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Business Planning Strategies to Sustain Hair Salons

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Business Planning Strategies to Sustain Hair Salons

by

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MBA, Walden University, 2007

BS, Georgia State University, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

March 2022

Abstract

Small businesses employ most Americans in the workforce; however, more than half of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of operation. Small business owners who lack business planning strategies are at a higher risk of failure. Grounded in the sustainable activity model, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies hair salon owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The participants comprised seven hair salon owners in the Southern region of the United States who successfully sustained their business beyond 5 years. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and reviews of organization documents and websites and then evaluated using Yin's five-step data analysis process. Three themes emerged: (a) marketing, (b) cash management, and (c) creation of a good business plan. The key recommendation is for hair salon owners to establish and implement business plans to obtain funding sources to prevent business failure and sustain future growth. The implications for positive social change include the potential for hair salon owners to increase employment opportunities and increase tax revenue to enrich the community.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my wonderful and loving family. To my ROCK, my husband, Yaquarri; his love, prayers, and support throughout this long journey cannot be trivialized. My beautiful children, Yaquarri II (Dre), Kalani, Brayden, and daughter-in-law, Ariana; their love and words of affirmation were my inspiration. My family has loved me, supported me, and been patient with me through the weekends, late nights, the tears, and several dramatic but fugacious breakdowns. I am eternally grateful. Love you to infinity!

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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 and Purpose	2
Population and Sampling	3
Nature of the Study	3
Research Question	4
Interview Questions	5
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Operational Definitions.....	6
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	7
Assumptions.....	7
Limitations	7
Delimitations.....	7
Significance of the Study	8
Contribution to Business Practice.....	8
Implications for Social Change.....	8
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	9
Literature Search Strategy.....	9
Organization of the Review	9

Sustainable Activity Model.....	10
Porter’s Value Chain Theory	15
Supporting and Contrasting Theories	18
Successful Planning Strategies	26
Business Failure in the Hair Salon Industry	61
Transition	63
Section 2: The Project.....	64
Purpose Statement.....	64
Role of the Researcher	64
Participants.....	66
Research Method and Design	67
Research Method	67
Research Design.....	68
Population and Sampling	69
Ethical Research.....	70
Data Collection Instruments	72
Data Collection Technique	72
Data Organization Technique	75
Data Analysis	75
Reliability and Validity.....	76
Reliability.....	76
Validity	77

Transition and Summary	78
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change	80
Introduction	80
Presentation of the Findings.....	81
Theme 1: Marketing.....	82
Theme 2: Cash Management	88
Theme 3: Creation of a Good Business Plan	90
Applications to Professional Practice	93
Implications for Social Change.....	93
Recommendations for Action	94
Recommendations for Further Research.....	95
Reflections	96
Conclusion	97
References.....	98
Appendix A: Permission to Use Sustainable Activity Model Illustration	135
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	136

List of Tables

Table 1 Emergent Themes 80

List of Figures

Figure 1. Sustainable Activity Model.....	12
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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses are valuable to the U.S. economy's growth and account for 99.9% of all companies (Small Business Administration [SBA], 2020). According to the United States Department of Labor (2017), 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of operation. Small business owners support local economies and substantially impact the nation's overall gross domestic product (SBA, 2018). These small businesses create two thirds of new jobs and account for 44% of U.S. economic activity (SBA, 2019). Small businesses in the United States are vital to new products, employment, and strong economic growth (Li & Nguyen, 2017). Small businesses are also significant suppliers, innovators, and sources of growth in free-market economies around the world (SBA, 2014; Snider, 2015). However, business sustainability beyond 5 years is challenging (Amisano & Anthony, 2017). Small businesses fail because of a lack of finances and resources, lack of skills, inadequate management, and insufficient marketing skills (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014). In this research study, I focused on business planning strategies that could help small business leaders to operate their businesses for extended periods.

Background of the Problem

Small business owners play an essential role in society; illustrating this point, the number of small businesses is rapidly expanding in the United States and numbered over 31 million companies in 2017 (SBA, 2020). Small businesses' viability is crucial to the economy's growth, but the number of thriving businesses continues to decrease (SBA, 2016). Many small business owners lack strategies for overcoming business-related

challenges and achieving success. Specifically, hair salon owners face significant challenges when opening and operating small salon businesses (Amisano, 2017). Because the number of sustainable companies continues to decline, it is essential to explore strategies that support small businesses' sustainability. Business leaders incorporate different planning strategies to increase low business survival rates, profit, and growth.

Problem and Purpose

Small businesses fail at very high rates (Turner & Endres, 2017). Over 50% of small business owners are unsuccessful in sustaining their businesses beyond 5 years (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). The general business problem was that some small business owners are negatively affected by the absence of business planning strategies, which results in business failure. The specific business problem was that some hair salon owners lack business planning strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore business planning strategies that hair salon owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The target population included seven hair salon owners in the Southern region of the United States who successfully sustained their business beyond 5 years. The implication for social change was the potential to expand the number of hair salons by using successful business planning strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years in operation. The ability to sustain more hair salons beyond 5 years could improve revenue for hair salon owners and provide employment opportunities for community citizens.

Population and Sampling

I used purposeful sampling for this research study. The sample was seven hair salon owners in the Southern region of the United States who have executed successful strategies to increase their business longevity. The eligibility criteria to select participants included the following: (a) be a hair salon small business owner in the Southern region of the United States, (b) have been in operation for a minimum of 5 years, and (c) have used successful business planning strategies to sustain the business. I used multiple data collection methods such as conducting semistructured interviews, performing member checking, and reviewing company documents to ensure data saturation. A more comprehensive overview of the study's population and sampling procedures is provided in Section 2.

Nature of the Study

There are three types of research methods available to researchers: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Yin, 2017). Khan (2014) described using a qualitative method research study to ascribe to a phenomenon. Conversely, through the quantitative method, researchers collect data from a population to test hypotheses about the relationships between variables and then make statistical inferences about those relationships' significance for generalizability to the larger population (Yin, 2017). Researchers use the mixed method to integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches (Yin, 2017). Therefore, mixed-method and quantitative research methods were not suitable for this study. I did not test a hypothesis about the relationships between variables. The

qualitative research method was most appropriate for this study because I explored the study phenomenon in depth.

I considered three qualitative research designs: (a) phenomenology, (b) ethnography, and (c) case study. Ultimately, I determined that a multiple case study design was the appropriate research design for this study. In a case study design, researchers can examine data types and sources to develop clarity regarding the topic area (Yin, 2017). Researchers explore a phenomenon, event, activity, process, or individual in depth when conducting multiple case studies (Yin, 2017). Using a case study research design allowed me to better understand the phenomenon of planning strategies. Researchers use a phenomenological design to explore the meanings of participants' lived experiences related to a phenomenon (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). I did not select a phenomenological design because I chose not to analyze data based on participants' lived experiences. Ethnographic researchers seek a broader understanding of culture (Rapp, 2017). I did not focus on understanding group cultures in this study. I chose a multiple case study instead of a single case to better understand this phenomenon. A multiple case study design was most suitable for this study because the goal was to explore the business planning strategies used by various owners of hair salons.

Research Question

What business planning strategies do hair salon owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What business planning strategies did you use for sustaining your business beyond 5 years?
2. What business planning strategies did you find most effective for sustaining your business?
3. How did you implement business planning strategies?
4. How did you measure and evaluate the effectiveness of your business planning strategies?
5. What key challenges did you have to overcome to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
6. What additional information would you like to share about business planning strategies to sustain your business beyond 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework supporting this study was the sustainable activity model, which was developed by Wayne McPhee (2014). McPhee's model is an adaptation of Michael Porter's (1985) value chain model who posited that value can originate from any place within the business. The sustainable activity model is a reconceptualization of Porter's value chain that evolved to consider the current impact of economic sustainability on business strategy (McPhee, 2014). This sustainable activity model includes all core value chain activities such as people, relationships, systems, ideas, and business infrastructure. Leaders can holistically identify all the business areas

that may lead to value creation opportunities. The sustainable activity model provides the structure to help guide and improve organizational business performance.

