maximize opportunity recognition and exploitation (Ireland et al., 2003) to facilitate innovation (Pucihar et al., 2019).

Wernerfelt (1984) explored the importance of the first-mover market advantage the first resource owner enjoyed, potentially barring new entrants or securing position advantage for an incumbent business; however, his views related to product innovation. SEs rely on specific resources for advantage and exploit their potential for agility and adaptability. They leverage identity and reputation, managerial capability, uniqueness of offering, or operational context (Ireland et al., 2003). The German Mittelstand SMEs effectively deployed limited financial and human capital resources to innovate and outcompete competitors (De Massis et al., 2017).

Resources are sector-specific and may be more limited for specific SEs. The most important type of resources vary among MSMEs and are enterprise-dependent (Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017). Grimmer et al. (2017) explored the relationship between resources, strategic orientation, and performance in small retail firms testing the hypothesis that the performance of small retail firms was positively related to resource advantage. Grimmer et al. considered the impact of size in providing an opportunity to leverage resources and the disadvantage of size on access and exploitation of critical resources and asserted that SEs needed to rely on alternative means of competitiveness to overcome size disadvantages.

Grimmer et al. (2018) found that in retail SEs, firm performance was positively related to resource advantage, particularly information such as computerized sales, inventory, customer information systems, and up-to-date industry information and financial capital. They asserted that planning capability mediated resources and

performance enabling utilization of resources dependent upon the resource in question. They found that agility afforded by size provided flexibility and nimbleness to exploit resources compensating for the slack resource advantage enjoyed by larger firms.

Woschke et al. (2017) asserted that SME innovation requires different firm resources and capabilities, particularly incremental and radical innovation. They found that financially constrained SMEs were better suited to incremental innovation aided by recombining resources. They found no positive effect of resource scarcity on innovation and neither significant effect of financial resources on radical innovation nor human resources on either incremental or radical innovation.

Knowledge is a critical source of organizational competitive advantage (Drucker, 1985). Knowledge may be acquired from an in-depth understanding of industry competitiveness, the workings of innovation, and how to identify and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities. This facilitates strategic bundling of resources, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation with resultant competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). External organizational knowledge available through customers and suppliers may boost innovation (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017). Grimmer et al. (2018) found that informational resources and access to financial capital were critical success factors for SEs in the retail sector. EoI create collective insight into better production, service delivery, access to resources, and organization of markets (Shamsudeen et al., 2017). Access to knowledge and information improves innovation capabilities (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018) and sustainability (Imran et al., 2019).

Relational social capital, internal and external, results in shared trust that can be leveraged to minimize firm transaction costs (Ireland et al., 2003). SE innovation capabilities are shaped by collaboration capacity, particularly the owner-manager (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs can exploit relational social capital for advantage. An SE, therefore, need not own resources but could creatively deploy or access resources through partnerships. In the modern business environment of increased market collaboration, resource advantage may be easily replicated through partnerships taking advantage of relational social capital to overcome any resource constraints.

Ecosystems are critical for SEs, especially in emerging economies where constraints to innovation are higher and are more easily overcome through partnerships. Entrepreneurial networks are a means to new business markets and resources offering opportunities. Networks facilitate knowledge creation and transfer among partners stimulating the innovation process. Brown and Mason (2017) recognized the impact of public and private sector players on entrepreneurial innovation, highlighting the interconnectedness of systems involving multiple entrepreneurial players. Entrepreneurs create opportunities through cooperation in individual networks or institutional alliances (Toms et al., 2020) and innovation alliances (Feranita et al., 2017). SEs could successfully exploit active networking, customer, key supplier engagements, and third-party resource networking (Turner & Endres, 2017).

In SMEs, knowledge can be gained by experience and transmitted on the job. Knowledge workers in EOI amass knowledge from their interactions generating intuitive

ways of exploiting an opportunity to create value, particularly if coupled with tacit knowledge (Acton et al., 2019; Mayanja et al., 2019; Schmidt et al., 2018). Knowledge is a critical part of idea generation and innovation. Innovation decisions depend on the owner; knowledge management is implicit and often controlled by owner-managers; however, most lack know-how on exploiting this resource. Formalized planning is challenging to implement (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017). De Massis et al. (2017) found that the German Mittelstand SMEs' competitive advantage was partly attributable to effectively leveraged knowledge from various sources, including networks.

The innovation decision rests on whether and how to innovate and involves exploring the external market or sector factors and internal firm-specific factors (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016). In SEs, resources are valued if they are difficult to imitate and substitute (Kellermanns et al., 2016). Cho and Linderman (2020), in their study of the impact of corporate strategic resources on product and process innovation, found that in dynamic markets, process innovation offers the most advantage in dynamic markets and product innovation in a stable market amongst large successful firms in the USA. The results are likely to differ in an SME context in emerging economies. SEs require and use different resources for growth and prosperity compared to larger firms. Use is also different among SEs depending on whether they are incumbents and family or non-family owned. Entrepreneurs tend to focus on resource value and inimitability rather than non-substitutability, rarity, or value creation and profit.

Managerial and workforce skills are vital to leveraging internal resources and distinguishing between SMEs' performance (OECD, 2018). An appropriate entrepreneurial mindset and leadership orientation to support identifying and exploiting opportunities where information and economic resource is available to support entrepreneurial actions and clarify decisions with resultant innovation could mitigate resource constraints in SEs (Imran et al., 2019).

Creativity

Creativity and innovation aid firm growth and competitiveness (Schumpeter, 1983) and are critical outcomes of an entrepreneurial mindset, an entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurial leadership practices, and strategic management of the firm's resources (Ireland et al., 2003). Creativity is the means to innovation through ideation, new content generation, or process combining existing resources to transform ideas into new products, services, or processes. Creativity is a crucial facet of entrepreneurial behavior (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). Creativity challenges tradition, and the status quo, facilitated by a culture of learning and curiosity. This culture is often absent in SEs, where teams focus on day-to-day operations.

Creativity facilitates innovation premised on new resource-transforming ideas though these are not always novel. Mihret and Shumetie (2017) found in their study of SEs in Ethiopia that creative business ideas were stimulants for product, service, and process innovation. Felicio et al. (2019) suggested that disruptive innovation favors creative thinking through exploratory activities while incremental innovation favors a

standardized routine. This could imply that SMEs that are not characteristically creative rely on traditional means to innovate incrementally.

Perry-Smith and Manucci (2017) viewed creativity and innovation as a social process recognizing the complexities of value extraction from networks constantly balancing multiple factors to convert a creative idea to a tangible outcome. Barriers to creativity include organizational structure, strategic vision, business strategy, skills and motivations, beliefs, and cultural characteristics of an entrepreneur.

Innovation in Small Enterprises (SEs)

Innovation improves products and processes within SMEs (Padilha & Gomes, 2016). Product and process innovation primarily relate to technological changes and materialize as new or significantly improved products/services and processes. Managerial or organizational innovation is related to changes to business practices (Exposito & Sanchis-Llopis, 2019). Exposito and Sanchis-Llopis (2019), in their study of the impact of innovation on SMEs in Spain, found that innovation increased the likelihood of better performance; however, this was reliant on the type of innovation. They found no significant impact of firm size and age advantage but that the medium-sized SMEs performed better operationally due to increased production capacity.

Process innovation is the modification of operational routines or material exchange processes to improve one or several stages of one or combined business functions, ultimately for better customer service (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018). It often involves cost-reduction strategies whose success depends on the capabilities of the

company management (OECD, 2018) achieved through efficacy, resource efficiency, reliability, resilience, affordability, convenience, and usability, which may involve a technological process (Padilha & Gomes, 2016). Padilha and Gomes (2016) found that process innovation was more prevalent among SMEs in Italy's highly competitive textile industry than product innovation. Product diversity and short life cycles due to changing fashion trends spurred innovation. Process innovation could be achieved incrementally through the reconfiguration of resources; however, entrepreneurship depends on technical innovations such as product innovation to create new markets mediated by financial intermediation to provide scalable opportunities for exploitation through appropriate investment (Toms et al., 2020).

Innovation is dynamic and distinct for firms (Cooper et al., 2016). It could be sequential (Drucker, 1985), hinged on continual learning, problem-solving, knowledge creation, and use (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018). Drucker (1985) proposed a systematic and purposeful approach to innovation supported by distinct entrepreneurial strategies and leadership. In SEs where innovation exists, it is often incremental rather than radical, particularly in family-owned businesses (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016). Block et al. (2017) asserted that only entrepreneurs that adopt the more disruptive, radical Schumpeterian approach maximally leverage available economic opportunities to achieve high SE and economic growth. They acknowledged that while highly valuable, particularly for market entry and delivery of superior customer value, product innovation

is less prevalent in SEs and that incumbent firms succeed more at incremental than radical or disruptive innovation. (Block et al., 2017).

Radical innovation focuses on novelty for a new customer experience (Woschke et al., 2017). While disruptive innovation departs from the existent to the novel, incremental innovation involves the continuous enhancement of the existent. Incremental innovation is usually process-focused, whereas disruptive or radical innovation involves a radical change to a product's or service's performance attributes to create uniqueness (Aksoy, 2017). Business model innovation is linked to the modification or change of a core element of a business and or reasons for a business (Ritter & Lettl, 2018). Disruptive innovation, including business model innovation, is vital for sustained competitive advantage for all businesses, including SMEs (Pucihar et al. (2019), particularly for start-ups; however, there are critical resource availability and capability dependencies (Felicio et al., 2019).

Woschke et al. (2017) asserted that resource-constrained firms should focus on incremental innovation, improving the existing with limited novelty rather than radical innovation. SEs are capable of all types of innovation, particularly in higher-income countries. SEs could benefit from open innovation, which addresses internal resource constraints to innovation (Freel & Robson, 2017). Open innovation moderates the constraints of limited capital and collaboration with external partners predominant in science-driven enterprises (OECD, 2018).

Lopez-Fernandez et al. (2016) found a significant and positive relationship between the long tenure of chief executive officers, innovation, and market positions; however, there was a limited appetite for risk or innovation in family-owned businesses. Durmusoglu et al. (2018) studied the barriers to service innovativeness in SMEs in Turkey's hospitality and tourism industry and the moderating effect of transformational leadership. Durmusoglu et al. found that barriers to innovation did not always impede innovation and could potentially serve as a catalyst to internal service innovation, inspire resilience, spark competitiveness, especially in uncertain times, and creativity for product innovation, especially with the existence of a transformational leader.

While essential for SME success, innovation may not result in business survival and success. Entrepreneurial innovation could have unintended consequences for the firm, including job destruction or income disparity arising from digitization and technology (Block et al., 2017). It could also result in detrimental risk-taking, particularly with radical innovation.

Risk aversion and fear of exploitation limit SME uptake of the opportunities for collaboration and funding, exacerbated by limited access to information (Faherty & Stephens, 2016). This could result in ignorance about how to deploy or utilize resources effectively, which opportunities, or how much risk to take (Imran et al., 2019). Incumbent SEs tend to innovate when demand for products and services dips (Ferreira de Lara & Regina Neves Guimarães, 2018). SE owners are less inclined to pursue innovation perceived as risky (Marom et al., 2019).

Constraints to Innovation

OECD/ Eurostat (2018) described an innovation barrier as one that prevents a non-innovative firm from innovating or an innovative firm from specific types of innovation but asserted that while these increase costs or challenges, they can be overcome. The influence of barriers to innovation depends on firms' characteristics, such as sectoral affiliation, technological behavior, and their response to perceived obstacles to innovation (Santiago et al., 2017).

Faherty and Stephens (2016) identified five primary barriers to innovation that remain relevant today: negative management style, financial pressures, inadequate ICT, complacency, and the need for investment. They attributed micro-enterprises' competitiveness in Ireland to identifying and exploiting opportunities for innovation to deliver customer value through new product development, market innovation, or a restructuring business model. They found that these firms challenged the industry status quo. The absence of managerial skills and knowledge in the SEs in developing economies such as Uganda (Lubowa et al., 2020; Ssempala & Mukoki, 2018), Tanzania (Isaga, 2018), and Zimbabwe (Makate et al., 2019) affects strategy.

SE strategy is emergent, informal, simplistic, and context specific (Ha et al., 2018). Entrepreneurial innovation remains primarily informal and emergent (Faherty & Stephens, 2016; Fernández-Esquinas et al., 2017), consumer induced and reactive to customer or supplier pressure rather than proactive in identifying opportunities (Leitch & Volery, 2017). SEs possess the advantage of agility that could be leveraged proactively,

yet innovation remains limited. SEs are inclined to short-term strategy, quick returns, and gains to achieve growth. This significantly impacts whether they view innovation for long-term success and survival as viable or necessary. SEs are characterized by a preoccupation with a short-term operational focus, survival rather than innovation and strategy (Faherty & Stephens, 2016; Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017). Managers must focus on innovation-oriented tasks beyond daily operations (Mazzei, 2018) yet remain largely internally focused. Creativity and innovation are overshadowed by a legacy mindset (Kearney et al., 2018).

Leader capability to recognize and exploit opportunity is the central enabler of entrepreneurial innovation, not the availability of resources (Drucker, 1985). Entrepreneurial innovation is explained by entrepreneurial behavior rather than firm size or age (Cooper et al., 2016). SEs lack suitably qualified personnel (Faherty & Stephens, 2016) and sometimes are managed by persons without business experience (Shibia & Barako, 2017) or appropriate managerial competencies to extract value from resources (Barasa et al., 2017). SE leaders are limited in financial literacy, knowledge, and skills, affecting access to funding (Dyckhoff, 2017; Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016), particularly in developing economies (Abaho et al., 2017; Gyimah et al., 2019). Managerial competencies should complement possession of resources to extract value moderated by an enabling firm environmental and institutional context. However, entrepreneurs often lack the managerial ability to identify and strategically manage the resource portfolio to create distinct products and services that can be leveraged for competitive advantage. In

SEs, managers may lack the innovation capability, skills, and experience to extract value, even from VRIN resources (Barasa et al., 2017).

SEs may fail to innovate or avoid innovation due to a lack of resources, risk aversion, or perception of innovation as burdensome rather than an opportunity, particularly in developing economies, especially if benefits are not immediate (Ferreira de Lara & Regina Neves Guimarães, 2018; Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016). In expounding the prospect theory, Danso et al. (2016) asserted that entrepreneurs or decision-makers are not necessarily risk-averse but evaluate prospects before taking or adopting a risk. They suggested that entrepreneurs view risks as worth taking when they are below their targets but are risk-averse when their performances are above the target level.

Risk-taking, frequent innovation, and pioneering nature are critical for SE survivability. Entrepreneurs' propensity for and perception of risk are essential (Boermans & Willebrands, 2017). SE owners are less inclined to pursue high-risk innovation strategies (Marom et al., 2019). Innovative entrepreneurs innovate regardless of resource constraints through recombination, often incrementally, where acquiring new resources is impossible (Woschke et al., 2017).

De Massis et al. (2017) investigated how highly innovative German Mittelstand SMEs achieved success despite financial and human capital resource constraints and found that they leveraged their limited resources to deliver superior value and sustain superior performance. The firms shared six common traits: niche focus and customer collaboration, globalization strategy, preference for self-financing, long-run mindset,

superior employee relations, and community embeddedness exploiting their networks. They innovated for a niche, preserved resources, and built on expertise and efficiencies over time. De Massis (2017) attributed these firms' competitive advantage to the trust built and nurtured by the leadership through multigenerational relationships with key stakeholders, including suppliers and customers, with resultant access to valuable resources. They effectively leveraged knowledge from various sources, including networks, strong partnerships, networks, and the eco-system of community banks, schools, local government, universities, and research centers (Brown & Mason, 2017).

In developing economies, entrepreneurship is mainly intuitive or imitated, with strategies highly duplicated and markets in the informal sector heavily saturated due to low barriers to entry. The external environment and institutional role, particularly of governments, in addressing corruption and poor regulation are critical. The moderating role of institutions on how value is extracted and appropriated from resources is critical. Despite the serious external challenges such as government policy and corruption, the SME failure rate, particularly among start-up firms, is mainly attributable to internal constraints such as owner competence, inadequate strategic planning, inability to innovate or adapt to finance, credit, and resource constraints (Barasa et al., 2017).

Critical success factors for SMEs include technology, management skills, environmental factors such as social networks, government & financial support, availability of capital (Nyoni & Bonga, 2018), and a growing economy (Gyimah et al., 2019). Resources are limited and often involve stiff competition from larger firms

(Faherty & Stephens, 2016). Lack of financial resources and funding is an obstacle to effective strategy (Conroy et al., 2017) and innovation, exacerbated by the limited negotiation power of SEs (Fernández-Esquinas et al., 2017). SE leaders are limited in financial literacy, knowledge, and skills, affecting access to funding (Dyckhoff, 2017; Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2016), particularly in developing economies (Abaho et al., 2017; Gyimah et al., 2019). The absence of managerial skills and knowledge is a challenge for SEs, for example, in Uganda (Lubowa et al., 2020; Sempala & Mukoki, 2018), Tanzania (Isaga, 2018), and Zimbabwe (Makate et al., 2019).

Developing economies are characterized by a dualism between formal and informal sectors and firms. Infrastructure is often poor, markets underdeveloped, and potential local customers' limited disposable income affects SME business. SMEs that innovate survive and lead the market. The different capabilities of firms in the formal and informal sectors will likely shape innovation adoption and diffusion. Firm size is a barrier, as is the entrepreneur's level of education (Fu et al., 2018). The SME leverage of size advantage is dependent on their environment. Environmental context and geographical location play a critical role in strategic success (Ferreira de Lara and Regina Neves Guimarães, 2018). This includes the external business environment, such as market competition influencing innovation (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018). Entrepreneurial activity is varied by context. The pace of change in the business environment may dictate the approach to innovation (Toms et al., 2020).

SE Innovation in Uganda

Successful entrepreneurship could facilitate socioeconomic growth through job creation and poverty reduction (OECD, 2018). The private sector in Uganda is dominated by MSMEs at approximately 90%, employing over 2.5 million people (UIA, 2020). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), 90% of which are small enterprises, fuel economic growth, create wealth and employment, and contribute to the gross domestic product. Most SMEs do not survive beyond 5 years, and only 30% survive the first year (MTIC, 2019). Firms in developing countries continue to face constraints to innovation (Barasa et al., 2017). In Uganda, only a minority of MSMEs, mostly mid-sized firms, invest in innovative products and services (FSDU, 2017). Innovation is limited (MoFPED, 2019).

Entrepreneurial deficiency in Uganda is attributable to limited business ability and a lack of entrepreneurial competence (Abaho et al., 2017), innovation capability, and skills critical to extract value from resources (Barasa et al., 2017). The entrepreneurial nature of an SE, including business philosophies, operating practices, and strategies, is often influenced by entrepreneur traits and characteristics (Smith, 2017). Entrepreneurship in Uganda is mainly necessity rather than opportunity driven (Abaho et al., 2017; Mayanja et al., 2019). Most SEs in Uganda are informal and based on necessity, and entrepreneurship is primarily a by-product of poverty and a lack of accessible formal employment (Lakuma et al., 2019). There is a need for entrepreneurial leadership strategies in SEs in the formal sector (UNCDF, 2020).