McPhee's sustainable activity model focuses on internal, resource-driven business strategies that provide value-added to core business processes. An initial component of the sustainable activity model involves focusing strategy on the practical impacts rather than the industry's issues (McPhee, 2014). The sustainable activity model, developed as a strategic management tool, aligns the firm's core resources to be strategically congruent. That is, the model helps management operationalize strategy set by the CEO so that all core processes of the business are aligned to meeting firm-specific initiatives, targets, and short- and longer-term goals. Eswarlal and Valessi (2014) noted that practical economic sustainability needs a clear vision with a strategic approach and long-lasting attention to its development, survival, and success. The sustainable activity model can be used to examine individuals and businesses (McPhee, 2014). For these reasons, I determined that the model was an appropriate conceptual framework to understand the strategies business salon owners incorporate to remain in business beyond 5 years.

Operational Definitions

Balanced scorecard (BSC): An approach to measuring an organization's performance by linking measurement to strategy (Kaplan & Norton, 2005).

Competitive advantage: The leverage that companies have over competitors due to low cost or product differentiation strategies leading to unique value propositions in the marketplace (Porter, 1985).

Value chain: Activities undertaken by an organization using internal and external resources to create new value for customers (Porter, 1985).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are ideas that are accepted as the truth without concrete proof (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I assumed that interviewees would answer the questions honestly to ensure accurate data collection. The second assumption was that conducting face-to-face interviews with multiple successful hair salon business owners was the most effective way to explore business planning strategies and, therefore, the best way to collect data for this case study.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses that can influence the results of a qualitative study (Yin, 2017). This study had some limitations. First, data saturation was limited to two data collection techniques although multiple data collection methods are typically used in a case study design (Yin, 2017). Second, I used only one method, the qualitative method. Third, in conducting a case study, I used only one research study design.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to a focus on a study's scope with multiple research barriers (Stewart et al., 2015). The first delimitation was the geographic location, which was the Southern region of the United States. The second delimitation was gathering information from successful hair salon business owners who have been in business for 5 years or more. The third delimitation was the sample size of the study.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

This study's research findings may reveal viable strategies for operating businesses for extended periods. In particular, the findings of this study could contribute to salon owners' knowledge and refinement of strategies for business sustainability. The proposed strategies may provide these business leaders with new means to develop and enhance execution plans. Hair salon owners' implementation of different business planning strategies may also increase profitability and decrease the rate of business failures.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the potential to expand the number of hair salons by identifying successful business planning strategies that owners can use to sustain their business beyond 5 years in operation. Research from this study may contribute to increasing awareness of some potential resources, planning, and critical processes to maintain hair salons' financial solvency. Reviewing and adopting this study's results could allow more hair salon owners to use the business planning strategies to thrive and integrate new hair products for customers of other local businesses. Increasing the number of successful companies in communities could increase employment and raise state and local taxes for community improvements. Furthermore, helping business owners to survive and thrive in business may lead to higher employment rates and greater tax revenue that could enrich the community.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The sustainable activity model provided a framework to explore the business problem and research successful business planning strategies that business salon owners could use to sustain their business. In this section, I review an exhaustive body of literature that includes scholarly articles relevant to the study topic and research question. I evaluate factors related to small business, business failure, leadership, sustainability, strategic planning, systems, infrastructure, and business strategies.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the following databases to find literature for the study: Business Source Complete, Science Direct, Science Direct, Sage Journals, ABI/INFORM Emerald Management Journals, and Google Scholar. The main search words and phrases I used when searching the databases were *small business owners*, *small business sustainability*, *strategy*, *salon owners*, *sustainability*, *sustainable business*, *value chain*, *sustainable activity model*, *sustainable models*, *brand value*, *brand reputation*, *business failures*, and *small business failures*. The literature I reviewed contained 267 references consisting of 249 peer-reviewed journals, 10 books, and four dissertations. Most (199) references were published between 2016 and 2021.

Organization of the Review

The literature review focuses on the sustainable activity model and related theories. After I review the sustainable activity model, I discuss factors connected to the business problem that may influence business sustainability. The literature is categorized into five sections: (a) the sustainable activity model, (b) Porter's value-chain theory, (c)

supporting and contrasting theories, (d) successful planning strategies, and (e) business failure in the hair salon industry. The purpose of this study was to explore business planning strategies business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

Sustainable Activity Model

I used the sustainable activity model as the conceptual framework for this study. McPhee (2014) developed the sustainable activity model as a sustainability tool. The sustainable activity model includes how business leaders develop a plan of strategic action that impacts change on how they interact and how value is created. Moreover, innovation concepts and processes that focus on technology, marketing, stakeholder engagement are used by business leaders to plan how a business will develop towards sustainability in a strategic-manner. McPhee posited that sustainable activity concepts help define the strategies required for effective business strategy implementation. Business leaders develop alternative ways of thinking and make revisions to strategy plans due to economic sustainability changes. The sustainable activity model originated to provide sustainability efforts inclusive of business activities and internal structure alignments. McPhee designed the sustainable activity model to support business growth and provide an enhanced strategy plan for companies interested in establishing strong businesses. Incorporating the sustainability approach can create opportunities for suppliers, eco-friendly builders, and businesses that focus on success and longevity (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 1992). The sustainable activity model concept can help improve the quality of business sustainability by creating value that supports the company.

McPhee's (2014) sustainable activity model supports business efficiency and strategy. The primary principle of sustainability is that managers use their firm's capacity to increase their economic prosperity by realigning their business models for consistency with how managers acquire, create, deliver, support, and improve their business activities (McPhee, 2014). The sustainable activity model involves focusing strategy on an organization's practical impacts to maximize efficiency and profitability (McPhee, 2014). Small business owners can incorporate the model to better understand how sustainability and failure connect to particular skill sets, such as financial, to fully grasp the firm's needs and the necessary activities to guide sustainability.

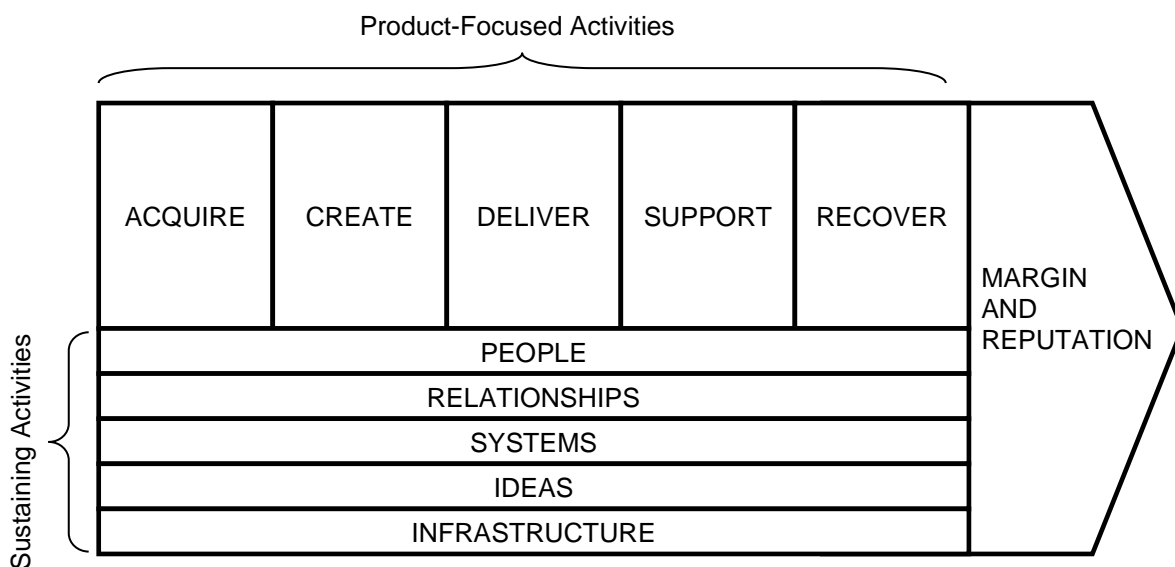
The sustainable activity model (see Figure 1) has sustaining and product life-cycle activities. Sustaining activities are not incorporated in the product life cycle but support value creation over the organization (McPhee, 2014). The combination of sustaining- and product-focused activities recognizes that sustained value and competitive advantage are created by having products, people, systems, and ideas that build a firm's infrastructure. Past events have shown that a company's value can be damaged by neglecting to address sustaining activities (McPhee, 2014). There is no evidence that failing to manage the product life cycle will destroy a business (McPhee, 2014). Therefore, the primary focus of the sustainable activity model is on sustaining activities.

Five sustaining activities support business value creation: (a) people, (b) relationships, (c) systems, (d) ideas, and (e) infrastructure (see Figure 1). According to MCPhee (2014), people can be viewed as a resource to be cultivated and managed to create an ongoing source of value. MCPhee stated that relationships involve collaborating

with stakeholders. Ideas can be created throughout the company and can resolve sustainability issues. Systems are used to develop and maintain the best operational process for a business. Infrastructure is relative to cost savings and reduced environmental impact. Integrating sustaining activities into business planning may allow business owners and leaders to create strategies to improve their chances of survival and growth. The sustainable activity model is a new business model for a more sustainable business.

Figure 1

Sustainable Activity Model



Note. From “A New Sustainability Model: Engaging the Entire Firm,” by W. McPhee, 2014, *Journal of Business Strategy*, 35(2), p. 6 (<https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-11-2013-0106>). Copyright 2014 by Emerald Group Publishing Limited. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

The sustainable activity model is pertinent to the business problem that was examined in this study, which is that some hair salon owners lack business planning

strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Specifically, the model's sustaining activities support the potential increase in the number of hair salon owners using successful business strategies. I used concepts from the model to provide insights on business planning and its adoption by hair salon owners.

The sustainable activity model reflects the impact of sustainability on a company's strategy. According to McPhee (2014), the model has three essential propositions that drive business strategy: (a) the value of an organization is based on more than just the profit margin and includes reputation, brand value, and license to operate; (b) sustainability can create value by improving both internal and external engagement and collaboration; and (c) the external impact of the company needs to be included in firm strategy and decision making. The sustainable activity model is a different approach than Porter's value chain, which creates more opportunities to impact an organization's value creation and control threats that may affect the business (McPhee, 2014). The value creation elements also provide economic value by offering services and continued collaboration and support. Therefore, the integration of the model's core strategies into internal processes improves the business. Using the sustainable activity model, I developed the research question as a way to explore and better understand planning strategies small business owners used to remain successful.

Although McPhee's sustainable activity model is similar to Porter's value chain, its process includes opportunities external to the business. The process includes

1. identifying what activities, the firm is currently doing and how they affect firm value, the environment, and society;

2. evaluating how activities can be changed or adapted to reduce negative impacts that can put the firm at risk of reduced profit margin or damaged reputation;
3. creating new activities across the model that can improve performance and have a positive impact on the firm's reputation; and
4. recognizing the limitations of the firm and identifying the activities that will require cooperation with other firms in the industry, local communities or stakeholders, and to create enhanced value for everyone involved (McPhee, 2014).

A fundamental part of sustainable development includes focusing strategy on practical impacts rather than on the industry's issues (McPhee, 2014). Implementing the sustainable activity model into business planning is applicable and may help business owners identify opportunities to influence firms' continual growth momentum.

The sustainable activity model is a relatively new conceptual design. Palmer and Flanagan (2016) stated that much of the extant research focuses on extending business models to integrate and implement sustainability activities into strategy and goal setting. Further, Ray and Mondal's (2017) study findings showed that the model enhanced innovations in technology and organizational effectiveness. Specifically, adopting a sustainable activity model lowers operational costs, impacts revenue, and provides the opportunity for firms to embrace new business approaches that could advance their competitive advantage. Additionally, Kachouie et al. (2018) posited that strategies are coordinated activities and ploys for outperforming competitors. The main objective of

using sustainable models is to identify actions that will help the firm gain a competitive advantage and increase performance. The development of the sustainable activity model was fueled by McPhee's (2014) assertion that sustainability needed a different approach to strategy. The sustainable activity model could be a helpful tool for small business owners to develop a sustainable plan and better understand planning strategies used to remain successful.

Porter's Value Chain Theory

McPhee's (2014) model is an adaptation of Porter's (1985) value chain model that posits that value can originate from any place within the business. The value chain model is used to determine the competitive advantage of an organization. Initially, an organizational leader must identify an efficient value chain that can develop with competition in the industry. Ideally, by comparing competitors' value chains, business owners can determine the differences in competitive advantages. In undertaking Porter's value chain analysis, business leaders categorize nine different activities related to strategy that directly impact activities of design, production, marketing, delivery, and opposite products. They then divide value activities into two distinct sections: necessary activities and auxiliary activities. A business is simply the sum of all of its activities, and redundant activities should be isolated and removed to maximize efficiency and profitability according to Porter. A business chain of activities is essential to create business strategies for achieving competitive advantage.

The value chain model is a lens for business leaders to better understand how to gain a competitive advantage. Porter (1985) created the value chain model as a critical

conceptual framework for business leaders to increase long-term value. The value chain can be used to target value creation across an organization's critical and supporting business activities. Porter stated that the primary activities related to producing, selling, and providing customer support for goods and services are (a) inbound logistics, (b) operations, (c) outbound logistics, (d) marketing, (e) sales, (e) service. The support activities are (a) procurement, (b) human resources management, (c) technological development, and (d) infrastructure. Porter argued that if firms' leaders increased the development of technology, firms would increase profits and sustain a competitive advantage. The value chain model is integral for business leaders to create value for products and services after gaining profits.

Porter established the value chain model as a strategic conceptual framework for business leaders to increase value. Porter (2007) demonstrated that the value chain model is a useful resource for devising a sustainable business strategy. However, change to the original model was required but would cause a challenge to implementing sustainability into a firm's value chain process. As McPhee (2014) stated, applying the sustainable activity model is closely related to using Porter's value chain where the organization's activities are assessed within each element of the model and compare how the elements can correlate with establishing additional value by reducing redundant activities.

Significantly, McPhee's (2014) sustainable activity model expands the focus of elements to include more of the impacts and opportunities external to the company. The process consists of (a) identifying what activities the company is currently doing and how they impact company value, the environment, and society; (b) assessing how activities

can be changed or adapted to reduce negative impacts that can put the firm at risk of reduced profit margin or damaged reputation; (c) creating new activities across the model that can improve performance and positively impact the company's reputation; and (d) recognizing the company's limits and identify which activities will require cooperation with other organizations in the industry, local communities, or employees to create enhanced value for everyone involved. As a result, McPhee (2014) asserted that the sustainable activity model is directly linked to adding value to business activities and a firm's competitive advantage. Implementing the sustainable activity model can encourage ways for leadership to think about value and create new ideas.

Value creation is feasible when leaders use specific business models to deliver value different from competitors. The value chain model encompasses marketing, designing, and providing services to deliver value to customers (Porter, 2007). Business leaders can use the value chain to gain competitive advantages and identify business strategies (Nada & Ali, 2015). There are different ways to configure an industry's value chain to improve the firm's strategic positioning depending on the firm's desired positioning within the industry. Yang et al. (2017) examined how leaders engage in strategic positioning to create a unique and superior value proposition by doing things differently to serve customers. Companies need a distinct value proposition for an eminent strategy (Kaya, 2015). Therefore, determining the value proposition of the product or service offered by the firm allows business owners to identify target consumers, ascertain their needs, and provide value to customers.

Business leaders should determine which activities and core processes are imperative to sustain their business. Porter's value-chain model's purpose assists organizational leaders' in identifying the top activities that would bring the most value to the company. The sustainable activity model extends the set of activities identified initially by Porter (1985), integrating the models to achieve optimum organization growth. The business strategy allows leaders to focus on all aspects of value creation activities. In turn, leaders engage internally to develop the best sustainable plan for organizations.

Supporting and Contrasting Theories

Resource-Based View Theory

The resource-based view (RBV) theory supports the sustainable activity model as the RBV has been used to better understand firms' strategic advantage and sustainability. Small business owners use different strategies to acquire resources for success. According to Barney (2014), with adequate resources, small business owners could earn significant profits. However, business owners need efficient processes to regulate and monitor their businesses (Barney, 2014). Small business owners' use of the RBV theory could lead to superior performance over time.

Penrose (1959) originated the RBV of strategic management. Wernerfelt (1984) built on the work of Penrose, arguing that the two aspects of the firm are resources and products. Wernerfelt further developed the RBV as an analytical theory for growth from the usefulness of the firm's resources rather than a company's products. A critical component of the RBV includes resources, which organizations use to create a

competitive advantage (Kurniawan & Christiananta, 2018). Resources include all physical and intellectual property owned by an organization to obtain a strategic advantage (Barney, 1991). Researchers use RBV to understand better how integrating appropriate resources and activities may contribute to its sustainability (Barney, 1991). Business owners can implement the RBV theory's tenets into their core processes through Six Sigma and process mapping to improve operations.