Block et al. (2017) asserted that necessity entrepreneurs have limited growth aspirations given their recourse to entrepreneurship for self-employment and survival at minimal cost, often characterized by tax avoidance. Available skills, client contacts, personnel, and capital investments at start-up influence strategic choices, locking firms into a strategic approach, particularly for necessity entrepreneurship that constrains innovation. In Uganda, in addition to SE owner capabilities, other success factors identified include access to capital and digitization (Buyinza et al., 2017; Lakuma et al., 2019).

Low product, process, and organization innovation levels, low competitiveness, and informality characterize Uganda (AFDB, 2017). Minimalistic entrepreneurial strategies, low education, lack of cash flow management, poor managerial skills, competence at the level of the entrepreneurs, and limited network activities environment hamper MSE growth (Kappel & Never, 2017). A lack of professional management techniques among high- and mid-level managers limits organizational efficiency and thus the ability to operate at scale. Skills gaps are also common (ANODE, 2018).

Nkundabanyanga et al. (2020) found that consistent with extant research, firm characteristics such as size, age, and innovation predicted firm survival of financial services firms. Opportunities for access to financing are increasingly available in Uganda (FSDU, 2017), and networking opportunities allow SMEs to leverage opportunities to borrow and securitize their movable assets with financial institutions. SMEs should create internal and external sectoral strategic alliances for backward and forward linkages to

facilitate product innovation and continuous business process improvement (Abaho et al., 2017).

An entrepreneur recognizes and seizes opportunities for innovation, often through EoI (Kuckertz et al., 2017; Shamsudeen et al., 2017). Feranita et al. (2017) cited the increased reliance of SEs on collaborative innovation to overcome resource limitations. Network-based innovation strategies that exploit data on consumer patterns and behavior offer some mitigation for entrepreneurs afraid of risk (Ferreira de Lara & Regina Neves Guimarães, 2018). Abaho's (2017) study, set in Jinja, a hive for family-owned SMEs in Uganda, found that innovative thinking and relationship building more strongly correlated with SME performance than opportunism competency (Abaho et al., 2017). Jinja is a town characterized by businesses in the manufacturing sector, predominantly incumbent businesses; therefore, the results in Kampala may differ.

SE innovation often involves reconfiguring and exploiting opportunities through innovation networks to overcome resource challenges. A significant relationship between entrepreneurial networking and opportunity exploitation exists among SMEs in Uganda, with Ecologies of Innovation (EoI) significantly serving as a conduit for innovation and partially mediating the relationship. EoI are a means for SME cost-effective collaboration to address resource constraints and seize opportunities through knowledge-based innovation achieved through discovering and implementing new, competitive ways of doing business (Mayanja et al., 2019). In line with the social capital and network theories,

Lubowa et al. (2020), in their study of MSEs in Wakiso, found that MSEs utilize resources within their surroundings maximally to attain competitiveness.

Transition

The objective of this multiple case study was to understand the entrepreneurial leadership strategies that owners of small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda, employed to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. In Section 1, I discussed: (a) topic of study, (b) background of the problem, (c) problem statement, (d) purpose statement, (e) nature of the study, (f) the research question and interview questions, (g) the conceptual framework. I also discussed the operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, the significance of the study, and included a review of professional and academic literature.

In Section 2, I restate the purpose statement and explain the (a) role of the researcher, (b) research method, (c) research design, population, and sampling, (d) data collection instruments and organization techniques, and (f) data analysis. I also discuss the reliability and validity of the study. I provide this detail to justify my choice of research method and design. I further explain how I used ethical research practices during the study to ensure the protection of all participants. In Section 3, I present the findings, the results, and the conclusions of the research, apply the findings to professional practice and determine the implications for social change. Last, I make recommendations for both action and future research.

Section 2: The Project

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the entrepreneurial leadership strategies that owners of small tours and travel agencies adopt to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. In this section, I discuss the purpose of this research, the role of the researcher, the participant population, research method and design, conduct of ethical research, and data collection instruments, collection, and organization techniques. I also discuss data analysis, reliability tests, and data validity procedures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study of small enterprises was to explore the entrepreneurial leadership strategies owners of small tours and travel agencies adopted to drive innovation and sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of five SEs with fewer than 50 employees who successfully implemented entrepreneurial leadership strategies to drive innovation and sustain their businesses. Participants were owners of these firms. Quality business practices increase the likelihood of SE survival and growth in developing economies (McKenzie & Woodruff, 2017). The findings of this study provided valuable insights for SE owners into the strategies that sustain businesses and contribute to communities' socioeconomic development through job creation and an increased tax base.

Role of the Researcher

The methodology adopted for this research was qualitative. The qualitative researcher is the primary data collection instrument collecting data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon first hand (Clark & Veale, 2018). Qualitative researchers conduct interviews, code, analyze the data for themes and patterns, and draw conclusions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). My role as a researcher for this qualitative study was to (a) identify participants, (b) collect, organize, and analyze data, and (c) present the results of the research.

The qualitative researcher plays a participatory role (Park & Park, 2016) rather than a quantitative researcher's objective, detached role. Qualitative researchers build relationships with participants during interviews to understand and contextualize information to facilitate effective data collection and analysis. Qualitative researchers could potentially influence the research process and findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017) because subjectivity is inevitable (Florczak, 2017; Fusch et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers should remain conscious of the bias arising from the interpretive nature of their role. They should minimize the influence of their presumptions, biases, and values on findings (Clark & Veale, 2018) to acquire an accurate representation of the phenomenon or topic (Bengtsson, 2016). They should delineate the researcher-participant relationship and acknowledge personal biases (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

I am passionate and knowledgeable about small business management from my 5-year SE consultancy experience. This motivated my research topic but increased the

potential for bias. I worked with SE owners in Kampala, Uganda, previously unknown to me, followed the interview protocol strictly, and relied on member checking to mitigate any potential for my own researcher bias.

Participants

The choice of participants is critical to a research study with a significant impact on the study's findings. Researchers should carefully select participants who have relevant experience and information to add value to the study and are eligible. Qualitative researchers rely on participants with a first-hand experience of the phenomenon under study and must establish criteria for participants (Yin, 2018). A researcher should develop selection criteria to ensure the selection of participants whose characteristics align with the research question (Morse, 2018; Yin, 2018). This facilitated the collection of quality data to answer the research question (Bengtsson, 2016).

The eligibility criteria for the target population were participants who (a) were above 18 years of age, (b) were business owners and managers in the tourism and hospitality industry in Kampala, Uganda, (c) managed businesses that employed between 5 and 49 people with total assets between Uganda Shillings 10 and 100 million, and (d) had successfully implemented innovation strategies and remained in business beyond 5 years. MTIC (2019) defined SEs as enterprises with 5 to 49 employees with total assets between Uganda Shillings 10 million to 100 million. The rationale for the selection criteria was that 28.25% of SMEs do not survive their first year, and more than 54% fail to survive beyond 5 years (MTIC, 2019). The 5-year period is the most common time

measure (Abaho et al., 2017). The participants offered insights into the entrepreneurial leadership strategies they successfully applied to innovate to sustain their businesses.

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I searched the database at the Registry of Companies in Kampala and obtained updated contact information on the potential participants. The Registrar of Companies maintains detailed, publicly available records of local businesses by region. I also conducted internet and website searches through search engines such as Google, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

I used purposive sampling guided by the eligibility criteria to select participants. In qualitative research, it is best to select a sample from which the researcher can learn the most through purposive sampling (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Purposive sampling aids the researcher in selecting eligible participants who are knowledgeable and able to contribute to answering the overarching research question in a study (Yin, 2018). I identified five participants. In selecting the five participants targeted for this study, I considered the return of a signed consent form within allocated timelines, availability, articulation of opinions, and enthusiasm toward the research topic. Researchers should consider availability, willingness to participate, and ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Ilker, 2016).

An interviewer must demonstrate legitimacy to gain respect and build rapport. I sent a formal invitation email to explain the purpose of the study and requested their participation and consent via a reply to the email within 3 business days. After receipt of consent from a participant, I scheduled interviews via phone call and email to the

participants. The consent form contained details of the purpose of the study, conduct of interviews, the confidentiality of participants, potential risks, benefits, and the right to withdraw. The form also included a commitment to participate in a 45-60 minute audio-recorded interview, availability for follow-up questions after the initial interview, and to member checking my interpretation of the interview with participants, which could be facilitated by a letter of invitation on letterhead (see McGrath et al., 2019).

I established trust by sharing detailed information in the consent form. I emphasized the confidential nature of the research and detailed steps that I would take to maintain confidentiality and the participant's right to withdraw at any time for any reason with no consequence. I confirmed that each participant would have the opportunity to confirm my interpretation of the interview and that all materials would be destroyed after 5 years. Researchers should establish trust with participants to facilitate data collection (Anderson, 2017). Researchers usually explain the nature of the research in the informed consent document. They should assure participants of confidentiality (Lune & Berg, 2017) and the right to withdraw at any time. Access to data is essential to research and can be facilitated by building rapport and a pragmatic approach. Organizations are often concerned about the security of their confidential information and resources, and access may be limited or continuity through the proposed study period unassured (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

I offered participants the opportunity to ask questions and answer any questions participants had as part of the invitation email and at the initial point of introduction. I

offered each participant a choice of mode and choice of venue. Creating rapport with the participants, including sharing key information, is important. An interviewer should use the first interaction with the participant to persuade them of the importance of the research and to develop rapport. They should allow the participants to ask questions and raise concerns about the study or their participation (McGrath et al., 2019).

Research Method and Design

A researcher should create the best study design, carefully planning for external resources such as time, finances, and potential informants, considering that some types of data collection and analysis are costly and time-consuming. These should inform the choice of method (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). All qualitative research should demonstrate coherence in the choice and application of research design, including methods and techniques consistent with the research questions. This builds confidence in the reader by offering an audit trail to explain research steps and processes from the research question to data analysis (Anderson, 2017).

Research Method

The three standard research methods are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. A researcher's choice depends on the purpose of the study and the research question. Qualitative research is designed to understand a phenomenon from the participant's perspective and lived experiences (Carminati, 2018; Denscombe, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019), offering room for subjective analysis of the meaning of participant experiences (Savela, 2018). The qualitative approach is suited to exploring

(Giorgi, 2017) and understanding social problems or phenomena to provide rich, fresh insights into a real-life context in a holistic approach (Park & Park, 2016).

Qualitative research measures non-quantitative data such as opinions, feelings, and experiences, while quantitative research measures data in numbers (Clark & Veale, 2018). The quantitative approach is focused on objective measurement (Florczak, 2017) through numerical data (Goertzen, 2017). The quantitative researcher tests hypotheses to determine the relationship between independent and dependent variables to examine and establish relationships (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017) testing hypotheses. It is focused on 'how many' or 'how much,' rather than on the 'what,' 'how' or 'why' of a phenomenon (Lune & Berg, 2017).

This study was focused on gathering insights into the entrepreneurial strategies owners of SEs use to innovate to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The qualitative method, rather than the quantitative or mixed method, was the most appropriate for my exploratory study into entrepreneurial leadership strategies SE owners successfully used to innovate to sustain their small businesses beyond 5 years. It was not aimed at examining relationships, testing hypotheses, or analyzing numerical data to explain the success of the entrepreneurial strategies small business owners use to sustain their businesses.

Researchers combined qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study (Ogilvie & McCrudden, 2017), where either methodology on its own was insufficient to address a complex research question (Goertzen, 2017). While this approach provides

better answers to a research question, it is time-consuming (Turner et al., 2017), costly (Giorgi, 2017), and unsuitable for a time-bound study (Anguera et al., 2018). As a novice researcher undertaking a time-bound study, my study was not intended to test hypotheses; therefore, the mixed method was not appropriate for my study.

Research Design

The most common research designs adopted for a qualitative study are the case study, phenomenological and ethnographic designs (Bengtsson, 2016). The case study design provides a holistic, in-depth analysis of a real-life, contemporary problem bounded by time and place (Yin, 2018) most widely used method for academic qualitative research (Rashid et al., 2019). It is useful for researcher exploration through multiple data sources using multiple data collection methods such as interviews, documents, observation, and archives to facilitate in-depth exploration. It is the most appropriate design for exploratory studies (Bengtsson, 2016) to address the how, what, and why (Bengtsson, 2016; Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). It facilitates an in-depth understanding of a specific problem (Morgan et al., 2017) and theorizing in a broader context through comparison and contrast to determine the value and reliability of findings (Heale & Twycross, 2017). Researchers use the multiple case study design to collect, present, and analyze data across cases in an open-minded approach to achieve generalizations (Gaikwad, 2017; Gustafsson, 2017; Yin, 2018).

A phenomenological research design is useful for exploring the personal meanings of participants' lived experiences (Yin, 2018) and is well suited to research

focused on emotions and feelings. The phenomenological design heavily relies on the participant's ability to articulate experiences and suitable where researchers can immerse themselves in the lives and culture of the participants. The ethnographic design focuses on a specific group's shared culture in their natural settings (Hammersley, 2018), which is useful for deriving insights into interactions among participants in their natural environment (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). However, it is mired by obstacles in gaining access to settings to carry out the research (Hammersley, 2018).

This exploratory study was focused on the entrepreneurial strategies that SE owners used to sustain their business, not their culture. It did not entail immersion in the lives of the participants. Therefore, the phenomenological and ethnographic research designs were inappropriate for this study. I, therefore, adopted the exploratory multiple case study design, which was well-aligned with the qualitative method.

Population and Sampling

Researchers should achieve consistency between sampling and objectives (Ilker, 2016). The choice of sampling technique depends on the study's type, nature, and purpose. In qualitative research, it is best to select a sample from which the researcher can learn the most through purposive sampling (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Nonprobability sampling involves the deliberate selection of a population with the relevant knowledge of the study subject and specific essential characteristics. No set number of participants is required (Ilker, 2016). It is subjective and non-representative of a population. It is useful when generalization is not intended, for example, owing to a

large population that may not be well-defined or in instances of limited resources, time, and workforce.

Purposive sampling involves the non-random selection of a sample representative of the population to achieve the study's objective (Lune & Berg, 2017). Qualitative researchers often use purposive sampling to focus more on quality and rich data than the number of participants (Hennink et al., 2017). I used the purposive sampling method to select successful small business owners in the service industry in Kampala, Uganda, who provided valuable insights into my study. Purposive sampling is suited to and commonly adopted for qualitative research due to the emphasis on saturation compared to convenience sampling focused on generalizability (Ilker, 2016). Purposive sampling aids the researcher in selecting eligible participants, knowledgeable, and able to contribute to answering the overarching research question in a study (Yin, 2018).

The sample size for a qualitative methodology is usually smaller than for a quantitative or mixed methodology (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). There is no commonly accepted sample size; however, researchers must justify the size's adequacy (Anderson, 2017). Three participants can be used to achieve trustworthy, reliable, and valuable data (Yin, 2018). Case studies use a small number of participants, even as small as one (Gaikwad, 2017). A small sample size in qualitative research limits the generalization of findings; therefore, data saturation is crucial to achieving the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Yin, 2018). Deliberate identification of participants and emerging themes during the study inform next steps are key in qualitative research

sampling because these inform further choices in sampling to achieve rich findings (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I utilized a sample size of five entrepreneurs selected from successful small businesses located in Kampala, Uganda, to explore the research question in this study.

The population for this qualitative research study was five owners in the travel and tourism industry in Kampala city, Central Region of Uganda, who successfully innovated and sustained their businesses beyond 5 years. Kampala is the epicenter of business and industry in Uganda. 59% of businesses in Uganda are in the Central region, the bulk (29%) of which are in Kampala (MTIC, 2019), the capital city and the center of business, therefore useful for a doctoral study.

Ethical Research

Qualitative researchers are ethically obligated as social scientists to their study populations and the wider society because they delve into the lives of human beings. Researchers must act with honesty and integrity and responsibly report the data (Lune & Berg, 2017). Qualitative researchers must uphold the rights, privacy, and welfare of participants that form the focus of their studies. Researchers must adhere to ethical standards and procedures and build trust with participants to provide confidence that the data collected is authentic and rich in meaning (Anderson, 2017).

A researcher should focus on ethical principles throughout the study, demonstrating respect for the participants' autonomy, observing participants' privacy, minimizing harm, and acting calmly. Researchers involved with human subjects should

conduct their research conforming to the Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The Belmont report enshrines respect for persons, beneficence, and justice for all participants. Respect for persons applies to informed consent, beneficence to risk/benefit analysis, and justice to subject selection. Applying the principle of beneficence requires a researcher to treat persons ethically to secure their well-being (Beauchamp, 2020). Each principle applies throughout every research stage from design, development, implementation, and distribution (Friesen et al., 2017).

I conducted this study upon receipt of approval from IRB at Walden University and in compliance with the requirements of the Belmont Report, which served as the ethical foundation for this study to ensure respect, justice, and beneficence of participants. The IRB approval number for my study was 12-20-21-0983151. I withheld participants' identities, including names and codes with unique identifiers such as P1, P2, P3, and P4 for participants, and C1, C2, C3, and C4 for organizations. I removed any information that could identify the participant from all documents saved in password-protected computer folders in the NVivo 12 electronic system. While the applicability of the Belmont report to social science research has come under scrutiny in recent times owing to its foundation in medical research (van den Hoonaard, 2018), its principles remain relevant for this study. Safety and security during data collection, storage, and analysis are essential to protect participants' rights and maintain their privacy (Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers should ensure anonymity. This may be achieved by code

numbering tapes and transcripts and removing any identifying information from the transcripts (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

I did not pay participants. Instead, as an incentive to participate in the study, I pledged to share a summary of the study findings with each participant and send a note of appreciation for their participation in this research of social significance. Sharing findings may be a viable alternative that could demonstrate respect and collaboration with the participant (Collins et al., 2017).

I informed participants in the informed consent form and at the commencement of the interview that participation was voluntary and that a participant had the right to withdraw from my study at any time for any reason without consequence. Participants should give informed consent to participate and be afforded the opportunity to weigh the risks and benefits of participation (Adashi et al., 2018). I assured participants that they could withdraw in person, by phone, or via email and emphasized that any information received would be excluded from the study upon withdrawal. Participant welfare is paramount (Gillingham, 2018). The principles enshrined in the Belmont Report apply at all stages of the research, from design, development, implementation, and distribution (Friesen et al., 2017).