Business leaders use the RBV theory to understand how resources highly impact business performance. Importantly, business owners use internal resources to find ways to control outside threats (Kozlenkova et al., 2014). Business leaders use RBV theory to focus their attention on the firm's internal resources that enable the firm to assess and apply strategies that improve its business success and sustainability (Lin & Wu, 2014). Greene et al. (2015) argued that the main resources should be summarized into five categories such as physical, financial, technological, human, and organizational resources. In another study, researchers defined resources as all forms of assets, including capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, and knowledge controlled by a firm that enables the organization to plan and implement strategies for business efficiency and effectiveness (Zhao & Ha-Brookshire, 2014). Similarly, the sustainable activity model and RBV theory focus on a small business's internal attributes. However, leaders have used the RBV theory to highlight internal elements such as business skills, steady cash flow, and the ability to obtain the required capital (van Bommel, 2011). Ding et al. (2013) argued against using RBV due to uncertainty in assessing businesses' internal resources. Makadok (2001) posited a positive correlation

between business resources, capabilities, and competitive advantage, essentially validating RBV as a framework for exploring the strategies that small business owners used to succeed beyond the first 5 years of business. Examples of resources that business owners can use to achieve competitive advantage include in-house knowledge of technology, skilled employees, trade relationships, machinery, efficient production procedures, and capital (Wernerfelt, 1984). To develop a competitive advantage, business leaders have used RBV to focus on business-specific capabilities (Kurniawan & Christiananta, 2018). Small business owners with business planning skills could restructure business resources to decrease the competition.

McKinsey 7S Framework

McKinsey's 7S framework complements the sustainable activity model. Tom Peters and Robert Waterman (1982) developed the McKinsey 7S framework. Peters and Waterman (1982) indicated that organizational leaders should include developing systems and strategies to add value to the organization. The researchers combined three hardware and four software elements. The hard areas include the system, design, and structure. The soft areas consist of skills, style, staff, and shared values, which are generally difficult to manage but are considered the organization's foundations and are a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Jalagat, 2016). Even more, overseeing both the soft and hard elements are essential to maintain innovation and consistent profitability (Teh & Corbitt, 2015). The McKinsey 7S model can be used to encourage interdependency of the components for managing the successful implementation of change from a shared values perspective. For example, McKinsey 7s can be integrated

with the sustainable activity model's reputation value equation. Combining the two conceptual frameworks can be used by business leaders to evaluate how activities can affect both hard and soft assets of the firm, and thus future competitiveness (Wheeler & McPhee, 2006). Organizational leaders have accepted the McKinsey 7s framework and used it to implement business strategies (Teh & Corbitt, 2015). McKinsey's 7s framework should be implemented by business owners to effectively align the seven key elements to achieve business objectives.

McKinsey's 7s model focuses on the structures and core processes of the firm that need attention as continuous elements of an organization. Additionally, Peters and Waterman (1982) asserted that the McKinsey 7S framework begins with integrating strategies and organizational structure as critical points to reach a higher business performance. In his qualitative case study, Baishya (2015) found that business leaders used the 7S framework to improve the performance of a company, align departments, enhance processes during mergers, and determine how to implement a new strategy. According to Kaiser (2018), in contrast, the inclusion of process and design only as elements of a business plan that follows the McKinsey 7S framework is not adequate. Naipinit et al. (2014) demonstrated this premise related to strategy development through a qualitative study designed to investigate successful business strategies for the supply chain management. The results of Naipinit et al.'s study revealed that business leaders should have the right strategy, or they will struggle to sustain the organization. Alshaher (2013) similarly noted the value of strategy following the completion of an investigation using questionnaires and interviews to understand the effectiveness of the 7S framework

for e-learning system readiness. Company leaders should consider the intended positive impacts of decisions as well as possible adverse outcomes of strategy development (Wilburn & Wilburn, 2016). McKinsey's 7S framework is useful for leaders gaining insight into all potential or realized outcomes. Leaders should include other variables to improve longevity and business advantage.

Organizations could also use McKinsey 7S to explore economic sustainability operations. Starik et al. (2012) implemented the McKinsey 7S framework to focus on significant business sustainability components. According to Teh and Corbitt (2015), the sustainable activity model could offer an analytical model to set the McKinsey 7S's structure. Teh and Corbitt (2015) also opined that the 7S's framework complements the sustainable activity model by identifying and selecting activities that can help create value through sustainability. The central concept of adding elements to the initial strategy and structure elements offers a building ground for interactivity and adaptability to changes in the organization.

Competitive Advantage Theory

The competitive advantage theory, originated by Michael Porter (1985), included three basic strategies: focus strategy, differentiation strategy, and cost leadership. Porter (1985) asserted that competitive advantage theory is achieved by balancing multiple sets of strategies to create a defensible position in the industry and gain competitive abilities to generate a high return on investment. Porter's (1985) theory, and a key tenet of the theory, was that firms effectively use all available resources. The sustainable activity model was developed to encompass all available activities within an organization

(Wheeler & McPhee, 2006). Besides, the expanded activity set ensured that no potential activity was forgotten and no opportunity for increasing value was excluded (Wheeler & McPhee, 2006). Porter (1985) explained that leaders and business owners who use the competitive strategy framework seek to be the more favorable and dominant in their markets. The competitive advantage model challenged firms to rethink their business models to improve and maintain their competitive advantage.

Business leaders can apply the focus strategy by adopting a distinct target market, identifying that market's consumer needs, and developing services that fill the target market's needs and wants. Porter (1985) determined that a business owners' ability to create competitive advantages by implementing a focus strategy, a differentiation strategy, or producing a cost leadership strategy to increase profitability was the primary marketing and positioning strategy used by most business leaders. The identified target customers in a differentiation strategy are a small niche of customers willing to pay more money for nonexistent services at other companies (Porter, 1985). A firm can apply a differentiation strategy by providing better services compared to other organizations. Organizations that use the differentiation strategy can charge consumers higher prices because of their superior services (Kaya, 2015). The three strategies are approaches that business leaders could consider when dealing with competition.

Innovation, quality and customer service are known services that lead companies to achieve differentiation. Integrating the cost leadership strategy allows firms to continually improve operational abilities by offering value at a reasonable price (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). The pursuit of sustainability creates an excellent source of opportunities

for competitive organizations (Elkington, 1999). By implementing competitive advantage theory, business owners can integrate strategies to improve differentiation, business profitability and sustainability.

Business owners implement a competitive strategic plan to grow and maintain their business. According to Corderio (2013), most companies strategically have created a sustainable competitive advantage to remain successful for the long term. Li and Nguyen (2017) posited that small business owners encourage developing collective systems within organizations to acquire industry competitive advantage. Hence, allowing the business owners to direct strategic planning efforts to sustain their competitive edge and proficiencies may enhance their business sustainability.

Daniela (2013) conducted a study on Porter's competitive advantage. Daniela concluded that focusing on market segmentation, outsourcing, sustainability of the competitive advantage, and embracing employees are vital activities in competitive strategies. Malakoti-Negad (2016) conducted multiple qualitative case studies to explore the effective strategies in Canadian small and medium-sized firms to maintain their competitiveness based on Porter's theory. Malakoti-Negad concluded that businesses could gain a competitive advantage through outsourcing, customer service, technology, innovation, and cost leadership in refining operational performance productivity. Long-term sustainable competitive advantage and improved business performance are pillars of business sustainability (Kozubikova et al., 2017). Hair salon owners should incorporate the sustainable activity model into their business processes to acquire better efficiency and maintain a competitive advantage within the hair salon industry. Having a

competitive advantage supports the sustainable activity within a firm and encourages companies to improve strategic plans to maintain their competitive edge.

Chaos Theory

Chaos theory contrasts with the sustainable activity model. Henri Poincare (1890) developed chaos theory. The chaos theory's foundation is based on how systems self-organize to adapt to continuous challenges to overcome chaos (Faggini & Parziale, 2016). Chaos theory is a useful tool that helps business leaders identify strategies that will prepare their businesses for unpredictable events. Chaos theory is a crisis management theory that aligns with the transformation between order, confusion, and stability. Moreover, the approach supports ongoing strategic planning by business owners to address the different changes, uncertainties, and transitions within businesses (Bechtold, 1997). Bechtold indicated that this approach could positively affect an organization's knowledge, ecological situation, and adaptability as it shifts strategic direction.

Small business owners can use chaos theory strategies to recognize chaos that exists when exploring business decisions. According to Bechtold (1997), chaos is an evolutionary system and constantly evolves in complexity. A meteorologist, Lorenz, coined the term chaos theory in 1963 while working on a model for weather predictions (Stewart et al., 2015). Banik and Bandyopadhyay (2015) indicated that chaos theory is identified as a deterministic system with no random involvements, and their initial settings completely determine the outcome. Conversely, McCarthy (2014) believed the chaos theory to be sensitive and initial conditions are difficult to identify, which makes accurate predictions and forecasting challenges. McCarthy argued that chaos theorists

detect a complex system as having some interrelated parts that are dynamic and continuously evolving. Turner and Endres (2017) found that researchers use chaos theory methods to conduct business research exploring business system behaviors and the effectiveness of the business systems. Over the years, interest in chaos systems has increased amongst researchers in many disciplines (Stewart et al., 2015). The chaos theory is known as any mishap that occurs in the organization. Researchers of chaos theory reject that success can be guaranteed in any business which did not align with the conceptual framework to explore the business planning strategies used to sustain hair salons. The sustainable activity model was a better lens for this study than chaos theory because sustaining activities can be used to increase business profits and maintain successful business performance.

Successful Planning Strategies

Planning gives an organization direction. Business owners build a plan that includes the current state of the organization, the future goals for the business, and a process to achieve those goals. Blackburn et al. (2013) studied business growth, profits, and determined lucrative firms tend to grow at a steady rate over a long time. Business leaders of successful organizations have long-term strategic plans that lead to long-term gains. Mitchell et al. (2015) discovered that small businesses omit to establish a strategic position for a day-to-day operational focus. The lack of strategic planning by small business owners leads to a lack of understanding and a misunderstanding of leadership between business owners and employees.

Small business owners incorporate strategies for long-term success and to strengthen the organization. The strategy process developed is dependent on the desired outcome. Dunne et al. (2016) found a correlation between leadership strategies and small businesses' sustainability through new product innovation. In contrast, Holloway and Schaefer (2014) focused on recurring themes of successful business owners and leadership strategies focused on people to ensure success. Some owners emphasized continued learning, whereas others emphasized developing a direction for an organization. The literature review provided little insight into specific correlations between leadership styles and sustainability, but there are some correlations of successful leadership traits, principles, and leadership strategies. These strategies are essential to organizations' success, and small business owners can use them to enhance the owners' capabilities. Focus and direction are crucial parts of successful businesses, and the type of leadership strategy must match the need of an organization.

Planning strategies may contribute to decreasing the number of small business failures beyond 5 years. Five sustaining activities support business value creation: (a) people, (b) relationships, (c) ideas, (d) systems, and (e) infrastructure. Firms should manage sustaining activities as a part of the business planning strategy to alleviate business failure. In this study, the primary focus of the sustainable activity model was on sustaining activities.

People

Employee Engagement. Employee engagement is an essential concept of organizational success. Current researchers identified the benefits of employee

engagement in an organization and the impact of employee engagement on firm profitability, sustainability, and growth (Wooster, 2013). Past research included a focus on external elements instead of internal resources (Paulraj, 2011). Similarly, the sustainable activity model allows organizations to focus on internal resources and potential impacts (McPhee, 2014). Essentially, new activity models enable business leaders to identify the resources they use in their daily operations because current research highlights the need for companies to show how they focus on sustainability (Wooster, 2013). Small business leaders can sustain their businesses by integrating sustainability models (Biedenbach & Manzhynski, 2016). Business owners should focus on ways to engage their employees to benefit them over the long term.

All employees should engage in the company's sustainability plan to increase the chances of making it work. Increased employee engagement is one benefit of an efficient, sustainable resources plan (Wooster, 2013). According to *Sustainable Industries* magazine (Wooster, 2013), companies with sustainability plans experience four times the growth as companies that do not have a business strategy plan. For instance, leaders of a company that produces and designs carpets challenged employees to submit sustaining ideas, and the company showed a 49% sales increase from 1995 to 2007 (Jones & Wadhvani, 2007). Employees find value in their engagement and the opportunity to share feedback with business leaders. Companies must engage employees to ensure success from a sustainability perspective (Benedetto & Thompson, 2013). According to a Gallup survey, only 11% of employees are engaged, and as noted earlier, employee engagement directly affects a companies' profitability and sustainability (Benedetto &

Thompson, 2013). A company benefits when employees are engaged and committed to the goals of the organization.

Employee engagement is an essential element in increasing innovation across a firm. Rao (2013) opined that employee engagement includes employees connecting to better understand the vision and mission of their firms. Garg and Dhar (2017) noted that unique relationships between employees and business owners, grow over time as roles are established and defined. In agreement, Kim and Park (2017) stated that employee engagement will result in enhanced overall employee performance. Employees who are engaged at work are most likely to be more productive, which can lead to more company revenue. Also, when employees are engaged, they are more likely to invest in the work they do which can lead to the production of innovative work. Encouraging employee engagement can build a strong bond between the organization and its employees.

Business leaders can use employee engagement to impact business innovation. Kim and Koo (2017) affirmed that employee engagement impacts innovative behavior in an organization but did not influence performance. Kim and Koo (2017) acknowledged that the findings in their study suggested that a good leader has a significant role in engaging employees and performance. Contrarily, Liat (2017) stated that the best learning environment for engagement is based on employee perceptions of firms' training resources from which employees can acquire knowledge to meet organizational goals. An innovative engagement strategy is designed to improve efficiency in the workplace and drive a problem-solving environment.

Employee Training and Development Strategies. Small business owners invest in training to support sustainability (Albuquerque et al., 2016). Groups of professionals shared how educational programs and training bring value to organizations (Albuquerque et al., 2016). According to McPhee (2014), “people” sustaining activities focused on training and professional development require a short-term investment but could deliver long-term value to the organization. A healthy and prosperous training and development strategy can help business owners develop their employees.

Small business owners can implement employee training and development strategies to help improve business performance and success. Business leaders look for ways to improve employee productivity and enhance corporate profits (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Training, educating, and developing employees increase their engagement level (Mirchandani & Ikerd, 2008). Business success is contingent on the skills of its staff. Employees are an organization’s greatest asset and the key to competitive advantage (Viswanathan & Chopra, 2015). Employee skills refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) employees use to bring value and performance to reach organizational goals (Putra et al., 2019). Skill development is essential for organizations. Singh's (2013) study found that employees with the appropriate skill sets would perform at high levels within an organization. Similarly, Tawekal and Welly (2016) investigated that business leaders should continue fostering their workers’ skills, as it directly relates to performance. Business leaders should build a strategy that improves employees’ productivity and knowledge skills to improve their performance.

Business succession is an important component for businesses and employees. Managing succession planning, timing, and selecting a successor can influence small business sustainability (Sharma & Dave, 2014). Succession planning ensures that businesses' productivity continues after organizations' most important employees move on to new opportunities or retire. A survey on characteristics of career succession indicated that employees prepared for succession outperformed those who were not prepared (Berns & Klarnar, 2017). Business leaders use the succession planning process to recruit and develop employees to fill each key role within the firm. For example, an experienced hair professional from another hair salon can be recruited and groomed for a management position. Gauthier (2016) presumed that small business leaders should achieve business sustainability with the use of strategies to continue to successfully operate long term. Business owners should use succession planning to attract and reinforce career development among employees.

Small business owners can use business funding to enhance training and development. People who own businesses design the company in their areas of interest and expertise. Business owners who have high education levels are inclined to obtain more business funding than business owners who have lower education levels (Frid et al., 2016). People with professional experience in different industries frequently develop multiple skills and increase their KSAs, making them good candidates for entrepreneurship (Tegtmeier et al., 2016). Expanding KSAs can assist small business owners in acquiring funding to sustain their business.

Cosmetologists must acquire and maintain a license and receive training to legally provide beauty services (Georgia Secretary of State, 2020). Customers can report hair salons that are not in compliance with state laws. Hair salon owners and cosmetologists must continue necessary licensing compliances and training to sustain themselves in the hair industry. Owners and salon workers have proper licenses and training to operate the business accordingly. Norlien et al. (2017) asserted that continuing education is required for salon owners and cosmetologists to renew their licenses. Therefore, licensing credentials and training are crucial for the continued success of the hair salon business.

Learning is an important way for business leaders and staff to adjust to change. According to Mason (2018), transformational learning is the process of conforming to change and gaining new perspectives and opinions. Business leaders should be able to adapt to the varying workforce that they govern. DeCapua et al. (2018), argued that transformational learning is dependent on creating mentor relationships. The mentor and mentee relationship must be strong, and both parties must be a part of the process (DeCapua et al., 2018). Transformational learning allows small business owners to develop new strategies and adapt to the ever-changing market. Small business owners can increase their flexibility because of their openness to change and adjust to new beliefs when implementing transformational leadership strategies.