Data Collection Instruments

The qualitative researcher is the primary data collection instrument and plays a key role in data collection (Carminati, 2018; Clark & Veale, 2018). Qualitative researchers conduct interviews, code, and analyze data collected for themes and patterns

to draw conclusions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Florczak, 2017). Documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts are useful data collection tools (Gaikwad, 2017). While there is no universally accepted design for data collection (Fusch et al., 2018), interviews, observations, documentation, and artifacts are the most common data collection methods in qualitative research. The data collection strategy is informed by the research question and the source of data most likely to yield the best results (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

I served as the primary data collection instrument. Following IRB approval, I proceeded to collect data. My primary source of data collection was semistructured interviews guided by a prepared interview protocol. Interviews are one of the most important data sources for a case study (Yin, 2018). Interviews enable a researcher to understand the world from the participant's view (Arsel, 2017), offering an interviewer the advantage of collecting first-hand relevant data about individuals' experiences, opinions, or perspectives (McGrath et al., 2019). Dependent on the research purpose and research question (Kallio et al., 2016), semistructured interviews offer versatility and flexibility (Lune & Berg, 2017), with each interview taking its own form grounded in themes of a specific research question (Arsel, 2017). Semistructured interviews afford the researcher the flexibility to ask follow-up questions to obtain rich data (Kopp et al., 2017).

The interview guide provides direction and structure and enhances the trustworthiness of qualitative research, contributing to the study's credibility,

confirmability, and dependability (Kallio et al., 2016). The researcher should ensure that questions and the research methods are aligned to facilitate understanding of the phenomena under study (Bengtsson, 2016). An interview protocol should include a simple introduction describing the research project, an explanation of interview procedures, and an invitation to the interviewees to ask questions (Arsel, 2017). I, therefore, constructed and used an interview protocol to guide the interviews in this study (Appendix A). Each interview consisted of eight main questions (Appendix B) with follow-up questions after each main question.

I shared each participant's interview data with them to ensure accurate representation of their views, mitigate subjectivity and bias, and an editable transcript of the interview recordings to verify the information captured in Word format with tracked changes locked in to validate data and enhance reliability and validity. Researchers can achieve reliability through member checking of data interpretation and review of interview transcripts and protocols (Livari, 2018; Yin, 2018). Member checking enables participants and the interviewer to co-create data and knowledge. Participants become co-analysts and co-interpreters to make sense of the researchers' interpretations and findings during the interview (Livari, 2018; McGrath et al., 2019). Researchers use member checking for data validation involving the participants in checking misrepresentation, correcting errors, and assessing the accuracy of the data collected (Anderson, 2017) and assumptions (Livari, 2018).

I used archival records and documentation as a secondary data source, including social media, media stories, web pages, and corporate brochures, which were useful for validating participants' interview responses. This enhanced validity through methodological triangulation. As part of the informed consent, I requested access to specified categories of documents and provided assurance of utmost confidentiality and ethical practices. After receiving a signed consent form from each participant, I discussed access to documents at the initial contact point to agree on the interview details. I requested access to digital copies of any information already available to the public, such as the audited accounts, annual reports, corporate brochures, and marketing information. I also requested access to the premises for viewing sensitive documentation such as strategic, marketing, and business plans. I also relied on publicly available information such as media stories, social media, website information, and central repositories such as the Registrar of Companies.

Using archival records as a secondary data source provides the opportunity for triangulation, which validates the primary data and improves the study's validity (Fusch et al., 2018). However, reviewing additional data for triangulation can be time-consuming (Yin, 2018) and futile if the records are outdated or irrelevant. Participants may be unwilling to share information, or the company documents available may not contain rich data to find the answer to the research question. I took steps to build rapport with the participants. Assurances of the confidential nature of the research and triangulation with

other publicly available information via media, websites, and newspapers served as useful mitigants against the risk of inaccessibility or poor quality of data.

Yin (2018) proposed six sources of data: (a) documentation, (b) archival records, (c) interviews, (d) direct observations, (e) participant observation, and (f) physical artifacts. In qualitative research, triangulating data from at least three sources increases the validity and reliability of the research findings (Yin, 2018). The case study design facilitates triangulation when applied to each case under study (Fusch et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2017). Multiple sources of information and collection methods facilitate the triangulation of evidence to enhance the validity and reliability of a case study (Gaikwad, 2017).

I determined convergence between the primary and the secondary data sources and triangulated multiple data sources to achieve the credibility and reliability of this study. Interview data collection as a single strategy for data collection could raise questions of study validity and reliability owing to the potential for bias (Yin, 2018). I triangulated the data using multiple sources such as interview data, archival records, and documentation. Triangulation is a form of convergent validation (Lune & Berg, 2017) that assures procedural validity and reassurance that the researcher adopted appropriate and reliable research methods and procedures. Triangulation facilitates the researcher in generating rich field data through internal validity checks, mitigating the weaknesses of a single source (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

Documentation and artifacts may be written, oral, visual, or cultural data, including web information, public records, or personal documents. The strength of this type of data lies in the fact that it pre-existed the researcher and, unlike interview and observational data, is not dependent on human beings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). While archival records offer evidence, their validity is contingent upon documents' authenticity, accuracy, and completeness (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

I targeted four to six participants, I continued to interview until saturation occurred with the fifth participant when no new information or themes arose. Saturation is achieved where further data collection becomes repetitive, counterproductive, or redundant, with new information adding no new insight or value to the overall story (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017; Nelson, 2017). It is an accepted demonstration of quality and rigor used in qualitative research as a criterion for discontinuing data collection and analysis (Nelson, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018).

Data Collection Technique

Rigorous data collection is essential for quality and trustworthy research (Kallio et al., 2016; Kross & Giust, 2019). Data collection is essential to a better understanding of the conceptual framework. The manner of and sources for data collection require sound judgment because the analysis cannot compensate for improperly collected data (Ilker, 2016). In case study research, multiple data collection and analysis methods provide a more comprehensive, synergized view of the phenomenon under study (Harrison et al., 2017). Combining data collection methods is common in qualitative

research, with interviews and participant observation being the most common (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The qualitative researcher conducts interviews and codes and analyzes data for themes and patterns to draw conclusions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Florczak, 2017) to produce a richly descriptive report as evidence of findings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Interviews are particularly suited for studying people's understanding of their lived world's meanings, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspectives on their lived world (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Interview data provides first-hand information, and in-depth and rich data from participants on the phenomena under study, offering great insight. However, participants may fail to recollect useful information, be unwilling to share, or provide answers they believe the researcher wants to hear, which would impact the reliability of the findings (Yin, 2018).

I used the interview protocol comprised of eight open-ended questions interview questions aligned to the conceptual framework of the study (Appendix A) as a guide for interviews. I conducted semistructured interviews posing pre-planned interview questions consistently and systematically to each participant. I used open-ended questions with follow-up questions and built flexibility, developed rapport, encouraged in-depth discussion, and drew insights from participants. Semistructured interviews facilitate in-depth insights through open-ended questions to answer research questions (Yin, 2018) are the most common (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Most interviews are a mix of highly and

less structured questions. The interviewer commences with specific questions to elicit specific information from each participant. However, the bulk of the interview is informed by the encounter with the participant based on a list of questions to be explored with neither wording nor order pre-determined (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Semistructured interviews offer versatility and flexibility (Lune & Berg, 2017) to ask follow-up questions to obtain rich data (Kopp et al., 2017), with each interview taking its own form informed by common themes (Arsel, 2017). A researcher can deviate from pre-determined questions to ask relevant open-ended questions to gain perspective and understand the participant's responses (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Semistructured interviews provide a researcher with insights and facilitate a researcher in building rapport (Silverman, 2017). However, deviation may result in the researcher drifting from the objective of the interview, and loss of control by the interviewer where an interviewee is surprised by the unexpected questions. This could affect the interviewer-interviewee dynamic with a negative impact on the quality of data collected.

I posed the main interview questions and then utilized follow-up questions to obtain a detailed participant response with varying phrasing to elicit the best available response and drew out any personal experience data to enrich the information provided. Follow-up questions build a better understanding of the phenomenon under study and enrich study findings by probing. An interviewer may use probing questions to follow matter-of-fact answers and refine, change, shorten, or reword questions (Gaikwad, 2017). It is good practice to begin with the easy material and work up to the more challenging

questions to make the interviewee more comfortable and willing to share (Lune & Berg, 2017). Open-ended questions provide the opportunity for a participant to share an in-depth account of their experience (Yin, 2018) and for researchers to probe deeper (McGrath et al., 2019). A combination of semistructured interviews and handwritten notes from the interviews can provide an accurate review of a participant's data (Yin, 2018). Handwritten notes capture observations and thoughts for follow-up. Audio provides a permanent record that offers the opportunity to study voice and invaluable data such as tone, inflections, hesitation, and areas of emphasis. Audio enables the interviewer to focus on participant responses, offering more flexibility in directing the conversation; however, the presence of a voice recorder may affect the interviewer-participant dynamic with the participation of a power differential, which could be a limitation in data collection (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

I recorded the interviews with the consent of each participant, transcribed and coded each participant's responses. I requested permission to take notes and to record the interview from each participant at the start of the interview, provided assurance of confidentiality, and explained the advantages of focus and accuracy that recording provides. I conducted audio-recorded interviews, each for 45 to 60 minutes. The conduct of the interview involves recording data, writing notes, and producing evidence through transcription, verification, and reporting (Yin, 2018). Interviews may be conducted face to face, via phone, or through the web, email, or online messaging. During face-to-face interviews, the researcher must juggle listening, simultaneously recording and

interpreting the responses, managing time efficiently, and quickly rectifying any mishaps (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I conducted in-person interviews and follow-up sessions remotely via telephone and WhatsApp calls.

After each interview, I thanked the participant for their participation in this study and emphasized that there was no incentive for participation; however, each participant will receive a summary of the findings and a note of appreciation. As part of member checking, I emailed each participant my interpretation of data collected from the interview. I requested that they each review my interpretation to ensure an accurate representation of their views and to mitigate subjectivity and bias. Member checking is an appropriate way to confirm the accuracy of interview interpretation (Livari, 2018; Thomas, 2017).

I limited interaction with participants outside of interviews to maintain objectivity. I also remained mindful of the potential for researcher bias that arose from my understanding of the research topic before this study and bracketed my emotions. Interviews are prone to researcher bias could affect the validity and reliability of study findings (Yin, 2018).

During the research process, I maintained a reflective journal of my views, emotions, and observations to facilitate reflection, analysis, and distinction between subjective and objective observations. Interviewers should practice objective, mindful interviewing. They should view interviews as exhibitions of behaviors rather than experiences (Silverman, 2017). Documenting or recording data requires the observer's

objectivity, attention, and perceptivity. Inaccurate reconstructions invalidate the data. Note-taking through diarizing, self-memos, or summaries after interviews or observation aids memorizing and contextualizing. Keeping a record of the interview aids the development of themes, follow-up interview questions, and data analysis. Researchers' attention to words and context for each response improves reliability facilitating accurate coding beyond the topic (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

Qualitative research carries an inherent risk of bias (Harrison et al., 2017), given that the researcher is the primary collection instrument. The interview data collection approach is often presumptive and subjective (Silverman, 2017). Researcher perceptions and interpretations become part of the research. Data quality depends on a researcher's ability to reduce bias and validate interpretations of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Researcher bias can be mitigated (Bengtsson, 2016). A reflective stance in case study research mitigates qualitative research's inherent subjectivity (Anderson, 2017). Self-journaling enables reflective thinking of events and experiences during the research process (Harrison et al., 2017; Morse, 2018). Self-journaling may include observations, intuition, emotional responses to interviews and emergent information (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017), assumptions, biases, and relationships to the study that could affect the study (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Data Organization Technique

Data organization techniques enable researchers to compile, disassemble, and organize data collected in a study (Yin, 2018). Compared to quantitative researchers who

measure numerical data, qualitative researchers record data as opinions, feelings, and experiences, code the information, and determine themes and patterns (Clark & Veale, 2018). I recorded the interviews with an audio recorder with automatic verbatim transcription from audio to text functionality. Mindful transcription improves the credibility and reliability of the interview transcripts and analysis of interview data mitigating the risk of subjectivity. A transcript reflective of the essence of the interaction, including moments of pause and overlaps, facilitates robust analysis of interview data (Silverman, 2017). Transcription may require independent proofreading to verify content accuracy (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019), which could be time-consuming and costly.

I converted the interview recordings to password-protected computer folders. I loaded the data onto NVivo, a user-friendly electronic system that I used to organize the data into codes and themes. Coding software tools are useful for organizing and managing massive amounts of data from different sources and are particularly appropriate for data derived from interviews. However, while coding software eases analysis, it does not replace the need for researcher thought, application, and responsibility for generating or choosing themes (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

I compiled and arranged the data in an electronic database as Yin (2018) advocated. This may be achieved by removing any identifying information from transcripts and digital code numbering (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). I concealed the participants' identities, including names and detailed descriptions, and coded them with unique identifiers such as participant P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, and allocated each

participant a folder labelled with a code. An effective storage and retrieval system eases tracking data use, systematic analysis, and documentation and facilitates replication and retention of data after completion of the study (Lune & Berg, 2017). Proper use of data organization techniques aids data gathering during a research study. Computer databases may be prepared for categorizing, sorting, storing, and retrieving data for analysis. Collecting and storing multiple sources of evidence comprehensively and systematically is an important case study step (Gaikwad, 2017).

I stored and secured all raw data on a password-protected hard drive with restricted access to myself and locked in a safe to ensure confidentiality and privacy. I will store the files for a minimum of 5 years, after which I will shred all hard copies and delete electronic copies from all drives. Qualitative researchers should ensure participant anonymity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in a case study consists of critically examining the research data, categorizing it, and tabulating it to analyze real-world experiences (Bengtsson, 2016; Silverman, 2017; Yin, 2018). A timely data analysis ensures the validity and accuracy of the writing, account, and transcription (Silverman, 2017). In qualitative research, data analysis is usually inductive and simultaneously conducted with data collection. Themes provide insights and valuable information as part of the analysis (Nelson, 2017). Through thematic analysis, suitable for case study research, the researcher identifies common

patterns, assigns them names, refines, and adjusts them as the analysis progresses (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Percy et al., 2015).

Arsel (2017) emphasized the evolving nature of thematic analysis advocating an iterative approach between conceptualization, data collection, and data analysis. Yin (2018) proposed the following approach for qualitative data analysis: (a) compile, (b) disassemble, (c) reassemble, (d) interpret, and (e) conclude. He emphasized the iterative nature of this process, involving moving back and forth between phases to facilitate proper analysis and interpretation.

I compiled, transcribed, and loaded the transcribed interview notes, my researcher notes, and documentation collected onto the NVivo software. I used the software to process, summarise, code, and organize the data. I coded the data by assigning codes to specific sentences, paragraphs, or sections relevant to the research question. I compared participant responses, assembled thematically similar text, and arranged data based on emergent arguments. I identified and listed my top 10 observations to facilitate my pattern recognition analysis as Clark and Veale (2018) advocated. Data analysis involves summarizing, categorizing, and ordering meaning using description to facilitate analysis and interpretation of evidence and comparison. Analysis and researcher review of interview transcripts provides a more critical interpretation than searching for predetermined categories (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

Percy et al. (2015) proposed a step-by-step analysis process as follows: (a) review and examine data collected or contained in interview transcripts, journals, field notes,

records, and documents for meaningful information, (b) guided by the research question highlight what is relevant, (c) eliminate unrelated data and store separately for future reference, (d) identify sets of data and code them, (e) develop connections and cluster related sets of data to identify patterns, (f) follow this process for each transcript constantly compare and contrast the major concepts across transcripts, (g) throughout the analysis process extract data relevant to a specific theme and include under the corresponding theme, and (h) categorize the identifiable themes that provide an answer to the research question.

I disassembled the data by identifying similar narratives and grouped and assigned each category a code. I continued coding collected data until I attained data saturation. Silverman (2017) and Yin (2018) proposed an inductive approach to analysis and coding to inform conclusions from the data collected.

I reassembled the information and grouped the codes into categories based on keywords identified in SEM conceptual framework and key topics from the study's literature review to determine significant patterns in the data and the emerging themes or patterns. This enabled me to form interpretations and conclusions of the collected data (Yin, 2018). Analysis may be improved by the researcher's review of interview transcripts in which participants' expressions of subjectivity may elicit deeper meanings and invite a more critical interpretation than scanning for predetermined categories (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

I explored the reassembled data and emerging themes to facilitate understanding and interpreted the data to inform a new narrative guided by Yin's (2018) definition of good interpretation as complete, fair, credible, accurate, and new. I identified repetitions of themes, trends, and patterns to arrive at findings for the study. Researchers identify patterns to interpret the participants' responses regarding a problem or issue and to identify emerging themes from the collected data, to enable data saturation and enhance the study's validity and reliability (Yin, 2018).

I concluded by formulating key statements on the findings of a study based on the interpretation of the reassembled codes and the emerging themes, calling for future research to cover any identified gaps (Yin, 2018). I examined the resultant themes against the conceptual framework for this study, the SEM model, to develop the study findings grouped into the following categories: (a) entrepreneurship, (b) innovation, (c) the SEM, and (d) innovation in SEs in Uganda to answer the research question.

As a final step, I critically analyzed the study findings and the emerging themes and patterns to answer the research question based on the SEM model, the conceptual framework, and the literature review. I made recommendations based on the findings from the study. I related the findings to recently published studies, the conceptual framework, and the general body of the literature. I checked for agreement or disagreement and further compared the resultant themes with recent, similar studies. I checked each theme against correlation to literature and the conceptual framework.

Reliability and Validity

Standards for rigor differ for qualitative and quantitative research (Florczak, 2017). I used archival records and documentation as a secondary data source, including media stories, web pages, social media, and corporate brochures, to enhance validity through methodological triangulation. I determined convergence between the primary and the secondary data sources and triangulated multiple data sources to increase the validity of this study. Researchers can achieve credibility and reliability through member checking of data interpretation and review of interview transcripts and protocols (Livari, 2018; Yin, 2018).

To triangulate the data, I used multiple sources of information such as interview data, archival records, and documentation. Triangulation is a standard method employed by qualitative researchers using multiple data collection methods to establish credibility and internal validity (Florczak, 2017; Merriam & Grenier, 2019) and enhance the validity and reliability of a case study (Gaikwad, 2017). The creation of a database of all documentation in an evidence chain emerging from fieldwork will support the procedural validity of the research (Yin, 2018).

Qualitative researchers use descriptive vividness, methodological congruence, analytical preciseness, theoretical connectedness, and heuristic relevance to achieve rigor. A thorough review of interpretations ensures credibility and validity. Clear and descriptive statements about setting, culture, and period permit transferability of findings across contexts and explain how the results relate to the research question (Levitt et al.,

2017). Interpretivism prioritizes understanding human behavior over predicting and generalizing causes and effects (Carminati, 2018).

Validity

Validity is factual accuracy ensured through careful selection and rigorous application of the most appropriate method to answer a given question (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). The validity of findings is paramount so that data represent a true and complete picture of the constructs under investigation (Park & Park, 2016). Internal validity relates to the trustworthiness of the researcher's account evident in descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical aspects such as methods, procedures, and presentation of data collection and analysis. External validity relates to the generalizability of the research addressing aspects beyond the research process and immediate context. It includes the extent to which the findings can withstand scrutiny and the extent to which any value judgments made by the researcher are legitimately part of the analysis (Nelson, 2017).

I provided a detailed description of the context of the case study, including detail on research ethics, data collection, sampling technique, and the process of data analysis. Qualitative researchers use descriptive vividness, methodological congruence, analytical preciseness, theoretical connectedness, and heuristic relevance to achieve rigor. Textual authenticity, clarity, and precision are evidence of validity (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Rich descriptions obtained from first-hand researcher experience are necessary to inform understanding of the real-life world of the case under study. Replication of qualitative research is unlikely to yield the same results, yet that does not invalidate findings because

multiple interpretations may exist for the same data. To establish dependability, researchers should determine the consistency of interpretations against the data collected (Alsharari & Al-Shboul, 2019).

I methodically adhered to the data collection and analysis techniques following the interview protocol and interview guide comprised of well-structured questions to which respondents can accurately respond. I sent each participant an editable transcript of the interview recordings to verify the information captured in Word format with tracking of changes enabled. The appropriate measure should be informed by the researcher's appreciation of what needs to be measured and awareness of what can be reliably measured (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018).

Credibility. Triangulation and data saturation provide means for researchers to establish credibility (Mazerolle & Eason, 2018). Given that qualitative research samples are small, purposively selected statistic generalization is not possible. Credibility may be achieved through member checking to ensure the accuracy of the choice of words and interpretation. I emailed each participant my interpretation of the collected data from the interview and requested each for review to ensure an accurate representation of their views and mitigate subjectivity and bias. Member checks involve presenting tentative findings back to the participant to establish the correctness of the researcher's interpretation (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) and check for misrepresentation (Livari, 2018).

Confirmability. Confirmability is a demonstration of researcher objectivity achieved through a high level of transparency and description of data collection (Kallio et

al., 2016). Confirmability in analyzing the frequency of themes and words used in the interview transcripts. I enhanced confirmability through methodological triangulation using semistructured interviews, archival records and documentation, reflective journaling, and member checking to verify the accuracy of data interpretations. An ample number of participants would be necessary for the interview to reach data saturation. I, therefore, ensured data saturation, appropriate sample size, and triangulation to improve the credibility of my findings.

Transferability. Transferability is the extent to which a researcher can transfer the study's findings to similar situations. It is future researchers rather than the original researcher who determine transferability. Thick description through the presentation of rich, direct quotations, researchers' own words, descriptive phrases, or experiences conveys a sense of the participants and their environment. These descriptions justify interpretations adopted and are an indicator of rigor, providing the basis for consideration of applicability to other times, places, people, and contexts (Anderson, 2017). Rich, thick description contextualizes the study for readers to determine the extent to which a situation matches the research context, therefore, whether findings can be transferred.

I provided a detailed description of the interview data to allow readers to make informed decisions about the suitability of applying the findings to other cases. Providing rich, thick description allows readers to determine how closely matched the situations determines transferability (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I methodically adhered to the interview protocol data collection and analysis techniques. I conducted member checking,

methodological triangulation, and data saturation but left it to future researchers to determine transferability.

Reliability

Reliability relates to consistency. Qualitative research carries an inherent risk of bias (Harrison et al., 2017), given that the researcher is the primary collection instrument. Data quality depends on a researcher's ability to reduce bias and validate interpretations of the phenomenon (Yin, 2018). In qualitative research, reliability is grounded in the researcher's adoption of widely accepted data collection and analysis methods within the research community. This entails rich and meaningful descriptions of the phenomena under study. Participants may attach different meanings to the phenomena experienced; however, this is not evidence of unreliability (Collingridge & Gantt, 2019). Bias can be mitigated (Bengtsson, 2016).

I shared with each participant my interpretation of data collected from the interview via email after the interview and requested that they each review my interpretation. This is important to ensure accurate representation of their views and to mitigate subjectivity and bias. Researchers can increase the reliability of data collected through member checking of data interpretation and review of interview transcripts and protocols (Livari, 2018; Morse, 2018; Yin, 2018). Member checking involves presenting tentative findings back to the participant to establish correctness (Merriam & Grenier, 2019), checking for misrepresentation, correcting errors, and assessing the accuracy of

the data collected (Livari, 2018) to confirm the correctness of the researcher's interpretation.

Transition and Summary

The objective of this qualitative case study was to explore the entrepreneurial leadership strategies owners of SEs use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. In Section 2, I discussed the purpose of this research, the role of the researcher, the participant population, the research method and design, conduct of ethical research, and data collection instruments, collection, and organization techniques. I also discussed data analysis techniques, reliability tests, and data validity procedures. In Section 3, I presented a brief overview and a detailed analysis of my results. I included recommendations for professional practice, implications for social change, suggestions for future research, and research conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the entrepreneurial leadership strategies owners of small tours and travel agencies adopted to drive innovation and sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I collected data using semistructured interviews of between 40-60 minutes, follow-up questions triangulated with secondary data from corporate archival records such as certificates of incorporation, reports, brochures, office files, and online information from influential online travel agents such as Tripadvisor and Travelstride, social media pages, and press releases. Additionally, I observed staff in the work environment for three participants for an average of 25 minutes each.

I attained data saturation at the fourth interview and conducted one more interview obtaining no new information. I relied on follow-up questions via telephone and member checking to clarify my views and confirm my interpretation. All the collected data was stored and analyzed in NVivo 12 software following Yin's (2014) 5-step process: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting the data, and conclusion. Upon thematic analysis, I developed the study findings, which answered the central research question. I validated my study findings against recent studies, literature, and the SEM model, the conceptual framework for this study.

I identified and discussed five themes: (a) customer-centricity, (b) owner-driven strategy, (c) strategic management of resources, (d) collaboration and partnerships, and (e) online marketing with related subthemes.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this study was: What entrepreneurial leadership strategies do owners of small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda, adopt to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years? I collected primary and secondary data and applied methodological triangulation to multiple data sources, including interviews, observations, archived documents, websites, and social media pages. I identified and invited 12 small tourism businesspeople via email to participate. Nine firms expressed interest; however, two were ineligible and were excluded. Two participants did not respond to confirm interview participation.

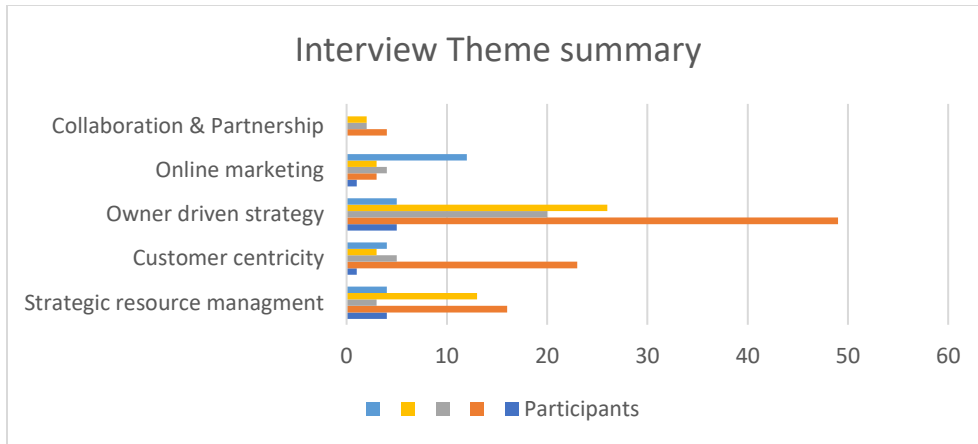
I interviewed five owners whose businesses had existed between 7 and 20 years. I conducted data analysis using NVivo12 software. I transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and coded the transcripts. I relied on NVivo software intuitiveness to eliminate redundant codes. I followed Yin's (2014) guidance to disassemble the codes and looked at emerging patterns to group the codes and generate themes. The summary of the thematic analysis process is indicated in Appendix C.

Themes

I identified and discussed five themes: (a) customer-centricity, (b) owner-driven strategy, (c) strategic management of resources, (d) collaboration and partnerships, and (e) online marketing. A summary of the themes I identified from the interview data is reproduced in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

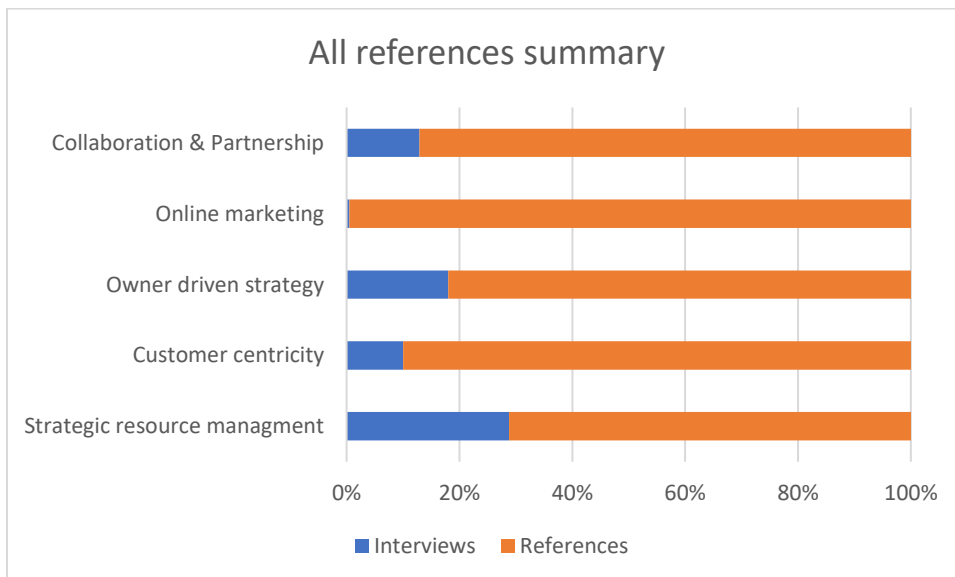
Interview Theme Summary



A summary of each theme coverage from all the multiple sources of data is reproduced in Figure 3.

Figure 3

All References Summary



Customer Centricity

OECD (2020) found that innovation provides tourists with new products and experiences, enhancing the quality and efficiency of tourism services and processes and driving customer demand. Innovation is crucial to respond to tourists' changing needs and critical for firm competitiveness in the tourism sector given its seasonality and, therefore, the uncertainty of demand. Innovation may involve a combination or conversion of material assets or configuration of existing resources (Drucker, 1985) characterized by a significant difference in a product, process, or combination of both that is new or improved and availed to consumers by the firm (OECD/Eurostat, 2018).

All the participants said that customer needs were at the center of their strategies and innovation driven towards creating the most memorable experience focusing on the type of product and quality of service they attributed to their success in a highly competitive, fragmented market in Uganda. One of the participants attributed their innovation success to a focus on authenticity and unique Ugandan experiences such as a chimpanzee habituation experience that allowed visitors to spend whole day a whole day observing them (Villa-Clarke, 2021).

Highly competitive market contexts and demand uncertainty stimulate creative marketing and innovation in tourism SMEs (Nguyen et al., 2021). Tourists have options and are better informed about the alternatives aided by technology in general, the internet, and specifically for the tourism industry, social media. They have high bargaining power, therefore, and are more demanding. P5 stated,

Because we are a small boutique company that really allows us to have the details, the personal touch, and the flexibility in the kinds of itineraries we serve instead of insisting the customer takes our choice. The team, especially the tour guides, are with the clients throughout the trip. I get to know the clients and get to know what their interests are.

P3 stated,

When you come to the office, we want to understand what your interests are, not just selling to you something. We do proper communication then we also do incentives for our clients. Our thing is service and we do our very best to deliver this service.

P2 stated that as travel agents, they focused on the human touch that clients cannot experience from direct online services. They emphasized that they sold convenience and obtained the best deal for the client to meet their desire. P4 stated that they offered clients free advice, additional tours including city tours and shared stories to promote Uganda and enrich the journey to a client destination. The findings align with Ha et al.'s (2018) assertion that innovation performance and delivery of superior value are borne from product development responsive to customer demands and expectations.

Tourism firms operate under demand uncertainty and unpredictable macro-environmental conditions (Hall & Williams, 2019). To react to uncertainty, tourism SMEs innovate to reduce barriers to growth and support firm performance (Verreyne et al., 2019). While uncertainty presents a challenge to firm growth, it also drives

innovation. The study's findings confirm that the competitive nature of the tourism sector in Uganda is a significant driver of innovation amongst tour and travel agencies because customers demand the highest quality of service.

Firm and market characteristics, degree of competition, and firm size influence the propensity to innovate (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018). OECD and Eurostat (2018) found that the success of firm innovation was determined by both internal and external enablers or inhibitors. These include (a) innovation inputs, (b) firm characteristics and (c) external environment beyond the control of the SME. External entrepreneurial enablers are single, distinct, external circumstances, and market conditions central to the results of entrepreneurial action (Foss & Klein, 2020) that trigger new ventures regardless of the entrepreneur type (Davidsson et al., 2020).

The tourism industry is highly customer centric and experience driven. It is also partly driven by customer ratings and brand loyalty which demands continual innovation. The study findings align with these views and indicate that customer needs drive the tours and travel sector. The participants identified the key drivers of innovation: a competitive, highly customer-centric sector as the most significant driver, followed by opportunity and change. Innovation is primarily focused on improving customer experience and meeting their needs.

The temporal nature of demand impacts firm performance (Williams et al., 2020). Tourism activities are characterized by seasonality, perishability, intangibility, and, therefore, uncertainty, increasing the pressure for tourism SMEs to innovate across a

diverse range of innovation types (Nguyen et al., 2021). P4 stated that, “Tourism is and can also be very uncertain. We work majorly three, six months out of 12 months in a year.”

Verreynne et al. (2019) found that the simultaneous flow of production and consumption of services that places the tourism consumer as a co-creator facilitated by social media aids real-time agility and responsiveness resulting in innovation. The perceived uncertainty of the tourism industry requires adaptive behavior and facilitates opportunity seeking and innovation among tourism firms.

P4 said that innovation made the company competitive; therefore, they innovated to distinguish themselves and capture opportunities. P1 observed that a firm must be different to succeed. P3 said that without innovation, a business cannot survive and added that they continually added different things to their packages, including destinations that Ugandans, their primary clients, had not been to.

All participants continually customized packages for their customers, particularly on price and product offerings ranging from the traditional safari programs to the niche products such as community and eco-tourism and agri-food tourism. P1 and P4 offered their customers bumper sales by taking advantage of ownership of hotels to provide accommodation as part of the packages. P1 introduced niche products such as urban tourism, including tours of key cultural sites, and added agri-food tourism, including private chef lessons. P4 offered luxury accommodation in the national parks that allowed chimp lovers to live a day in the life of a chimp, enhancing their experience.

These study findings align with the views that the tourism sector's competitive nature and the consumers' unique role as cocreators of their desired experience spark constant innovation to gain or remain competitive. The participants, owners of small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, innovated continually to drive competitiveness even past the start-up phase of their businesses. This is largely driven by the business's competitive nature and the clients' ever-changing demands for unique experiences.

Customers possess high bargaining power. Coupled with the seasonality of demand and the substitutability of the product offering, the tours and travel agencies tend to be highly innovated; however, they are driven by the pull of the market rather than proactively disruptive. The nature of innovation is incremental, mainly based on exploitative activities. The agility afforded by size provides flexibility and nimbleness to exploit resources compensating for the slack resource advantage enjoyed by larger firms (Grimmer et al., 2018). The participants all demonstrated agility in making decisions and changing direction for advantage. This is particularly evident in exploitative activities.

Exploitative Activities

The Schumpeterian (1983) entrepreneur innovates to disrupt, cause or drive change in an existent market, leveraging resources and is inclined to exploratory activities in contrast to the Druckerian entrepreneur who exploits rather than causes the change (Stefan & Bengtsson, 2017). Exploitative activities facilitate incremental rather than disruptive innovation (Felicio et al., 2019) for firm survival (Rod, 2019). Exploitation is favored to improve firm performance and efficiency because of its short-

term nature, reduced risk, and uncertainty. It occurs through the further penetration of existent rather than new (Wenke et al., 2020). The study findings align with these views. Innovation across all five participants was incremental, exploiting existent capabilities and resources to seize identified opportunities. While the entrepreneurs were notable risk takers, the risks taken were primarily to penetrate existent markets and improve products rather than radically innovate. Innovation was centrally around marketing, organizational, and process changes with product development.

Product innovation includes introducing new or repackaged products that may be improved significantly in characteristics or use, including sustainable tourism (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018). Acorn Tourism Consulting (2020) asserted that Uganda's greatest opportunity is to invest in attracting highly-valuable adventure and leisure tourists. The interests of these groups include safaris, immersive local experiences, hiking, birdwatching, ecotourism, and community-based cultural tourism, which Uganda enriched with natural resources and iconic wildlife is well matched to offer.

P3 developed new product offerings suited to their primary corporate client, including wellness activities and team building, combining safaris and adventure with wellbeing. P5 offered high-end luxury packages suited to its client profile looking for luxury destinations, including the introduction of flying safaris to improve the experience of sight-seeing and comfortable travel using a chartered plane. P5 expanded operations from two to four countries in the region to increase the opportunity to enrich the

experience with diverse activities, tour sites, and high-quality accommodation suited to its destination clients interested in holidays and adventurers. She stated,

As a start-up, someone advised me when I started out that if I was going into tourism, I had to sell both Uganda and Rwanda otherwise I would struggle given few people come to Uganda only and that category was already overserved by the competition. Rwanda was low-hanging fruit. However, now post COVID-19, I am changing because of the growing opportunity in other markets.

Process innovation involves new or significant improvements to production or delivery methods such as back-office functions of tourism firms, mobile ordering, self-order kiosks, and new reservation systems to enable fast and convenient ordering (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018). P4 leveraged the strategic location of its hotels to create a unique ecotourism experience, which was well-received by environmentally conscious and philanthropic clients. Villa-Clarke (2021) referred to P4's approach to ecotourism as built on an authentic "give-back" philosophy which she noted was achieved through its Safaris Foundation set up to support and empower local communities living close to its lodges and wildlife areas. She noted that guests were charged an extra fee which was channeled back into the community. P5 introduced eco-friendly treks and safaris with strict terms against littering, use of glass rather than plastic bottles, and compliance with guidance on interaction with wildlife and flora to avoid destruction.

Acorn Tourism Consulting (2020) cited the growing demand for local cultural experiences popular among European adventure travelers seeking to experience local

lifestyles. They highlighted the opportunities for MSME providers and local entrepreneurs to attract high-value clients interested in booking directly with local tour agents that could create suitable products, offer high-value flexible itineraries, and promote themselves effectively online. All participants were cognizant of the opportunity to innovate through creating cultural experiences consistent of the traditional experiences of rural communities and authentic local experiences. P3 focused on selling the uniqueness of Uganda. She said that it was focused on client enjoyment and self-discovery while maintaining the essence of the ‘Ugandaness’ culture, which is music, drink, and fun which she incorporated into her offering. Ugandan tourists love music; the Ugandan tourist loves barbeque meat and drinking. She stated,

It’s not just about gorillas—tourists want more. We should sell our country and cover each culture. I do not have many international clients, but those that I do, when I pick you up the first day or the last day. I take you out if your time allows. I do a city tour, take you to Ndere Centre for the cultural performance, you eat the food, we tell you about the Ugandan culture. By the time you leave you know a lot about Uganda.