Relationships

One of the foundations of business sustainability is leaders' cooperation and connection with stakeholders. Relationships involve collaborating with stakeholders

(McPhee, 2014). Business leaders can incorporate leadership strategies in sustainable business planning to support relationship building. Relationships is a McPhee (2014) sustaining activity for firms. Understanding relationships with stakeholders could help business leaders establish meaningful connections to achieve the organization's strategic goals.

Stakeholder Engagement. A significant component of the sustainable activity model is collaborating and building strong and positive relationships with stakeholders. Organizations need to incorporate a stakeholder engagement plan to ensure business goals and objectives are achieved (McPhee, 2014). Organizational leaders use their resources and focus on the areas that increase their profits by encouraging employees to focus on team goals instead of their self-interests. Besides, business leaders hold employees accountable for production goals and recognize that employees are a company's greatest resource. Numerous researchers have identified the need for companies to address business sustainability within their organizations. Failure to do so can lead to challenges that can slow down or stop an organization's success. Akhtar et al. (2015) argued that business owners need to work collaboratively towards a distinct goal of profiting ecologically to generate future wealth. Darcy et al. (2014) opined that business leaders should integrate small businesses' characteristics into viable sustainability models within their scale of operation to be capable of remaining in business over the long term. Small business owners can support their businesses through internal relationships and develop a sustainable culture with a sustainability commitment.

Leadership Strategies. Leadership affects the success of small businesses (Longenecker & Insch, 2018). The task of the leader is to support and conserve the sustainability of the company. Leaders use sustainable leadership as a strategy to balance individual parts of the business to increase the organization's sustainability (Gerard et al., 2017; Suriyahkietkaew, 2016). An organization's leaders can influence the organization's potential survival. Gerard et al. (2017) found organizational leaders are critical in building stakeholder relationships, developing human capital (i.e., leaders and employees), and managing the organization's external impact. Suriyahkietkaew (2016) argued that sustainable leadership incorporates people, profits, and plans to enhance its longevity. Every part of an organization is vital because of the various interdependent systems.

Sustainable leadership strategies focus on growing the leaders in the organization and creating a balance for long-term sustainability. There are different positive outcomes when incorporating sustainable leadership strategies into core business processes—for example, employee satisfaction increases (Moon & Jung, 2018). Leadership embodies mentoring, guiding, and coaching others. Good leaders allow employees to develop, innovate, and contribute to the success of the overall company. The sustainable activity model's structure was developed to support relationships and people working together to create value.

Additionally, effective leaders can plan, motivate, and solve problems in firms. People skills are critical to the sustainability of small businesses, and the emphasis on people in an organization affects how employees interact with customers (Holloway &

Schaefer, 2014). People skills and how employees connect and build relationships with customers are essential for small businesses to reduce employee turnover and create customer loyalty, necessary for small business sustainability. Each part of a small business has a large effect on the company. Variety and balance are essential features of effective leadership (Gerard et al., 2017; Suriyahkietkaew, 2016). Small business leaders often fail because leaders focus on a small business area instead of focusing on holistic organizational planning. Business owners should use effective leadership to support the development of successful business planning strategies.

Leaders should engage in improvement activities to demonstrate the significance of their commitment to excellence. Liao et al. (2018) declared that organizations' should have supportive leadership, quality methods training, and principles, the ability to articulate a vision and inspire innovation to achieve superior performance. Calabrese and Corbò (2015) stated that a lack of leadership and management support of quality impacts strategic planning, leadership development, the maturity of a quality management system, loss of focus on processes, and a lack of employee involvement in improvement.

Leadership involvement in continuous improvement is vital for the successful implementation and sustainment, tools, and techniques that support exemplary performance (Laureani & Antony, 2016). Engagement is an important interaction between employees and leadership. Business leaders should set priorities for improvement and actively engage employees at some level to unify the company.

Small business leaders can use leadership strategies to increase business performance. Leaders set measurable goals and objectives, identify departments, and

establish a team to fulfill those goals and objectives (Northouse, 2013). Managers define group leadership traits and their respective responsibilities, as well as ensure the team implements the new program or policy promptly (May-Chiun et al., 2015; Northouse, 2013). No model or strategy can predict business success or failure, meaning that outcomes depend on the owner's background, education, experience, and resources (Belas et al., 2015). According to Kock and Nguyen (2011), leaders are essential to a successful business because they execute the strategies that affect the external factors, which drive a firm's performance. May-Chiun et al. (2015) confirmed the findings of Kock and Nguyen, who reviewed the importance of leaders in business success.

Northouse (2013) characterized a successful small business as one in which ownership demonstrates effective leadership to sustain performance. Leaders should not rely on any model to anticipate success and failure but should instead leverage their knowledge and experience (Ciampi & Gordini, 2013). Success depends on knowledgeable, educated, and experienced small business owners who know how to apply strategies and business models that meet the needs of their business (Ipate & Parvu, 2014). Based on the literature, no single model is sufficient because the success of any business depends on a variety of tactics and strategies (Marom & Lussier, 2014). Leaders can create strategic business plans that assist a firm to offer value to customers. Likewise, business leaders must avoid qualities that can be interrupted, hardship to maintain satisfied customers and market positions, and the inability to generate funds for growth (Cronin, 2014). Leaders should align goals and work with employees to achieve the firm's overall business strategy.

Leadership Development. Leadership development is a crucial element of business sustainability. Small business owners consider new leadership initiatives that support sustainability. Small business owners in the hair salon industry need additional leadership training on hair industry knowledge and a practical environment to apply what they learned (Coenen & Kok, 2014). A leader's role includes maintaining consistency in the organization through employee engagement and satisfaction (Bambale et al., 2017). Business owners should implement staff development and training into strategic plans to support their organizational goals and longevity.

Business leaders can benefit from learning and development. Learning is critical for continued success in business (García-Palma & Molina, 2016). Business owners develop skill sets through work experience and use them to adapt to new situations that enable their business to succeed (Holloway & Schaefer, 2014). According to García-Palma and Molina (2016), learning is an active process that allows business owners to expand their knowledge by reflecting on previous successes and failures. Business owners must continue to enhance their skill levels and ability to sustain their businesses. Pucci et al. (2017) opined that small business owners engaged in building their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) could recognize and respond to market challenges. Business owners can learn and advance instinctively, or apart from learning institutions, during their daily work experiences (Sharafizad, 2018). Small business owners should consistently enhance their KSAs to remain competitive in their evolving industry.

Systems

Systems is one of McPhee's five support activities. McPhee (2014) demonstrated that firms can use systems as a tool for driving business sustainability into operations throughout the organization. Systems development and maintenance can be used to support added value for a firm.

Margin and Reputation. Brand and a good reputation are integral to firm value. The value of a company includes profit margin and intangible assets such as brand value for consumer goods (Wheeler & McPhee, 2006). A strong brand and reputation can attract new business opportunities and customers to organizations. Therefore, margin and reputation are valuable to firms and can positively impact business performance.

Leaders use marketing strategies to help promote the business. Specifically, small business owners implement marketing and brand marketing strategies to increase their awareness about consumers and competitors in the market (Ritter, 2016). Business owners discover consumers' needs by effectively using marketing strategies (Ritter, 2016). The implementation of marketing theories and approach helps small business owners implement established procedures to influence consumers' purchasing behaviors by identifying and evaluating customer needs (Woo et al., 2015). However, small business owners often lack crucial elements for business success (Ritter, 2016). Campbell (2017) identified 10 local marketing strategies that work for businesses: leaders should (a) manage their business in search engines, (b) target local social media users, (c) participate with online professional groups, (d) sponsor community events, (e) follow up with customers, (f) register with local business directories, (g) cross-promote with other

local businesses, (h) commence a referral program, (i) introduce themselves to local media, and (j) host an experienced event. Small business owners should also attract potential local customers to patronize the products or services (Campbell, 2017). Campbell (2017) referred to the 10 regional marketing strategies as local marketing. Leaders should implement marketing and brand marketing strategies to help manage consumers strategically to increase business growth.