The tourism industry was one of the worst hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, with a reported 99% drop in international air travel (Ahebwa & English, 2021). Due to pandemic-related shutdowns, tour operators suffered about 80% business loss, estimated at 30.4 million US dollars (Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities [MTWA], 2020). Bookings recorded by tour companies and operators increased eleven-fold between August 2020

and March 2021 (MTWA, 2021). Uganda reopened to international travelers in October 2020 and is on the road to recovery with nearly triple growth in local tourists from an estimated 28,000 to 83,000 (Kiva, 2022). The growth in domestic tourism and the recovery in international tourism presents a significant opportunity for tours and travel businesses. The participants of this study seized the opportunities arising from these growth trends.

Sigala (2020) found that tourism companies innovated by redesigning experiences and tours to restart business due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This aligns with this study's findings. The pandemic triggered innovation across all the participants to ensure continued relevance and survival. With the government lifting of lockdowns, P4 invested in high-end safari vehicles tailor-made for comfort, including WIFI and high-end refrigerators fitting to attract and cater to their targeted high-end international clients. P1 adopted digital apps as a means for sales and marketing focusing on domestic tourism and the lower-end customer compared to the previous focus on high to mid-range customers. He stated,

Before the emergence of Covid, our biggest clientele was Asia and Western Europe. But when Covid came, we switched to domestic tourism, where the position that we had created earlier helped us to get the biggest clients to move with us. I decided to downsize my profit margins for customer growth, that is serve more clients rather than have a few high-end ones and drove delivery through technology.

The findings of this study are that in the travel and tourism industry, innovation does not necessarily spark creativity. This aligns with views in extant literature such as (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018). Marketing innovations including online marketing, are mainly incremental, a modification of the existing and easily copied. Innovation is crucial to enhancing the survival and competitiveness of tourism SMEs (Nguyen et al., 2021). The distinction between innovations is often blurred (Ng et al., 2018; Verreyne et al., 2019). Travel and tourism firms tend to combine various types of innovation, leveraging capabilities for synergy to maximize benefits, predominantly non-technological innovations and organizational and marketing innovations, and may sometimes leverage the technology of their suppliers.

All participants were involved in service innovation related to product, process, organizational, and marketing methods. The study findings were that marketing innovation was the most common innovation enabled by social media and was significantly the most common innovation followed by organizational innovation. Process and product innovation were significantly less prevalent. Creativity was limited in all the innovations.

Organizational Innovation

Organizational innovation is evidenced in management or internal organization changes or departure from traditional processes, business practices, and structures, including allocation of responsibility or change in task procedures. Organizational innovation was the second most common innovation that the participants leveraged,

particularly to maintain lean, cost-effective operations and to deliver better services to customers. P5, who initially offered transportation services leveraging their existing fleet, opted to lease vehicles as a cost management initiative and ceased to maintain their strategic physical location in the center of the city. Instead, the owner focused on leveraging digital means for communication and interaction with clients suited to the higher-end, foreign digital-savvy clientele.

Like P3, P5 innovated in the human resource structure, adopting a lean structure following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The business retained only the owner, and all other services, including marketing and accounting, were outsourced. P3 changed the remuneration structure to include a small retainer and commission structure, where staff could work with other firms and leverage the office space and equipment at a fee to enable the firm to retain the physical location, which was critical for their targeted clientele. She introduced a cost-share model and flexible working arrangements.

She stated,

One of my staff is not good at writing, yet writing is critical, but he is good outdoors, say with ticket errands, and has a great attitude towards life. His work ethic is outstanding. I decided I would not want to lose him. I pay him a small monthly retainer, then top up for additional work delivered. When I returned after COVID, I realized if I pay monthly salaries, it's going to be hard, and you don't want to work with people, and then you are not paying them. So, we sat down, and I said I don't want to lay you off, but things are like this. But let's work this

way, I can keep a portion to pay rent. I challenged them and said the company may not give you everything that you need; what else can you do for yourself. I gave them the flexibility to do other things allowed them to use the office for that with no charge. I introduced a retainer fee and then a top-up for the stories. I give them a commute and lunch allowance.

All the participants leveraged technology to serve their clientele for sales and marketing. P1 moved away from its traditional approach to sales and marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic and built digital apps. P2's early investment in technology as part of its focus on distribution facilitated access to key networks to provide bespoke travel services as an efficient one-stop travel service provider for ticketing and other travel needs, including tours and business conferences.

Product Innovation

Following the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants focused on domestic tourism. The focus on domestic tourism aligns with the observations of researchers, Acorn Tourism Consulting (2020) noted that domestic tourism was increasingly valuable and mitigated the effects of seasonality. P1, P2, P4, and P5 shifted from a focus on international tourism's traditional approach. P4 ventured into ecotourism in line with the growing international trends to attract a niche clientele passionate about the environment and social issues.

P5 expanded the region of operation to include other countries where post-Covid restrictions were less, and it was easier to book longer trips given their clientele were

interested in other regions. They changed the strategy to include agency relationships with other tour agencies in the region. For example, participant P4 entered a destination management relationship with firms in the UK and US to capture sales by taking on clients on their principal's behalf. They organized their operations to such a professional quality to grow their market share, as evident from the recognition and positive independent reviews.

All participants enjoyed a first-mover advantage from seizing opportunities ahead of the competition. P3 focused on deepening relationships with the potential base of over 1000 staff employed by its key corporate client to offer individual and group packages for its departments to sustain itself. P5 focused on high-end luxury clients adopting a highly niched, differentiated service primarily focused on international and foreign resident clients. P2 focused primarily on Ticketing and handling the travel needs of its clientele, including groups such as country netball teams, and meeting their other related tourism interests building good relations with key tourism stakeholders, increasing demand for services. They built a niche in ticketing and related travel needs.

All the participants focused on a multi-regional approach, commonly Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda, in addition to Uganda, to capture more clients and tapped into gorilla trekking. This aligns with the Acorn Tourism Consulting (2020) report that regional multi-destination packages are the most popular among tourists. They all offered tours to the most popular destinations, including Kibale Forest and Queen Elizabeth National Park to the west and Murchison Falls and Lake Albert to the northwest.

However, P4 innovated a product offering to focus on chimps rather than gorillas, creating a niche experience, and focused on Jinja, a hub for adventure tourists who were a large part of his clientele in a move away from parks and wildlife. He stated, “Jinja is becoming an adventurous place, it is growing. You can do quad biking, kayaking, rough streams, horse riding, go to the source of the Nile, bungee jumping. Now, that helps my bigger picture goals.”

Post the COVID-19 pandemic, P1 has increasingly focused on northeast. P5 initially focused on market deepening in Rwanda, which was suited to her clientele of luxury, holiday clients focused post covid on market penetration of Kenya and Tanzania. P1, P4, and P5 focused on international leveraging the availability of resources and award-winning status because they were able to satisfy the demands of this clientele. Ireland et al. (2003) encouraged entrepreneurs to explore new opportunities to grow and sustain their businesses. Recognition of opportunities requires alertness to and active search for potential business opportunities and information gathering on new ideas on products or services (Cho & Linderman, 2020). While creativity is a key facet of entrepreneurial behavior (Bercu & Lupu, 2020), there is very limited creativity in small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda.

Innovation is incremental rather than radical, with exploitative rather than exploratory activities. This aligns with Felicio et al.’s (2019) assertion that incremental innovation favors a standardized routine and exploitative activities. The findings indicated only minimal creativity from P4; however, even this was limited to the

exploitation of available opportunities that had simply not been leveraged, owing mostly to the expensive nature of ventures, such as sustainable tourism. In the tourism industry market competition spurs innovation but not necessarily creativity (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018).

Innovations are easily copied. The advantage lies in innovation with VRIN resources not easily replicated, which sustains advantage. Therefore, the literature review and participant responses support the theme of the centrality of customer centricity but differ from the tenets of the SEM model because creativity is not evidence of strategic entrepreneurship in small travels and tourism businesses in Kampala, Uganda.

Online Marketing

Service innovation is a means to add value to customer service. It is mainly incremental, may be technology-enabled or not in areas such as human resources, marketing, and distribution. Marketing and technological innovation are the most common innovation types in tourism SMEs, particularly marketing (Hall & Williams, 2019), which is important to drive customer demand and competitiveness (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018).

All participants had websites with P1, P4, and P5 particularly well-maintained active websites. These three firms were notably the most well-recognized and awarded firms. This demonstrates, as suggested by Acorn Tourism Consulting (2020), that tourism firms should have a professional website, as it is the ‘public face’ of their businesses and a vital tool for business in the travel industry. The centrality of the website is attributed to

the fact that it is widely used among independent travelers and is a key consumer decision-enabling tool that presents an opportunity for tour operators to make a good impression.

Social media facilitates the exchange of travel information globally between users through electronic word-of-mouth through sharing of travel experiences who wield great power with their online ratings and opinions. Influencers endorse and promote travel destinations on sites, including Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Tripadvisor is also viewed as social media for Tourism players. Findings from previous studies indicated that Facebook is the most widely used platform, followed by Tripadvisor, Twitter, YouTube, and then Instagram (Chu et al., 2020). The findings align with the study findings however differ on the use of Tripadvisor, which only P4 and P5 leveraged, while YouTube was not commonly used.

All participants leveraged social media platforms and utilized tags and links to provide specific details catered to a specific client type. However, P1, P4, and P5 consistently implemented a social media strategy. Amongst the three participants, Twitter was the significantly preferred platform of choice by over 80%, followed by Facebook and then Instagram. When P5 first started her business, she did not leverage social media and focused more on international EXPOS. She later developed an understanding of the value of the various social media platforms to inform her marketing strategy. In her view, one size does not fit all, and Facebook serves her mid to higher-end targeted clientele.

The website is also a good source of information and detail for a potential client who can then make contact. She stated,

Instagram is very good for visuals and interest but not the conversion of sales because it is dominated by younger, less monied groups. Twitter and LinkedIn are time-consuming and not ideal for hands-on involvement in client engagement and safaris. Twitter is very fast-paced and requires a personal touch. It is a very good place to generate interest but not for closing out a sale and is the most labor-intensive. While Facebook and LinkedIn are not as labor-intensive, LinkedIn in requires the generation of content and an impressive profile to gain credibility so it is ideal as a long-term strategy.

P3 leveraged WhatsApp, useful for client engagement and connection, to build and maintain a community during the Covid-19 pandemic. She stated,

We built a WhatsApp community. Even during the pandemic, this group stayed with us. We do ads online on Instagram, Facebook, and on Twitter. At least every day we post on Twitter and Instagram as well as three times a week on Facebook.

According to Acorn Tourism Consulting (2020), “Independent travelers tend to book tours using online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Tripadvisor.” P2, P4, and P5, the more successful businesses focused on international clientele and were notably highly rated by independent reviewers. The observation aligns with findings that P4 and P5, who received excellent ratings online from Tripadvisor, were highly recommended for excellent service by international clients and respected sites such as Travelstride. These

firms leveraged these ratings as customer certification to support their brand strategy to attract international and foreign resident clients. At the time of the study, P4 and P5 received excellent reviews on Tripadvisor. P5 was ranked as a Top ten company by Travelstride rated for its 100% excellent online reviews of the quality of guides, transport, food, lodging, and activities. Travelstride is a travel experience reviewer endorsed by top brands, including Chicago Tribune, Washington Times, New York Times, Los Angeles Tribune, and Boston Globe.

Online marketing strategies are easily replicable and do not singularly sustain competitive advantage. Marketing innovation is hinged on the existence of a strong brand supported by strategic management of other resources such as knowledge and teams for advantage. The level of creativity attained is dependent on the quality of the team, brand, and owner.

Strategic Management of Resources

SEs rely on internal assets for competitive advantage; therefore, entrepreneur appreciation of the strategic value and management of firm resources is key. Resources leveraged for competitive advantage are heterogeneous and immobile compared to the resources of a competitor. Wernerfelt (1984) asserted that competitive advantage lies in heterogeneity and immobility. Heterogeneity is achieved in how resources are bundled, the extent of diversity, and immobility arising from private ownership (Wernerfelt, 1984). The participants bundled resources in distinct combinations not easily replicable based on VRIN resources facilitated by the uniqueness of their owners' vision. The participants all

attained immobility arising from private ownership of key assets or uniquely positioned themselves to maximally leverage infinite resources to which they had access or, in the case of tour guides and knowledge, access to resources owing to unique positions of advantage in the industry or from first mover advantage. Therefore, the literature review and participant responses support the theme that strategic management of resources is central to strategic entrepreneurship and aids innovation.

A firm's internal resources are the foundational factor of sustainability. Firm-level resources, particularly valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources facilitate competitiveness with a resultant competitive advantage and are critical for innovation (Barney, 1991). In the labor-intensive tourism industry, the quality of human capital is critical for tourism firms (Hall & Williams, 2019) and is a decisive factor in innovation performance in tourism. It includes education, skills, and training acquired by workers both on and off the job (Nguyen et al., 2021). Intangible assets, including a firm's collective knowledge and capabilities, are invaluable assets that are scarce and often difficult to imitate (Teece, 2019). P1 stated that, as a company, they deployed continuous innovation as their key resource for continuously creating new products on the market.

The study findings indicate that critical resources are grouped into firm-specific resources and sector resources. Firm resources, particularly intangible assets, are the most critical for innovation for tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda, particularly the intangible assets. The most essential resources noted in order of priority were knowledge,

high-value partnerships and networks, and brand. The most significant tangible assets were a high-quality team, physical assets such as technology, including the know-how of digital apps, and a diversified group structure. The scarcity of the physical assets and the financial capital facilitated P1, P4, and P5 to adopt inimitable innovation approaches owing to the VRIN nature of the resources.

All the participants leveraged resources, tangible, and intangible, for innovation however the advantage lies in innovation with VRIN resources that are not easily replicated, which sustains advantage. They leveraged internal and externally available resources such as the infinite natural resources, value chain players such as tour guides, and firm-specific human resources, most notably owner capabilities for strategic management of resources, knowledge, information, online communities, and brand. The capabilities of the human resources, expertise, and knowledge of the industry provided unique competencies which served as VRIN resources, with unique combinations that were difficult to imitate.

Resources may be firm-specific, including capabilities (Imran et al., 2019), assets permanently or semi-permanently owned or controlled, and collective organizational skills. Resource coordination and management are as important to competitive success and survival as identification of the resources (Teece, 2019). Leveraging capabilities such as bundling resources is a creative and entrepreneurial capability (Ireland et al., 2003). Owner capabilities are a possible source of proximate market and relational advantage for

the SE (Kearney et al., 2018). SE owner capabilities amassed from years of experience and knowledge are a means to innovation for advantage (Makate et al., 2019).

P4 stated,

We have been around for a long time. I leveraged the knowledge base. I started from the bottom up, I started as a sweeper, as a cleaner, a sweeper, then an office messenger, I became a tour guide. That gives you a chance to understand the value of everyone around the chain. I never did anything else, just tourism so that is the amount of knowledge that I have accumulated. I am always engaging clients, marketing, and writing.

In all five cases, the owners are a critical human resource. In all the cases, the owners were hands-on, passionate Ugandans who were travel enthusiasts with a wealth of knowledge and hands-on experience. They were the drivers of strategy and innovation. Accumulated experience in conducting business activities and available financial resources offer resource advantage, which could also arise from access to affiliate firms within a group and facilitates partnerships and collaborations. P5 stated, “For me, the business comes from a passion for travel.” P3 stated,

I love to travel. I switched from law to tourism. I love travel, I am passionate really about travel. To me business is a passion, it will survive because you are passionate about it. Not because the trends are good or because the money is coming but it is the passion that is going to keep you there and it is the passion

that has kept me in tourism even amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and all other challenges.

Grimmer et al. (2018) found that in retail SEs, firm performance was positively related to resource advantage, including up-to-date industry information and financial capital. All participants boasted a core, loyal client base and well-liked brand as evident from websites and social media. They all possess strong brands built off a track record of delivery and excellent service. They all hold members with key local tourism bodies that serve as certification of professionalism and quality, and all but P2 have won awards for excellence.

P1's business won several awards in 2019 and 2020, including recognition for a world travel award, premised on growth, responsible tourism, and level of social responsibility, including the number of persons employed and contribution along the value chain. It also received awards and recognitions for quality tour operator services both in Uganda and Africa. P4's firm has also enjoyed several awards over the years, and P4 holds a highly valued personal brand which translated into a strong brand for his company. The strong brands ensured these firms were firms of choice. P4 and P5 own particularly respected brands that translate into trust, as evidenced in the customer reviews and independent reviewers. Both come very highly recommended. P2 stated,

I am successful because I have a good name. We have a lot of information, a lot. We have all the airline information. We can consolidate and give a client additional information. Client recommendation, repeat clients, you can't stay in

this business without them. I want to give people an opportunity to see and love nature, I will still do it on a low budget. I know I have planted a seed. You test me, and then if I pass the next year, you are, like I am, glad to continue with you.

P3 stated,

We get the new clients but almost everyone who has traveled with us has come back. We have worked with our key corporate client since 2017. We added tourism to their package, and they really loved it. We discovered that for team building, they just go to a hotel, so we sold them the aspect of tourism. People started appreciating their country and asking for honeymoon bookings in the country. So, we also added that to our packages and extended it to other countries and other key corporates.

P1 and P4 leveraged their group corporate structure for financial and human capital to build synergies and operate efficiently, leveraging economies of scale while also utilizing their financial capital maximally to invest. Financial capital also enabled these firms to build partnerships and strategic alliances. All five firms invested in competitive remuneration for their staff. P4 stated that with good pay, you could attract and retain good quality staff. All the firms have built sufficient strategies to leverage the infinite natural resources available to the sector. They are all members of key tourism bodies that provide them license to operate leveraging naturally abundant resources, including wildlife, scenery, culture, and historic sites.

Sustained competitive advantage arises from executing a unique value-creating strategy that other firms cannot duplicate (Barney, 1991), aided by ownership, and strategic deployment, of valuable, rare, inimitable (VRIN; Grimmer et al., 2017). VRIN resources support innovation and facilitate differentiation and a defensive strategy (Mabhungu & van der Poll, 2017). The views are aligned with the study findings. P1, P4, and P5 possess and effectively combine firm-specific resources to build advantage and preference with key players in the value chain, including the customers and suppliers of labor such as tour guides, for great advantage.