Marketing Strategies. Marketing is important to business growth and survival. Business leaders use marketing to enhance their businesses. Small businesses are essential to the economy (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). Hanssens and Pauwels (2016) confirmed how using marketing and advertising can enhance marketing selections for organizations. Hanssens and Pauwels noted that small business owners find value in focusing marketing efforts on components that benefit the business's accountability and profitability. Pophal (2015) shared the significance of marketing for small companies and posited that business owners should focus their advertising and marketing efforts to sustain the business. Hanssens and Pauwels contended that sustained growth is a strategic advertising and marketing goal, and communication is crucial to successfully marketing to support business success. Business leaders should implement marketing strategies to impact advertising, branding, and help firms thrive in an evolving market.

Marketing involves several factors that are relevant to small business sustainability. Communicating the value of advertising and marketing includes sharing various ideas in different business areas (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016). Pophal (2015) noted that small business owners should set reachable objectives, identify a target market,

and determine its value. Small business owners should also focus on a communication plan that aligns with the business identity (Pophal, 2015). In another study, Podlesni (2017) recommended efficient advertising and marketing resources and suggested that marketing is the source of business flows. Podlesni indicated that marketing is part art and part science. To have longevity within the business industry, business owners must be aware of and input different marketing principles. Business owners must determine which strategies bring the highest return to sustain the business. Importantly, maintaining a business requires a dynamic marketing plan (Podlesni, 2017). Small business owners must know how to align their business plans with the competitive market to attain long-term sustainability. Podlesni confirmed that marketing is vital to businesses' sustainability by growing, building relationships with, providing, and exchanging best practices with value for consumers, clients, associates, and humanity. Small business leaders should use advertising and marketing to increase business growth and success.

Business owners who effectively build their brand put themselves at a strategic advantage. Relationship marketing (RM) has become a way for small businesses to enhance their social communication efforts (Clark, 2017). Service quality and improved profit are essential to the survival of small businesses such as hair salons to overcome competition and provide good service quality. Hair salons face challenges such as fierce competition, and consequently, some fail too soon. Amoakoh and Naong (2017) asserted that successful hair salons should effectively adopt different market communication activities and new service opportunities. Hair salons that can provide customers with quality service from the beginning will further improve the quality, leading to customer

retention. A study conducted by Jussila et al. (2014), had 306 participants and found that the quality of relationships with customers affects their loyalty. This type of interaction enables opportunities for the advancement and incorporation of relationship marketing. Customers are significant to business growth, which Ramasobana et al. (2017) found that small business owners who focus on marketing strategies that meet customer needs have greater chances of sustaining their business beyond 5 years within a competitive market. RM can be an option for businesses to differentiate from other companies and consistently be efficient despite increasing competition.

Small business owners implement social media strategies to expand communication channels with their customers (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Balan and Rege (2017) and Schaupp and Bélanger (2014) noted that business owners could implement social media to recruit customers, market to customers, improve customer relationship management, and expand communication. Schaupp and Bélanger argued that social media could be beneficial to small business operations by (a) providing business exposure, (b) producing new clients, (c) decreasing advertisement cost, (d) building connections with clients, (e) developing a global network of new clients, and (f) increasing local presence in the community. Implementing social media in a business marketing strategy can enable small business owners to reach new consumers cheaper than conventional marketing methods (Jones et al., 2015). Besides, business owners who use social media generate a more significant substantial client base than they would be using conventional marketing strategies (Balan & Rege, 2017; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Moreover, social media has a noticeable advantage, even though social media also

has flaws (Lepkowska-White, 2017; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). According to Schaupp and Bélanger (2014), shortcomings include insufficient technology capability and customer pressure. Small business owners should consider social media platforms as a sustainable business strategy.

Enterprise Resource Planning. Business owners use enterprise resource planning (ERP) to help manage their business. Leaders oversee internal improvements to differentiate themselves from competitors (Appelbaum et al., 2016). To further define resources, McPhee (2014) noted that integrating the sustainable activity model in a business strategy can provide a sustainable business advantage. Several companies have integrated enterprise resource planning as a business strategy to improve their competitive advantage, business efficiencies, and performance. An ERP system integrates business processes and transfers data into a central location (Tomić & Jovanović, 2016). Business owners should implement ERP into strategic plans to help maintain and consolidate information from multiple areas within the organization.

Business leaders can implement ERP to increase business performance. Among the most critical attributes of ERP is its ability to automate and integrate business processes, enable the implementation of best business practices, produce and share standard information across the organization, and access information in real-time. ERP system replaces numerous disconnected databases with a unique design that can incorporate different applications and various data sources. Additionally, the business can support data across all departments. McPhee (2014) asserted that the “systems” sustaining activity is the process of incorporating sustainability into operations by

integrating sustainability into systems across the organization. Because a centralized flow of data can provide better visibility, it helps improve the effectiveness of organizational performance. Mustapha et al. (2015) argued that organizations with a centralized information structure have significantly lower costs than those with decentralized information systems. As a result, the system can store data centrally. Besides, the combined costs and revenue information provided in real-time to managers allow organizations to reduce costs and increase profits. Lowered costs can help the organization improve customer service and increase sales and market share.

The ERP system collects, records, integrates real-time information for managers and delivers data and information across all enterprise functional units to provide seamless communication in real-time, leading to more efficient and higher-performing organizations. ERP helps owners and managers improve communication between different functional teams like inventory, production, planning, materials, engineering, finance, human resources, sales, marketing, operation, and all other enterprise departments. Positive results of successfully implementing an ERP system could be in the form of higher quality, reduced time-to-market, improved communications, support in decision making, shortened lead times, higher productivity, and lower costs. An ERP system also contributes to better internal control practices in the company. For example, Morris (2013) conducted a study that examined compliance for organizations that used ERP systems between 1994 and 2003. Morris (2013) concluded that organizations who adopt ERP practices are less likely to experience internal lack of control than non-ERP-implementing firms. Konthong et al. (2016) found that having a unique and valuable ERP

leverages competitive advantage by providing leaders, managers, and employees with access to a wide range of data. Leaders can use ERP data to analyze outcomes, make informed business decisions, and identify best practices. ERP systems should be used to improve operational efficiency for business activities and processes.

Business owners need business strategies to reduce ERP failures. ERP implementation failures are caused by (a) technical, (b) organizational, and (c) resource-related problems (Ruppert & Abony, 2020). Owners use ERP software to enhance the process by allowing information to flow between departments. Business owners must have an understanding of ERP strategies to maintain the highest performance of the system. One central module of ERP systems is CRM. Businesses use CRM to control internal and external relationships with customers. Ideally, owners use CRM within ERP software to improve business operations, customer expectations and obtain a sustainable competitive advantage (Tomić & Jovanović, 2016). Business owners integrate CRM within ERP software to improve efficiency and profitability.

Balanced Scorecard. Leaders use the balanced scorecard (BSC) model to translate an organization's vision and strategy to implement actions that ensure sustainability. Firms' can implement the model to help connect the design and business performance by integrating its activities with its mission and vision. There are four business perspectives: financial, customer, business process, and learning and growth (Meena & Thakkar, 2014). Measuring organizational performance in these four areas is recommended because the implementation of BSC can drive leaders to gain an overall view of performance measurement by developing initiatives, goals, targets, metrics for

every organizational unit, and strategically congruent employee goals (Sainaghi & Mauri, 2018). The internal process provides metrics to allow operations management to see the overall picture of how effectively the organization is running. The scorecard contains outcomes based on each maximum performance area, including previous successes and performance enablers leading to future performance successes. The purpose of using the BSC model is to help leaders translate the mission of an organization into a complete and efficient set of measures of performance.

Business leaders can use the BSC model to help drive business performance. Lussier and Corman (2015) highlighted a case study where the researchers studied a company that implemented a BSC. The findings revealed that successful implementation of the strategy was key to the organization's success and that the measures of the BSC represented the strategy (Gumbus & Lussier, 2006). Research conducted by Davis and Albright (2004) found that banks that used a BSC were better financially than those that did not use a BSC. In a study conducted by Farooq and Hussain (2011) regarding the effect of the BSC and change management on organizational performance in manufacturing and service companies, they found a positive effect on the organization's performance using the BSC. Leaders should integrate a BSC model to execute strategy and drive company performance.

The BSC is an important model for leaders that could link the mission and strategy of an organization to performance measures. According to Quesado et al. (2018), by linking the mission and organizational strategy, the BSC can increase employee morale. The implementation of the BSC can support all levels of the organization to

reach business goals and positively impact the employee work environment (Quesado et al., 2018). Calderòn et al. (2016) found that integrating BSC helps inform employees about the leadership decisions and company strategy. Lastly, the BSC can improve communication between senior management and lower-level employees. Therefore, the BSC can help support a firm in building a high-performance culture within the organization (Niven, 2006). Business leaders should integrate BSC into business strategy to help drive better business performance.