P4 leveraged its Group structure to maintain a lean resource, offer competitive pricing, and utilize highly skilled and trained staff to deliver excellent customer service. The strong personal brand of the owner, combined with deep knowledge and passion for Tourism, highly networked both internationally and nationally, provided access to sector resources, international clients, and partners to elevate the firm's status, which boasts several awards. Many social media followers on Twitter was then leveraged for sales. This built legitimacy for the firm and resulted in goodwill that has brought great success, particularly in its innovation towards building an ecotourism brand, positioning it for success in the future. The strategic location of the hotels owned within its Group structure allows for a unique, authentic wildlife experience based on immersion in the life of primates, positioning it away from the usual gorilla trekking activity.

Positive ratings on respected sites such as Tripadvisor or Travelstride are a vital firm-specific brand resource that offers an advantage. As Chu et al. (2020)

acknowledged, positive word of mouth on brands via sites that assist consumers on a site evaluate options can be an effective marketing tool to build awareness and drive purchases. P5, highly rated by customers and independent reviewers, enjoys a preferred brand that continues to attract its preferred niche international and foreign resident clients willing to pay for a differentiated, luxury product. P1 has leveraged its owners' background training in engineering to invest in technology and leverage the competitiveness that digitization offers. They leverage the investment in technology across their group structure that includes strategically located hotels in Kampala and a high tourist influx region to serve clients better, at a cost-effective rate enabled by Group structure synergies. This, combined with its award-winning status, has allowed it to position itself for advantage.

All five owners cited knowledge gained from travel and benchmarking, for example, attending international and regional tourism events such as EXPOs and other entrepreneurship initiatives, as key. P2 possesses deep expertise in ticketing and travel business accumulated over ten years, resulting in a loyal base enjoyed from first-mover advantage. Its unique presence initially in business cities and regions, including Congo and China, facilitated differentiated service, while its investment in technology that other players cannot afford allowed it to build partnerships. It possesses unique partnerships with key sector players in Sports, allowing it to focus on innovation for key clientele at a profit. This has sustained the business.

P3 boasts loyal, repeat corporate clients, particularly with one large corporate for whom it is a preferred provider with 80% of their tourism and leisure activities. The first-mover advantage it enjoyed serving this client with over 1000 staff whose individual needs it now meets has driven its profitability. Innovations are, however, easily copied, and creativity is limited.

The first resource owner may enjoy a first-mover market advantage and potentially bar new entrants or secure a position advantage for an incumbent business in product innovation (Wernerfelt, 1984). The advantage lies in innovation through VRIN to maintain or gain an advantage. Great advantage also lies in first mover advantage from the firm that first gets ahead with the new product or service gaining and retaining a customer's loyalty, usually through the uniqueness and quality of the experience. Resources are critical to attaining this.

Managerial and workforce skills are vital to leveraging internal resources and distinguishing between SMEs' performance (OECD, 2018). Divisekera and Nguyen (2018) found that the quality of human capital in Australian tour firms impacted product and organizational innovation. Firms can utilize publicly available resources such as the internet, wildlife, or culture combined with firm-specific resources supported by competencies of Management and ownership for unique advantage. The existence of knowledgeable, often multi-skilled staff with the capability to perform dual roles, such as tour guides and drivers, customer service, and salespersons, were present for all the five participants.

Information and communication technology (ICT) aids organizational innovation by facilitating the organization and sharing of information and knowledge, for example, on destinations, accommodation, and services. ICT also facilitated efficient service delivery across the tourism value chain, and reengineering of operations such as back-office, online booking, and e-business impacts process innovation (Singh, 2021). P5 confirmed that they recently relaunched their website and kept innovating. P5 commented on leveraging the internet,

It is very important that you are on the internet. When I was still writing for myself, someone advised me that Google picks things that are unique and relevant. So, I write creatively about my travel experiences. I write unique content, and then it shoots up. That is how I started getting clients for Rwanda. The internet is available, so I taught myself a lot of stuff. There are people who will shop only on social media. If you have no other ways of acquiring clients, the internet is really your best.

P1 commented on leveraging technology. He stated,

Before 2020 and the start of Covid, we were doing sales and marketing more traditionally in how we reach out to our marketing bases and all that. So, when Covid came, we started building applications to reach many people. You just get the application, book into our hotels, you book all that on your phone and you get everything down from one platform. Where you just say you want to have a trip, get an application, book a hotel all on one interface so that every person can use

it. It is user friendly rather than waiting for the traditional marketing methods. So, when the COVID-19 pandemic happened, we had to figure out what do we do now since we were not about to market direct. We pushed the sale of those applications to all the magnitudes of people who can now still see our visibility. We moved fast while competitors waited for the pandemic to end; now we have an advantage.

Funding is a critical input for the innovation of processes (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018); however, it must be combined with financial discipline. All five firms leveraged financial capital and continually took effective cost management measures, including competitive remuneration for their staff to drive performance with clear deliverables to ensure a return on investment. P1, P4, and P5 exhibited a culture of financial discipline and management. P4 and P5 retained the services of a qualified accountant, and both indicated that they received a monthly salary and did not utilize firm resources for personal or any other businesses.

P4 stated,

I have earned a salary from the company for the past 18 years. I don't go to the firm when I have my personal problems. At every end of the month, I am paid a salary. For a business to grow the discipline of the entrepreneur is very important. It's easy they say for you to grow wealth, when you do you first start by looking for a source of income, second you save as much as possible, the third invest as wisely as possible but fourth which defeats many people is lifestyle. So, it doesn't

matter how much you save, or how much you invest. If your lifestyle is not right, forget it.

Owner-driven Strategies

Entrepreneurial capability is critical to the survival and competitiveness of SEs (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). Owner-managed enterprises are entrepreneurial, practice a horizontal leadership style, and have a direct role in innovation as ideas generators (Ng et al., 2018). Imran et al. (2019) found that strategy and innovation are owner-driven in small tours and travel businesses in Kampala, Uganda. The participants were all seasoned leaders who influenced their businesses' strategic direction, motivating their teams and stakeholders to achieve goals.

The CEO's style has the most significant impact on whether a firm undertakes exploitative activities, while the organizational innovation climate most greatly influences exploration (Zuraik & Kelly, 2019). Acton et al. (2019) encouraged positive resonant leadership to motivate team members to exploit opportunities. Interactive leadership is essential for SMEs and critical for collaboration and teamwork. A resonant leader drives positive energy and teamwork towards a goal. Resonant leaders create an SME enabling environment for learning and development and generating new ideas due to openness facilitating opportunity identification, exploration, and exploitation (Mayanja et al., 2019; 2021b). This was evident in the study findings.

Entrepreneurial Culture

Innovativeness is evident in generating new ideas, innovative products or services, and experimentation achieved through proactiveness in the anticipation and response to future market demands to enjoy a first-mover competitive advantage, supported by risk-taking through adequate investment in new ideas or ventures (Singh et al., 2021). An enabling, shared culture of innovation, proactivity, risk-taking, and understanding of the importance of innovation facilitated the continuous pursuit of innovation (Mazzei, 2018).

Managers should focus on promoting innovation through proper HR management backed by policies that promote productivity, collaboration, and creativity (Mazzei, 2018). Incremental innovation is operationalized by standardization and routine aided by a centralized structure, transactional leadership, vertical communication, hierarchical relations, culture, and accountability (Felicio et al., 2019). All the participants drove performance, professionalism, and accountability supported by inclusive work practices that empowered and motivated staff toward team and co-creation. The creative approach to remuneration, including commission-based pay, flexible work hours, and routine, all served to drive productivity. P1, P2, and P5 embodied transactional leadership, while P3 and P4 were more visionary and inspirational. The findings suggest that, in this sector, no single leadership style drives innovation; however, a culture of high performance, professionalism, and customer centricity are critical to innovating for the customer.

P1 stated that the team's growth was a key measure of entrepreneurial leadership. He advised that business owners should create a business where everyone has a right to contribute to the success of the company. He stated,

If a staff member is required to deliver a certain percentage of workload, it is a must to deliver within their limits. When they are told to do an assignment, no one should have to drive them, they should know it is an obligation to deliver it. If a staff member does not achieve their goals, then they do not deserve to be on my team.

P1 stated,

I am not directly in charge of my business. My main role is to innovate instead carrying the burden of running the business which is taken over by someone else. I innovate for the businesses that I put up. I sit aside and think what we can do next. Most business owners take on all the company burdens and fail to get time to think outside the box. That is why most companies do not really innovate because they don't have the time to think. They think about what is, not what will come.

P2 stated,

What it is in the big enterprise is the same as what it is in the small ones. A professional one. If your business is not professional, then you will not have the professional market. I find people who are like me to makes sure they deliver. If I call some tour guides and I don't like them I might have the sixth sense about that

one my customers will not like I will look for the one that is appropriate for me. I often choose them myself. If I don't, something can go wrong.

P4 stated,

I wanted Ugandans to see that this has nothing to do with color. It is about striving for your goals and overcoming bias in the industry. I hope I have shown that Ugandans can do this and that I have left a path for others to follow. I was the first Ugandan to do the lodge in national parks, right? Now everybody's saying that guy was a sweeper and did this, I can also do. I do a lot of mentorships for tour companies.

P3 instilled a learning and agile culture in her team. She stated,

In our industry, you will always work with third parties. You can't do it all. When they mess us up, we make sure we still deliver for the clients because they have paid us. Blaming the third party does not help. We often notify clients of setbacks and provide a solution to make sure we deliver on our promise.

Acorn Tourism Consulting (2020) emphasized the criticality of high standards of professionalism to capture the opportunity available with the growth of European tour groups and independent international travelers that book directly using small local tours and travel agencies. The findings clearly indicate that the participants' focus on professionalism facilitates innovation for competitive advantage resulting from customer satisfaction with resultant loyalty. P5 stated that she ensures she is prompt and pays great attention to response time on pricing and the itineraries to maintain her firm's

competitive edge over others. She also drives a culture of continual improvement and feedback. She said, “I talk to every client so I can hear right from them what they thought of a trip, what went well, what did not. What needs to change.”

All five participants emphasized the importance of competitive remuneration and, with that, accountability for productivity. P1 has adopted a methodical approach to strategy and achievement of objectives. He emphasized the need for leaders to measure themselves against the achievement of corporate objectives and staff on the delivery of assignments. He stated,

All business activities are aligned and feed into each other, core values are regularly discussed along with weekly performance including sales and marketing and a 90-day execution plan is always in place for every 12 week period. This ensures accountability and empowers the leadership to stretch the business, drive innovation within a system for measuring results.

P2 stated, “If any issue is sent to this organization, it would come to me and it would be resolved.” P5 encourages a culture of continuous improvement including soliciting feedback, positive and negative from clients to ensure improvement. She continually looks at what is not working and what needs to change. She stated,

My philosophy is staff should be able to work the way I want them to work. I will train them, pay decently but require that they do their part and bring ideas to the table. They cannot think that because I am the product development person ideas only come from me. Ideas can come from them and in fact should come from

them. I should not be saddled with all the ideas and I certainly should not have to get into operationalizing innovation. Staff should use their own networks to improve and bring ideas to the table on how a product and experience could be improved.

P3 built a culture of openness and collaboration with her team. She stated,

We deal with self-interest openly. Instead of losing a staff I cannot afford, I let them contract tours personally where they make millions but provide them with what they cannot afford as a single individual, an office. In turn I have loyalty, and their services for example one helps me in running the office. I also gain buy in which is essential for delivering on our customer promise.

All participants were also passionate about the empowerment of staff. P1 and P4 attracted praises from their staff on their leadership and empowerment via social media posts. The participants are all empowering leaders who require their teams to innovate and generate ideas.

Traits and Behavior

Entrepreneurial capability is critical to the survival and competitiveness of SEs (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). Entrepreneurship facilitates innovation through the unique deployment of resources and capabilities to identify (Teece, 2019) and exploit opportunities (Esfandiar et al., 2019). Entrepreneurs are adaptive to change, responsive to threats, and take strategic risks to exploit identified opportunities to deliver customer

value. They generate ideas, are interested in self and team development, manage risks and enable innovation (Harrison et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) drives the embracing of change (Ha et al., 2018). It is evident in the: top management style, configuration of assets, innovation (Wales et al., 2020), the recurrent pursuit of and exploitation of opportunities, and consistent bold entrepreneur decision-making regardless of resource constraints, often amidst market uncertainty (Foss & Klein, 2020). The participants demonstrated this in their approach to innovation, leveraging partnerships and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

P1 credited articulation of vision and meaning, positioning through trust, clear communication, accountability for living the values and standards, and respect for the team for his firm's success. Entrepreneurs significantly contribute to a firm's dynamic capability to innovate through their own dynamism, particularly their risk and uncertainty management capacity. Learning and accumulated experience in combining resources and exploiting complementary assets develop dynamic capabilities. These capabilities facilitate awareness and responsiveness to change in the market or customer preferences informing appropriate response in the realignment of strategy and deployment of resources. Ordinary capabilities are operational and only drive firm success and survival in weak competitive environments, for example, emerging economies (Williams et al., 2020).

Dynamic capabilities aid sensing threats, seizing fresh opportunities through resource mobilization of resources and extracting value from doing so (seizing) as well as

organizational renewal and transformation. Strong ordinary capabilities are limited in value to a specific time and are insufficient to deliver sustainable competitive advantage in the face of change in the business environment (Teece, 2019). Makate et al. (2019) found in Zimbabwe that the dynamic capabilities of firm owners resulted in tactics and recombination of resources that positively impacted innovation even in the informal sector with resultant business continuity, creation of wealth, and improved firm and sector performance.

All the participants demonstrated high business acumen in their strategic thinking and decision making; however, only P4, the owner of the oldest participant firm, demonstrated dynamic capabilities. P4's business has survived for 20 years through business slumps, low demand, and industry changes. The study findings align with Teece's (2019) and Makate's (2019) view that dynamic capabilities aid organizational renewal, business continuity, and transformation.

Risk Taker. Risk is a pre-requisite for any entrepreneur and is evident in investments of time, effort, and financial resources in the context of uncertain reward and return. Industry effects can significantly influence the level of risk and uncertainty, and entrepreneurial behavior (Williams et al., 2020). Risk-taking supports innovation in an entrepreneurial organization (Singh et al., 2021). P1 stated,

Most of them are afraid to test the waters. Most of them are afraid to invest in a place they don't know or maybe try something new out. And that has really given

us a push, we try something out, if it is a good season for us then we are able to have an emergency and a breakthrough from that innovation that we have put up.

Opportunity Taker. Grimmer et al. (2018) found that planning capability mediated resources and performance enabling utilization of resources. Information is an essential component for opportunity discovery; therefore, innovation of products or services to leverage opportunity for advantage within a particular market (Shu et al., 2018). SMEs that thrive in a competitive environment learn to explore and exploit opportunities in an industry (Mayanja et al., 2021a), aided by information asymmetry, prior knowledge, experiential learning, and social networks (Mayanja et al., 2021b). All participants seized pre-existent opportunities available in the market. All five participants demonstrated that they were opportunity takers leveraging resources to exploit partnerships, networks, changes in the business environment, and in customer preference as well as needs either in niche products or areas of coverage.

P1 credited well-timed judgment for successful innovation. He stated that he seized opportunity whenever he identified it, while P4 stated that he was always searching for investment opportunities, even in other sectors. P2 stated,

There is an underdeveloped tourism market. There is still a lot of room. The thing is that with tourism it is you who must bring things together to create opportunities. If you can do that, then tourism is your thing.

All five participants identified gaps in the market and exploited the opportunity to innovate for advantage, sometimes through first mover advantage. P2 exploited the gap in

professional ticketing services delivered through investment in technology to gain a first mover advantage that secured its place as a leading provider and later exploited an opportunity for branding and marketing through sports in its partnership with a national sports team. P3 stated,

So, you need to look at how to expand the market. My strategy in this business is I have a big sustainable goal. I am not getting one client and at the end of the day to resolve my problems. I am taking it a bundle at a time.

P3 identified an opportunity to serve one major corporate client's needs for team building and later wellness to grow its revenue by deepening its market to the individual staff members for leisure and adventure. It continues to enjoy first mover advantage as a provider of choice, which sustained it post the COVID-19 pandemic.

P1 and P4 identified opportunities for partnerships with foreign players to leverage connections and gain credibility with the targeted international market and the opportunity to leverage synergies across hospitality players by investing in hotels. They both identified and leveraged the opportunity to partner with value chain players such as Miss Tourism competition for P1 to gain relevance and position for domestic and cultural tourism building cultural attaches to represent and build the love of Uganda, P1's brand serving in his words as 'a framework to sell'. The contestants serve as tour guides, sales, and brand ambassadors.

P4 leveraged important relationships built with tourism bodies and government through mentorship and social initiatives for the youth that gained him goodwill that he

leveraged for to obtain a license to operate in local communities and parks with the support of these key players. P5 identified an opportunity to exploit the gaps in service of the high-end market interested in Rwanda and Uganda, who were willing to pay a premium, and focused her strategy on excellent service.

Capabilities for identifying, managing, and coordinating resources are critical (Teece, 2019). Recognition of opportunities requires alertness to and active search for potential business opportunities and information gathering on new ideas on products or services (Cho & Linderman, 2020). P1 stated,

Among the products that we are selling that really sell, Uganda is the culture. Building off our traditions where we are raised from, that is in African culture, where you just have storytelling around the fireplace like milking the cows, you do the milking yourself, you eat breakfast with the communities. So, we really package our trips to bring that feeling of you being in Africa instead of just coming here and you stay in hotels and you just experiencing the urban life rather than the culture you are coming to experience. So that has built a stepping stone for us for all these people who want to experience their origin. Those people who want to come and experience their cradle in Africa. They come and feel that touch of Africa; they spend time in the communities, enjoy their food, socialize with them.

He further stated,

You know people just want to come and go to the national parks, go to town, and come back to Kampala. We are doing Food Tourism which no one is offering here in Uganda. And every food lover is tapping into it, where they want to come and experience the food in all these 54 tribes in Uganda. But we are running a campaign where all these guys are coming from abroad, start from Kabale, taste food like provide all that kind of food to their means. So, it is one of the innovations and it is really giving us success.

All the participants seized the opportunity to innovate by leveraging sector natural resources. P3 stated, "Tourism is that area that is low-hanging fruit for this country." P5 stated, "Uganda's tourism has not began in my opinion." All participants innovated around the growing interest of tourists in giving back to communities to venture into community tourism. P3 stated, "If we have gone somewhere, every tourist spends money. That money must benefit the least."

P5 stated,

If I am going to travel then I want to have an experience that is beyond just an itinerary. I want to learn about my community, I want to interact with the locals, talk, and maybe say a word in their language, so I want the same for others.

P3 stated,

I came up with a campaign called 'Knowing my country' to encourage Ugandans to tour their country. We developed packages for schools and corporates. We

organized school trips for the children to learn because we believed that if the children learned more about their country, they would learn to appreciate it and still love it. Most of us don't seem to really love our country and we don't know it. We developed a Knowing my country campaign that is still popular. It also built loyalty for the brand.

European package trips to Uganda are positioned at the mid-to-high end of the adventure travel market. This segment is highly competitive, and tourism firms must meet high expectations. It is a valuable market in which tour operators mark up their tours by 28% on average, as customers are willing to pay more for a high-end experience (Acorn Tourism Consulting, 2020). P5 leveraged its multi-region presence in Ugandan and Rwanda to leverage the opportunities for cheaper in gorilla-trekking permits to deliver a wholesome experience for its clients. P3 leveraged the brand loyalty from its domestic clientele to drive customer satisfaction through well-negotiated packages.

There is growing interest in the community-based cultural offer experiences that involve meeting local people and sharing their lifestyle, ceremonies, adventure activities around Jinja, and the compelling birding offer with over 1,000 species. Uganda also has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, largely untapped, with 56 indigenous ethnic groups and 45 languages. An area of particular interest is the Karamoja region, with a unique semi-nomadic pastoralist way of life, a very traditional lifestyle (Acorn Tourism Consulting, 2020).

Network Builder. Leadership plays a crucial role in forming innovation capability, which is crucial for survival and sustained competitive advantage (Le & Lei, 2019). Entrepreneurs create opportunities through cooperation within networks and partnerships (Toms et al., 2020). Entrepreneurial networks are a means to tackle resource constraints, building dependence, and connecting entrepreneurs to social resources such as information and social support. These relationships facilitate resource exchange and build competitiveness. A firm can improve resource combination and deployment, innovation, and the recognition and exploitation of opportunities through collaborative learning within the network. They reduce transaction costs and incrementally facilitate exploration and exploitation opportunities (Mayanja et al., 2021a). P3 leveraged partnerships to introduce products like gorilla trekking negotiating budget packages for groups, including schools that would otherwise not afford these trips. Consumers are increasingly looking for responsibly managed, conservation-driven destinations.

This view is aligned with the findings of the study, which confirm that it is an essential trait for successful entrepreneurs. All five participants were network builders, particularly in accessing partnerships for financing and business opportunity, collaboration along the value chain with key sector players, and critical resources. P4 stated,

I am very good at networking. If you do not have the networks that can give you the opportunity to apply your skills, you go nowhere. For the activities, I can take guys to Jinja, and they will be able to do so many activities. I am a beneficiary of

others' individual efforts. I don't have to own rafting, I don't have to own kayaking but I can work with them, make a commission out of them. But if they are not there, I also fail.

Team Builder. Leaders influence employees' behavior, performance, attitude, and motivation. In turn, this directly influences how the organization performs (Donkor & Dongmei, 2018). P1 advocated for the practice of Intrapreneurship which he described as the enablement of employees to act as entrepreneurs achieved by empowering them to think and act independently to create their own ideas. This, he argued, drives an organizational culture of ongoing innovation. P4 stated, "I have learnt to build teams. I have one of the best, I am surrounded by one of the best teams. We've done a lot of training; when you train your team, they get better." P3 stated that she really loves her team and is so open. She said, "My whole strategy is to empower others in the best way I can." In contrast, P4 stated that he was passionate about skilling people and giving them opportunities. P5 stated,

As I plan the itinerary, I advise the client that my driver is not going to drive after Seven o'clock. I am sorry. Because if someone is driving for 12 hours, that is not good for them. Also, as much as possible, I have the team involved in the business, so they understand that they are not just coming in and working and going away. I have conversations with the team, including the tour guides. I tell them the way you treat this client is going to impact him referring us more clients so this could be the end of our business or the beginning of many partnerships. I

have personal conversations to help them see that this is long-term, you need to think long-term.

P1 stated,

You know it's all in how you build your structures. For me, it is much more satisfying when I have a value chain that is functional rather than having three employees in an office who are nonperforming. So, for us to build all these teams, we create channels for them to be able to enjoy the work they are doing whether you are the manager, or the IT department, whether you are in the finance department. They have a sense of ownership of the business so they do the work to the satisfaction of their desires so that they can also get the returns of being paid.

He also said,

Strategy is dependent on leadership skills and how these were used to involve all the players doing business rather than just the directors or the CEO. So, for us to build all these teams we create channels for them to be able to enjoy the work they are doing whether you are the manager, or the IT department, whether you are in the finance department. They have a sense of ownership of the business so they do the work to the satisfaction of their desires so that they can also get the returns of being paid. All in all, it is how you build your structures. For me it is much more satisfying when I have a value chain that is functional rather than three employees that are nonperforming. At our firm, there is an involvement of

all the players to drive business rather than just the directors or the CEO. Where everyone has a chance to contribute to the success of the company, from the gateman to the team members, then also you, the owner of the business.

SEs tend to rely strongly on entrepreneur-related attributes and capabilities, including alertness, insights, and the ability to coordinate resources (Ireland et al., 2003). Isaga (2018) found in a study of SME performance in Tanzania that entrepreneur personality traits significantly influence SME performance through cognitive characteristics.

Personality traits like openness to experience, curiosity, creativity, intellect, and flexibility are associated with exploration activities that require experimenting with new approaches and creating novelty ecosystems (Christensen et al., 2018). While the participants demonstrated curiosity, flexibility, intellect, and openness to experience, their approach to innovation was largely incremental and built on exploitative activities, which were less risky.

3 participants were male, and 2 females aged between 35 to 50 years. All were founders of the businesses whose existence ranged between 10 to 20 years, characterized in all cases by informality in the start-up stages. The highest level of education among the business owners was a master's degree, one owner was a high school dropout, while two were degree holders, and one was a diploma holder. None of the degree qualifications are related to business management or tourism.

All the participants are hands-on leaders involved in client engagement, tours, or planning. P3 said that she was always personally in the field and handled their big clients

personally. P4 still works as a tour guide because he enjoys continuous learning and the opportunity to be a part of his clients' holiday memories. He stated,

I may not have been the best student, but I would grasp every opportunity to work hard and find a path for myself to achieve my goals. Tour-guiding taught me how to build relationships and to appreciate the value of networks and meeting people. Many of the opportunities that have come my way are through meetings with people who believed in me.

P5 stated,

I used to take clients down to the old park when I started, I used to do walking trips, safari trips I'd taken brochures, and I would walk with them, and they would pay me \$50 for 5-6 hours. Then, I was concentrating on product development, always looking at what new products I can add. I was doing a lot of marketing, writing, and attending an exhibition. I have been involved in product development, marketing, writing, and participated in exhibitions and visited destinations that I sell, so I have first-hand, inside information so I am able to advise appropriately and suited to my clients. So, then I am able to advise my clients sufficiently. I will know the real picture on whether a high-end lodge is only midrange and whether it is worth it. Things like that are what have helped me plan trips and deliver what clients need rather than offer them off-the-shelf itineraries. So that has been very helpful.

Resilient and Agile. Entrepreneurs are adaptive. They make decisions in uncertain business environments by learning from their experiences (Harrison et al., 2018). Entrepreneurs are resilient in the face of obstacles (Wu et al., 2019). All the participants demonstrated resilience and agility in learning which they instilled in their teams to drive constant improvement and growth despite setbacks. They all expressed having experienced various setbacks in their journey and remained determined to achieve their vision and dreams. P4 did not have clients for three months when he first started out in the tours and travel business. He emphasized the need to learn even when you fail. He stated, “I am a very determined person. When I am determined to do something, I go for it.”

P2 stated,

Success all depends on the person. It has been a roller coaster for me. I am sure if this company did not have a person like me, probably it would have closed. If you have been on the lake when the storms are really hard not many people can hold on to that ship, many of them will give up and sink.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Collaboration is an antecedent of innovation (Marasco et al., 2018). Social networks facilitate entrepreneurs in recognizing opportunities. The evolution of markets in the increasingly competitive business environment, from the traditional to networks comprised of interrelated firms, necessitates entrepreneurial capabilities ranging from

management of business relationships, strategic perspective of the opportunities available, and ability to evaluate relations to optimize value (Shu et al.'s, 2018).

According to P1, executives can foster new thinking and understanding by tapping into the strength of employee networks. He attributed the failure of many innovation programs to the separation of the innovation process from the informal networks that are critical to adapting and supporting the innovation.

O'Dwyer and Gilmore's (2019) emphasized that customer and competitor centrality is evident in entrepreneur appreciation of the value of networks. Entrepreneurs with broad, diverse social networks benefit from stronger ties to suppliers enjoying access to useful skills and information for evaluating opportunities for the creation of business opportunities (Mayanja et al., 2021a). Interactive ecosystems are central to business success and innovation (Orobia et al., 2021). While the Tourism industry is highly competitive and fragmented, particularly in the tours and travel industry, the industry is also characterized by collaboration with value chain players as no one owner can possess all the resources necessary to meet a customer's needs.

Collaboration is a critical contributor to innovation in small tourism firms enabling access to resources, including supply of skill and shared resources, knowledge sharing, and improvement of skills attained due to co-creation of solutions and integrated execution for a customer (Nguyen, 2021). Tour guides are key value-chain players and critical resources for the tourism sector. They provide a cost-efficient model of operation.

All five participants invested in relationship building though the incentives differed. P1 stated, "I rely on value chains. I create work for them. It is important to build belonging and a sense of ownership of the business for them." P4 and P5 highly retained customer-rated tour guides earning them excellent reviews on a continual basis. P4, in the infancy of its business, received negative reviews for poor customer care and innovated around retention of highly motivated guides incentivized attractively. Tour guides were a significant contributor to the expansion and brand recognition P5 received in its offering excellent safari experiences in a neighboring high destination country, rich in destinations favorable for its high-end clientele offering unique safaris. P5 leveraged its high-value partnership with highly experienced Tour guides and experts and has earned it excellent reviews. P5 employs community guides from among the local community to build a sense of ownership among the locals. He stated with regards to tour guides,

I empower them. I am putting up opportunities for them so they have a stake in the business for the most part. As much as possible is to have them involved in the business, so they understand that I am not just coming in and working and going away. I have conversations with them, I say the way you treat this client is going to impact on either him sending us or referring us more clients, so this could be the end of our business or the beginning of many partnerships.

Participants used continuous business opportunities to retain the tour guides and viewed them as partners. The guides network is particularly useful as a cost-effective model built that is more valuable for tour and travel agencies that offer continuous work retaining its

position as a firm of choice. P3 stated, “We have tour guides in each area, they don’t work for us, but they are affiliated to us. We even refer clients who are not ours to them. It keeps them happy.” P1 stated, “We picked interest in Miss Tourism Uganda because it shares the same goal of promoting domestic tourism; there is no better way to promote tourism than to partner with miss tourism Uganda.”

The network approach is growing in prevalence in tourism to generate shared value and benefit due to increased capacity to maximize value from available, deployable resources for all players (Cortese et al., 2021). It is also an effective means to minimize cost and maximize the benefit by overcoming resource constraints. Networks are largely informally built through relationships and collaboration. Networks facilitate the transfer of information, collaborative learning, and knowledge acquisition, facilitating innovation. The multi-player nature of the tourism sector demands collaboration, particularly sharing of information and knowledge to co-create the desired customer experience.

Divisekera and Nguyen (2018) found that collaboration among tourism firms positively impacted product, process, and organizational innovation in Australia. Collaboration allows firms to share ideas, knowledge, and resources to maximize performance outcomes for mutual benefits, sharing technical and commercial risks. Access to knowledge and information improves innovation capabilities (OECD/ Eurostat, 2018) and sustainability (Imran et al., 2019). The network approach facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, a pivotal resource for innovation in the tourism sector. ICT-

based tools support information collection and further understanding of the tourism market (Cortese et al., 2021).

P3 stated,

We packaged our country which increased travel now other companies have followed. They leveraged the abundance of the country to innovate for their domestic client, mostly schools and corporates. Tourism is totally a competitive space for business, and it is wide, the beauty about it is, that it is wide. We will not take all the Ugandans.

Collaboration is a critical contributor to innovation in small tourism firms enabling access to a partner's resources, access to knowledge, skilled personnel aiding the sharing of costs in product development and marketing (Hall & Williams, 2019), and the accumulation of experience through the co-production of an integrated service (Chu et al., 2020). All the participants confirmed the importance of, and further need for, collaboration to innovate. They all either owned a hotel or had arrangements with hotels suited to their clientele that enabled them to offer discounted rates. Hotels are a critical part of the value chain, and all the participants enjoyed valued relationships with hotels strategically positioned to meet the various interests of customers ranging from basic to luxury.

P2 stated,

Once you know the value of a travel agent, the travel agency is much better than even the airline. Because the airline only sells its own, it is only exposed to its

own route. But, we have networks with all the airlines. We can consolidate the information and give you more additional information.

Relational social capital, internal and external, results in shared trust that can be leveraged to minimize firm transaction costs (Ireland et al., 2003). SE innovation capabilities are shaped by collaboration capacity, particularly the owner-manager (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs can exploit relational social capital for advantage. An SE, therefore, need not own resources but could creatively deploy or access resources through partnerships.

P3 stated,

I am not doing it alone. I need collaboration to build the numbers even in the offseason. I share leads with trustworthy partners in the up times, pool clients in the low demand times so that, while profit margin of each is low, the regular delivery of customers is an investment both in the client who will come back but also with the players in the value chain. When Uganda Wildlife Authority brought buses for promoting domestic tourism, the average Ugandan could not afford the charge for tours. I negotiated with the MD to utilize their accommodation in the parks and the buses to offer a package with affordable transportation and accommodation for no more than 70 dollars. P1 stated, “Leaders should be open-minded and take advantage of networks. We rely on the value chain to build the brand. We are not known and our circle is limited.”

P4 stated,

Your business cannot grow when your country is not growing. Now that requires that, whenever you do business, you must fight for the bigger picture.

Collaborative strategy and value chain thinking. I do not have to own rafting, I do not have to own kayaking, but I can work with them and make a commission out of them. But if they are not there, I also fail.

Entrepreneurial networks link entrepreneurs with resources facilitating exchange and addressing the need for co-dependence to overcome resources achieved through collaboration and relationship building for SMEs. These networks improve learning on strategic deployment and a combination of resources. They facilitate recognition and exploitation of opportunities for both exploration and exploitation, therefore, aiding SME innovation (Mayanja et al., 2021a).

P4 boasts of strategic partnerships with agencies in the UK and the US, serving as their local destination management company, and key relationships with Tourism bodies and with governmental bodies facilitated by his social responsibility initiatives in the mentorship of youth and budding entrepreneurs. In his pragmatic approach to business, he has also trained and mentored other tours and travel agencies. P4 also stated,

I do a lot of mentorships for tour companies, up to 40% of it. If you ask tour companies that have just started in the last 10-15 years, they would tell you I have either inspired them or encouraged them to do it. The key thing is to create impact through employment because I do not have a right to complain about the lack of

jobs when I am not doing anything about it. And a lot of things, when I write, I'm believable because people see what I'm doing. So, I'm also engaging young people, young people follow me, for example, and I show them.

P2 is in partnership with a local sports federation in a mutually beneficial relationship where they sponsor the sport and, in turn, have a lucrative deal to organize all business, tours, and travel-related activities, including ticketing, conferencing, and tours, both local and international. The players serve as ambassadors for P2, wearing their branded jerseys and referring individual customers to them. As a start-up, P2 invested in a strategic partnership with a foreign firm with a local presence to break into a foreign market with a large influx of trade and business travelers to Uganda. As one of the oldest and most highly respected ticketing forms, P2 has built and leveraged key business relationships to set up in a neighboring country with a high influx of traders, maintaining a first-mover advantage.

Relational social capital, internal and external results in shared trust that can be leveraged to minimize firm transaction costs (Ireland et al., 2003). Collaboration capacity, particularly the owner-manager, shape SE innovation capabilities (Fernandez-Esquinas et al., 2017). Entrepreneurs can exploit relational social capital for advantage. An SE, therefore, need not own resources but could creatively deploy or access resources through partnerships.

The literature review and participant responses support the theme that collaboration and partnerships aid innovation in small tours and travel agencies. They are

especially important to overcome constraints to innovation through shared resources without the additional risk or cost of ownership.

Constraints to Innovation

The participants all practiced continual innovation. However, many challenges remain, including the need for government leadership to develop the sector, skills upgrading in the industry, investment in the parks and other protected areas, and a much stronger marketing effort for Ugandan tourism (Acorn Tourism Consulting, 2020). They, however, cited several barriers to innovation.

Skills and Competencies. Human capital presents a major challenge to tourism firms; due to the low qualification levels of the workforce and high staff turnover rates, staff training positively influences innovation (Nguyen et al., 2021). The participants cited quality and high turnover of human capital as a major challenge to innovation and strategy. P4 cited employee retention as a barrier. He stated, “It is painful when two years later when they have now learned, and everyone is calling them, and they no longer want or they treat your clients a certain way.” The study findings on the need for focus and skills development were reiterated by all the participants and align with the views of Ahebwa and English (2021), who noted the gaps and recommended that human resource development should be continuously pursued in the Uganda Tourism sector through training and skills upgrade to improve competence and increase professionalism. This would result in a pool of skilled personnel across the tourism value chain.

Lack of Entrepreneurial Mindset. While the literature speaks heavily to lack of access to capital, the feedback from the participants was that they innovated in accessing capital through partners, and three of the participants had no problem accessing affordable loans; however, they attributed this to the ability to demonstrate financial discipline and proper management of accounts. With regard to barriers, expensive capital was ranked 4 out of 5 barriers.

Market and Industry Factors. The most notable barrier cited under market and industry factors was the lack of sector and government collaboration. All five participants cited this as a barrier. The innovation process requires various and considerable resources that challenge resource-constrained SMEs. The participants all felt that the government and tourism bodies could significantly drive innovation with the commitment of resources, favorable policy, and increased collaboration. The increased national focus on the quality of tourism, including infrastructure, development, conservation, diversification of tourism products and services, and development of a pool of skilled players, provides a means to innovate (Uganda National Tourism Development Plan [NDP], III).

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

The entrepreneur is a decision-maker who creates benefits by using resources in a new or different way (Drucker, 1985; Schumpeter, 1983) in the pursuit of advantage (Ireland et al., 2003). The participants demonstrated entrepreneurial capabilities and strategically led their businesses to innovate for sustained competitiveness for over 5

years exhibiting strategic entrepreneurship in line with the tenets of the SEM save for creativity which was limited. The findings were aligned to the SEM as follows:

Entrepreneurial Mindset. An entrepreneurial mindset facilitates recognition, identification, and alertness to seize opportunities for competitive advantage (Casson, 2005; Drucker, 1985). An appropriate entrepreneurial mindset, leadership orientation to support identification, and exploitation of opportunities where information and economic resource is available to support entrepreneurial actions and clarify decisions with resultant innovation could mitigate resource constraints in SEs (Imran et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurial Leadership. Entrepreneurs possess superior skills in sensing and seizing entrepreneurial opportunities, creating significant value by leveraging capabilities to maximize opportunity recognition to create additional wealth. This distinguishes them from other business leaders (Ireland et al., 2003). Leveraging capabilities such as bundling resources is a creative and entrepreneurial capability largely dependent on management decisions rather than on the strength of competitor capabilities (Ireland et al., 2003) which facilitates innovation (Pucihar et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurial Culture. Entrepreneurial leaders influence others to nurture the right culture and management of resources (Casson, 2005). All the participants exhibited a learning orientation (EO) adaptive to change (Ha et al., 2018) with an inclusive, bold decision-making style that facilitated continuous pursuit and exploitation of opportunities. The prevalent culture was one of performance, professionalism, and

accountability supported by inclusive work practices that empowered and motivated staff toward teamwork and co-creation. This facilitated innovation.

Strategic Management of Resources: Resources are central to entrepreneurial innovation and competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Ireland et al., 2003). SEs rely on specific resources for advantage and exploit their potential for agility and adaptability, leveraging identity, managerial capability, uniqueness of offering, or operational context (Ireland et al., 2003). The study findings revealed that small tours and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda rely significantly on their resources, particularly the internal ones, including those cited by Ireland (2003).

A significant advantage lay in the possession of valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) which aligns with the RBT view that VRIN resources provide an opportunity for SE distinction from competitors for innovation and competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Heterogeneity and immobility sustained competitiveness which aligns with Wernerfelt (1984) with a resultant barrier to replication by competitors.

Collaboration through partnerships and exploitation of networks resulted in relational social capital which the participants effectively leveraged to minimize firm transaction costs to overcome resource constraints to facilitate innovation. This aligns with the SEM model view of strategic entrepreneurs facilitated by an entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial capability to exploit relational social capital for advantage.

All the participants demonstrated entrepreneurial mindset and leadership to set a culture that drove innovation. They habitually allocated resources to seize the opportunity with resultant product development, market penetration, or deepening. While there was limited evidence of exploratory activity, the calibre of decision and clarity of vision demonstrate alignment of the study findings with the conceptual framework of strategic entrepreneurship.

Creativity. Creativity and innovation aid firm growth and competitiveness (Schumpeter, 1983) and are key to entrepreneurial behavior (Bercu & Lupu, 2020). According to Ireland et al. (2003), creativity is a critical outcome of the other tenets of the SEM model: an entrepreneurial mindset, an entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurial leadership practices, and strategic management of the firm's resources. However, the findings of this study are that in the travel and tourism industry, innovation is largely incremental, a modification of the existing which is easily replicable and does not spark creativity. The advantage lies in the combination of resources rather than creativity.

Therefore, the study findings are not singularly aligned with the SEM save where creativity lies in the way VRIN resources are combined rather than in the uniqueness of ideas. The existence of VRIN resources is a great contributor to creative combinations for sustained advantage. Creativity is not a significant tenet for strategic entrepreneurship in small tours and travel businesses in Kampala, Uganda, and is not central to sustained competitiveness, and is not as asserted by Ireland et al. (2003) a critical outcome of the other tenets of the SEM.

Applications to Professional Practice

My research purpose was to explore entrepreneurial leadership strategies that SE owners in the travel and tourism business employ to innovate and survive beyond 5 years. Owners of small travel and tourism businesses could use these study findings to grow and survive beyond 5 years. These study findings are relatable and relevant for SE owners particularly in the travel and tourism sector. The vivid and detailed descriptions provide first-hand, insightful information and tips on successes, challenges and examples of how participants overcame them. The findings provide useful industry benchmarks that entrepreneurs, managers, consultants and trainers could apply to deepen entrepreneurial knowledge and improve entrepreneurial capabilities. Consultants and trainers in the industry such as business incubators and innovation hubs could develop a simple framework and modules to improve knowledge and understanding.

Businesses in Uganda are increasingly faced with a competitive business landscape owing to an integrated East Africa integration (AFDB, 2017). SE owners need to innovate to compete and improve business survival. The findings of this study are especially useful for SE owners in the travel and tourism sector which is highly competitive and fragmented market characterized by limited resources. The SEM model was particularly useful in drawing out strategies for management of resources to overcome a key constraint to entrepreneurship and innovation that is lack of resources. SE owners could replicate these strategies to improve their business prospects.

Entrepreneurial leadership research findings could address gaps in entrepreneur knowledge and skills (Harrison et al., 2018), potentially improve the innovation capabilities of entrepreneurs (Aksoy, 2017). My findings in this multiple case study could positively impact entrepreneurial behavior. They could contribute to an identified research gap into entrepreneurial capabilities in Uganda (Abaho et al., 2017; Lubowa et al., 2020) and improve the health and longevity of small businesses particularly in the travel and tourism sector.

Implications for Social Change

The research question for this study was: What entrepreneurial leadership strategies do owners of small tour and travel agencies in Kampala, Uganda adopt to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years? The research objective was to identify strategies to mitigate small travel and tourism business failure before they are five years old. I identified five themes: (a) strategic resource management, (b) customer centricity, (c) owner-driven strategy, (d) online marketing, and (e) collaboration and partnership.

Entrepreneurs fuel economic growth (Block et al., 2017) and could create jobs and reduce poverty within local communities (OECD, 2018). Entrepreneurship and innovation generate profit, creating value in the economic system that is shared by society and the various stakeholders of the business firms that innovate (Teece, 2019). Entrepreneurial research could improve business sustainability and economic growth

(Bercu & Lupu, 2020). In Uganda, the tourism sector was one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

SEs in Uganda are the backbone of the economy and contribute significantly to employment therefore their growth and survival could create jobs, reduce poverty within the communities in which the SEs operate. The tried and tested practices highlighted in this study could therefore contribute to sustaining the economy. The tourism sector generates employment for various segments of society, alleviates poverty, builds skills reducing inequality (Acorn Tourism Consulting, 2020). Therefore, these findings could aid recovery of the sector, the economy and could potentially drive social change.

Recommendations for Action

I identified five thematic entrepreneurial strategies that all the participants leveraged to survive in business for more than 5 years: (a) strategic resource management, (b) customer centricity, (c) owner- driven strategy, (d) online marketing, and (e) collaboration and partnership. I recommend that business owners of small travel and tourism businesses in Uganda adopt these strategies to innovate for growth and survival.

With regard to the first theme, SE owners in the travel and tourism industry should identify existent resources that could provide a competitive edge particularly VRIN resources that are not easily replicable and explore unique combinations to drive maximum yield. Based on participant responses, intangible internal resources are particularly key, including investing in, and leveraging, their brand. It is particularly

important that these SEs invest in the acquisition of knowledge and know-how, which are critical to driving their strategies.

The travel and tourism business is not exempt from customer-centricity's winning strategy. Based on the participants' responses, it is evident that the customer is not only the pull factor for innovation but is a co-creator in creating offerings that meet their needs. Small tour and travel agencies cannot rely on boiler template approaches to meeting customer needs in this business but must listen and deliver to the expectation of the customer. This will entail embedding a culture of service and professionalism, especially on quick turnaround on requests for information, itineraries, and promptness. It is evident from the participant feedback that going the extra mile to add value to a client's experience significantly increases the chances of referrals, repeat clients, and positive customer reviews, especially online.

Customers only take the time to provide reviews if they are elated with service or very disappointed. Focus on a customer entails the delivery of unique experiences that are significantly improved with the use of a highly knowledgeable, pleasant guide and a great driver. The owners must therefore pay attention to the motivation of these core staff and the front office, often the owner.

It is critical that the power of social media is leveraged by all businesses and small businesses such as tours and travel are no exception. The findings from the interviews and online reviews showed that the participants invested in driving positive messaging, particularly linking their websites to Facebook. The participants who were

very highly rated by customers in online reviews, also leveraged Twitter to engage with customers and utilized it along with Instagram for visuals to market experiences and generate interest through videos, great photography, and positive comments. The use of active, real time travel videos and photos is a particularly effective tool to capture interest. A strong social media presence is key and leveraging the personal brands of social media influencers including owners and staff is an effective strategy to drive traffic to social media pages which contain key exciting information such as tit bits on travel, interesting facts on places, wildlife and other animals.

The findings of this study indicate that the owner is the most important strategic tool available to these small entities to drive strategic thinking and embed the right culture. The owner leader's leadership style, philosophy, and behavior is the main influencer of innovation. Skills and competencies, along with the financial discipline, were noted as key constraints to innovation; therefore, owners must invest in the acquisition of broad skills, a deep understanding of the tourism value chain, and building high-value networks through relationships. SE owners should empower their staff to experiment and try new things and remunerate them appropriately. Given small businesses' financial constraints, this calls for creativity, for example, commission-based pay and exposure to new experiences to build growth and mentorship.

Based on this study's findings, the owner's ability to identify and seize opportunities is critical and should be nurtured. It is not innate but learned and leveraged off the willingness of the entrepreneur to take calculated risks. This ability is significantly

improved when an owner has built networks in the sector and therefore has improved judgment facilitated by knowledge and experience. The owners are the business leaders and must be resilient in the face of setbacks, not just at the start-up stage but continually when plans do not materialize. While knowledge and experience are critical, the investment should focus more on practical experience and learning because the findings suggested that educational qualifications were not the critical success factor at the start of the business; however, requisite knowledge allows the owner to keep the business afloat.

Based on the study findings, owners of small tours and travel agencies should drive collaboration and partnership along the value chain and with key tourism bodies. This is an effective strategy for overcoming resource constraints such as lack of access to funds for innovation and information. It is also a means to deepen knowledge and expertise by leveraging what is already available at a fraction of the cost, such as high-quality tour guides, hotels for affordable accommodation at discounted rates, Tourism bodies for training and upskilling, networks, and technology infrastructure.

High-value partnerships, such as those with the government, could directly improve the product or service offering by utilizing shared resources and tapping into ecosystems for potential clients from partnerships. However, extracting significant value will usually require each player to bring commitment, participation in broader tourism sector activities, and an essentially external-facing approach to building relevance. This also often requires social investment and giving back, for example, mentorship of other less experienced players and conservation efforts.

Owners could adopt the tried and tested strategies such as leveraging brands, social media and the value chain, effective strategic resource management. Owners of small tour and travel businesses in Uganda should read and review my findings to gain practical insights as to how they could innovate and increase their chances of survival beyond 5 years. I will share my study findings with key tourism bodies, such as Uganda Tour operators and Uganda Tourism Board, that serve as key partners for these small businesses to disseminate the information to their members and provide regular training. I will also share this with the Private Sector Foundation and with Business incubation programs that are involved in training Tourism firms to increase their chances of survival. As a trained trainer, I will offer willing partners the opportunity to conduct workshops that break down the information to suit the audiences, perhaps into short modules. These results could be disseminated via conferences, websites of key players, workshops.

Recommendations for Further Research

The first limitation is related to the small sample size. A small study sample could result in limited generalization of information, which may not be reflective across industries, regions, or worldwide. The second limitation relates to the dependency of this study on a single researcher with limited experience in qualitative research. The third limitation is the time-bound nature of the study.

I conducted a qualitative multiple case study on the entrepreneurial strategies small travel and tourism business owners use to innovate to survive beyond 5 years. I interviewed a small population of five owners limited to Kampala city in Uganda.

Therefore, my data may not be generalizable across tours and travel businesses in the rest of Uganda or other countries. I recommend other researchers broaden their scope of my study to other geographic areas and to mid-sized tour and travel agencies.

Future researchers could also consider including other small tourism businesses such as hotels and restaurants to explore the entrepreneurial strategies small owners employ to sustain business longevity. They could consider a qualitative study to explore my research question. Future researchers could also explore the research as multiple researchers in a study that is not time bound to achieve greater triangulation and increase the reliability of the study over a period that reviews innovation over a longer period.

Reflections

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program at Walden University was challenging, stressful, and sometimes discouraging, I could not have fully appreciated the impact of the program on my personal and professional life. At the start, I was certain that my work ethic and dedication to finishing anything I start would enable me to overcome any of the challenges the Residency 1 facilitators shared, and it did, but not without major setbacks. I was not fully mentally prepared for the experience that unfolded.

I changed jobs 8 months after I started the DBA program transitioning from the comfort of a flexible role to a new role in a market leader company, highly regulated entity operating with a new structure. This slowed me down. In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in new ways of working that required agility and flexibility. The

changes were overwhelming. I had been a top student until I received an unsatisfactory rating. Nothing, however, tested my resolve more than 2021. I faced the toughest challenge of my life, taking care of my beloved brother battling a terminal disease and having to cope with his eventual passing. I needed faith, friends, and family to get through, supported by an understanding committee chair.

I enjoyed interviewing the participants and conducting online media searches. I gained insight into the practical aspects of managing a small tourism business which sparked my interest in the subject of tourism. Analysis of the data was the highlight of this journey. It reignited my love of expression through the written word. My experience was insightful and informative and improved my outlook on business and entrepreneurship. I will leverage this experience to advance my consultancy and business coaching career moving forward. My mental fortitude and resilience have been tested, and my ability to persevere will be a reference point for other challenges that life may bring. I am elated to experience the journey. The journey was worth it.

Conclusion

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the entrepreneurial strategies owners of small tour and travel agencies employ to innovate to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The conceptual framework I applied was the Strategic Entrepreneurship Model (SEM) comprised of five key tenets: Entrepreneurial mindset, Entrepreneurial Leadership and culture, strategic management of resources and creativity. The findings from this study align with extant literature. Strategic

entrepreneurship is a means to innovation in SEs in the travel and tourism industry in Uganda. It is owner-driven and led evidenced by an entrepreneur's mindset, leadership which shapes culture, strategy, strategic management of resources, however creativity is limited. Strategic entrepreneurs innovate by focusing on the customer who plays a unique role as a co-creator of their experience, adopting an online sales and marketing strategy, strategically managing resources. Strategic entrepreneurship is enabled by collaboration and partnerships which offer mitigation against innovation related risk and the constraint of resources; however, a high level of financial discipline and a culture of professionalism are critical to support access.

Innovation in small tours and travel businesses is incremental, continuous due to the nature of customer demand, and often limited in creativity. Competitive advantage may be attained from first mover advantage, often from seizing existent, rather than created opportunities. However, sustained competitive advantage is attained through the entrepreneurial capability of the owner and deployment of VRIN resources. Innovation is valuable provided it is customer endorsed regardless of the level of creativity. Future and current owners of small tour and travel businesses could use this study's outcomes to survive in business beyond 5 years. This study's implication for positive social change includes the potential for small tours and travel business owners to reduce the failure rate, contribute to the economy, and provide employment for the benefit of the local communities in which small tours and travel businesses operate.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interviewee:

Time of Interview:

Date:

Position of Interviewee:

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study of small enterprises is to explore the entrepreneurial leadership strategies SE owners adopt to drive innovation to sustain their businesses beyond five years. The interviewees will consist of four to six small business owners who have successfully driven innovation strategies and remained in business beyond five years.

I will introduce myself, thank each participant for their willingness to participate in this study, introduce the purpose of the interview and advise the participant of their right to stop or withdraw from the interview at any time. I will invite each participant to ask questions, assure them of the confidentiality of all matters discussed and request permission to start. I will start the interview posing the interview questions, attentively listening, and observing both verbal and non-verbal responses including body language and pauses. I will take notes of all responses and ask probing questions to responses to elicit more information.

The questions I will ask include:

1. What entrepreneurial leadership strategies have you used to successfully innovate and remain in business?
2. How did you assess the effectiveness of your entrepreneurial leadership strategies for innovation?
3. In what ways would you say these strategies contributed to innovation success?
4. Which were the most successful innovation strategies and what were the benefits?
5. Based on your experience, what have been the key determinants within the organization and in the market for successful innovation at your firm?
6. What resources and capabilities have you successfully deployed to exploit opportunities for, and to respond to threats to, your competitiveness?
7. Please describe your leadership style and, based upon your experience, in what ways would you say this style contributed to the innovation and success of or your business?
8. What else can you share with me about the strategies you have found successful for catalyzing innovation to sustain your firm?

After each interview, I will thank the participants for agreeing to participate in this study and emphasize that there is no incentive for participation in this study however each participant will receive a summary of the findings.

As part of member checking, two days after the interview, I will email each participant my interpretation of data collected from the interview and request that they each review my interpretation to ensure accurate representation of their views and to mitigate subjectivity and bias.

During member checking, I will inquire from each participant whether they would like to clarify any matters as relate to accuracy, and interpretation. The questions I will ask include:

1. From the analysis interpretation, is everything correct?
2. From the analysis interpretation, do you see any errors or is anything misinterpreted.
3. Do you want to challenge any of the interpretation from the analysis?
4. From your interpretation what do you believe are more accurate?
5. Is there any additional information you feel will clarify the interpretation of the analysis?

I will thank each of the participants and remind them that there is no incentive for participation in this study; however, each participant will receive a summary of the final published findings.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What entrepreneurial leadership strategies have you used to successfully innovate and remain in business?
2. How did you assess the effectiveness of your entrepreneurial leadership strategies for innovation?
3. In what ways would you say these strategies contributed to innovation success?
4. Which were the most successful innovation strategies and what were the benefits?
5. Based on your experience, what have been the key determinants within the organization and in the market for successful innovation at your firm?
6. What resources and capabilities have you successfully deployed to exploit opportunities for, and to respond to threats to, your competitiveness?
7. Please describe your leadership style and, based upon your experience, in what ways would you say this style contributed to the innovation and success of or your business?
8. What else can you share with me about the strategies you have found successful for catalyzing innovation to sustain your firm?

Appendix C: Summary of the Generation of Codes

Codes	Categories	Themes
Sponsors and funders Personalities as ambassadors Tour guides and drivers	High value partnerships and networks	Collaboration and Partnership
Tour Operators Other tour agencies Tourism bodies Government	Industry bodies and players	
Agri and Food Tourism Birding Community tourism Culture tourism Eco Tourism Budget packages Price Discounts Adventure safaris High end safaris Photo Tourism	Customized packages	Customer Centricity
Covid-19 Opportunity Digitization	Drivers	
Domestic International Multi-Regional Diversified business Specialization	Company profile	Strategic Management of Resources
Expensive capital Mindset Poor financial management practices Skills and competencies Below par international standards Lack of Sector and Government collaboration	Constraints	
Brand Buildings High quality team Board of directors Technology Knowledge Foreign ownership Group structure	Firm specific	Strategic Management of Resources
Tradition and culture Buildings and structures Scenery Wildlife	Sector wide	

HR practices		
Professionalism	Culture	
Financial discipline		
Gender		
Age		
Education		
Strong Personal brand		
Hands-on leader		
Inspiring and Team leader		
Purposeful		
Network builder		Owner Driven Strategy
Opportunity taker		
Resourceful	Owner	
Risk taker		
Team builder		
Caring		
Empowering		
Inclusive		
Agile		
Determined		
Resilient		
Continuous learner		
Passion		
EXPOs		
Print and brochures	Non-social media	
Promotional Campaigns		
Recognitions & awards	Leveraging brand	
Customer certifications		
WhatsApp		
Facebook		
Instagram	Social media	Online Marketing
Twitter		
Visuals		
You tube		
Website		