Ideas

Ideas is another component of McPhee's (2014) sustaining activities. Ideas can be created throughout the organization and can resolve sustainability issues (McPhee, 2014). Reputation can also be used to establish ideas (McPhee, 2014). As such, McPhee's (2014) supporting activities are created externally with customers, suppliers, and other organizations in the industry. Business leaders can reward employees that create new ideas to support the longevity of the firm.

Business Sustainability. Sustainability requires the development of new ideas and methods, which are innovative and effective for business. Sustainability is a concept that empowers any entity to continue to thrive, specifically in business (Basu et al., 2015). An effective way to increase profits is to grow the business. The integration of sustainable business operations in a business entails introducing new ideas and processes that positively impact the stability of services to the community and help grow the business and profits (Dossa & Kaeufer, 2014). New business owners create a strategy and implementation plans that incorporate financial prosperity to ensure the supply of

resources and support for future growth and expansion (Churet & Eccles, 2014). Business sustainability strategies support organizational livelihood and survival.

Business strategies impact activities in several areas of marketing, technology, financial management, and strategic planning (Kachouie et al., 2018). Business owners implementing business strategies can focus on customer retention, good customer services, operational efficiencies, competitive advantage, and increasing revenues. Additionally, integrating sustaining activities such as qualified people, building strong relationships and communication with all in the value chain, improving operating systems, ideas, and infrastructures into business planning can maintain and aid in creating value within the organization (Yang et al., 2017). Kachouie et al. (2018) opined that a small business's advantage within its industry depends on its strategy and business planning initiatives. Small business owners should consider their products, marketing, costs, and distribution networks in their business strategy options (Kachouie et al., 2018). Business owners should integrate planning, marketing, technology, and financial management strategies to enhance business growth.

Sustainable business planning strategies can affect social change because small businesses are essential to the U.S. economy, producing over half of the U.S. gross domestic product. According to Galpin et al. (2015), sustainability has become a critical strategic concept. Sustainability, corporate social responsibility, corporate social performance, and the Triple Bottom are associated with enhancing sustainable economic growth (Galpin et al., 2015). More so, the concept of sustainability and growth comprises the triple bottom line (people–planet–profit) approach to measuring firm performance

(Elkington, 1999). Galpin et al. (2015) proposed the significance of sustaining organizations and the positive impact on performance. Business owners use a strategic approach to look into aspects of the business that will strengthen and sustain the organization. Perrault and Keating (2017) confirmed that small business owners need to affirm short-term success while remaining mindful of long-term sustainability. Hence, these business leaders must use concepts and the tools developed specifically for strategic planning.

Economic sustainability has multiple definitions and does not have a consistent description in the published literature. Sustainability remains generally unrecognized in the business industry (Holliday et al., 2002). Holliday et al. (2002) noted that those who understand sustainability models might not fully grasp the concept as it relates to their business. Some business leaders show an interest in sustainability because it promotes economic growth. Other leaders value the idea of sustainability as it pertains to problems related to sustaining the world and issues associated with maintaining a business. Business leaders that misinterpret the importance of the two areas can experience failure prematurely (Holliday et al., 2002). As such, both economic growth and sustaining a business require a focus on operating for the short term and the future.

Adopting sustainability strategies benefits small businesses' economic performance. According to Muller and Pflieger (2014), sustainability strategies include (a) introverted, (b) extroverted, (c) conservative, and (d) visionary. Introverted strategies involve legal parts of the business; extroverted strategies target external relationships; conservative strategies focus on economic efficiencies; and visionary strategies

concentrate on sustainability challenges within business activities (Muller & Pfleger, 2014). Additionally, business owners should use the introverted sustainability strategy to manage business risks (Nuryadin, 2016). Nuryadin (2016) also determined that owners use the extroverted sustainability strategy to manage the external relations among organizations. Small business owners use the conservative sustainability strategy to align the sustainability strategy on sustainability issues within business activities (Muller & Pfleger, 2014). The sustainable activity model requires firms to acquire, create, deliver, support, and recover activities to build sustainable value. In like manner, business leaders use the sustainable activity model to identify the value of current activities, evaluate how the activities may change to reduce negative impacts, create new activities that may improve performance, and recognize activities that may enhance stakeholders' value (McPhee, 2014). Small business owners should use these sustainability strategies to manage their businesses, improve performance, and sustain their business for both current and future generations.

Business sustainability is about incorporating processes and practices into the business model that make good business sense, with a positive cost-benefit tradeoff. Business owners' ability to adapt to new organizational goals is essential to a business's survival (Postma & Zwart, 2015). As such, owners' ability to manage changes within organizations encourages the integration of new business practices. Koryak et al. (2015) noted that small business owners' two essential functions are identifying sustainability opportunities and budgeting for resources to take advantage of those opportunities. Contrarily, Lussier and Corman (2015) found that sustaining businesses have owners who

fully understand essential functions and management. Therefore, addressing past issues, embracing past successes, and strategizing to meet future customer demands can increase organizations' future longevity potential.

Innovation. Researchers have studied the benefits of innovation on small business success. Although small businesses have a substantial effect on job creation in the United States, their survival rate is low (SBA, 2016). Small business owners who implement innovative strategies can create a competitive advantage to sustain their firms (Indounas & Arvaniti, 2015). For instance, owners can use technology to develop and define processes to assist with their critical sustainability initiatives (Windolph et al., 2014). In contrast, Katila et al. (2017) indicated that consumers are the essential source of innovation, while Manso (2017) noted that business owners use design to explore new and untested markets. Sustainability is increasingly recognized as a significant antecedent for business and economic growth (Deller & Conroy, 2016). Strategies small business leaders use to maintain sustainability may not be the same strategies supporting other business models.

The concept of innovation includes many elements related to business activities. The launch of customized products and technological innovations in the spa and beauty salon industry is likely to offer tremendous opportunities (Ourahmoune & El Jurdi, 2020). Hair salon owners can use innovative activities to differentiate their products, increase sales and business profits. Many industry owners in the United States focus on strategic alliances, research and development activities, and new products and services to support the hair salon industry (Ourahmoune & El Jurdi, 2020). Integration of the

sustainable activity model into salon business planning may help salon business owners create strategies to influence their survival and growth.

Hair salon owners, using the sustainable activity model, may implement innovations to enhance their business. Recent innovations include but are not limited to hair cutting and hair coloring (SBA, 2016). New products such as eco-friendly products made with natural ingredients have also gained popularity as more consumers opt for safer, more sustainable products (Ourahmoune & El Jurdi, 2020). The sustainable activity model and these innovations provide salons with a sustainable competitive advantage that peers not using the model may not possess.

Innovation can be an essential driver in value creation. The innovation introduces new designs that shape how critical resources are used in processes (Petkovska, 2015). Business owners must establish strategies that allow them to reduce risks and incorporate effective technology for innovation into their core business processes (Manso, 2017). Innovation supports business owners' approach to identify strategies and improve business efficiencies to create new products and services. Manso (2017) emphasized that innovation includes creativeness and ideal models for other small firms. Indeed, adopting this strategy can encourage collaboration and information sharing between employees and customers. For example, a known activity to improve idea creation in a business is to set specific new sustainability idea goals once a year and encourage employees to identify examples of adding value for the organization (McPhee, 2014). Small business owners must use effective strategies to survive in a competitive environment (Zeuli & O'Shea, 2017). Business owners should implement a strategic plan to maintain

incremental growth (Kozubikova et al., 2017). Business leaders view sustainability as a more integral component of their business strategy, identifying opportunities and risks to enhance revenue and brand value.

With an understanding of sustainability concepts, business owners can achieve success through innovative strategies. Business owners can sustain their businesses by attracting more customers, a more diverse and motivated talent pool, and business partners. Corporate sustainability is an ongoing initiative in which companies focus on shareholders' long-term benefits by focusing on identifying opportunities and risks related to the organization's needs (Makipere & Yip, 2008). In the same way, business owners could benefit from innovation strategies to level the competitive field and implement the methods essential to long-term survival.

Small businesses are essential drivers of innovation (Landoni et al., 2016). Landoni et al. (2016) noted that innovation drives sustainable business performance and impacts positive change within communities. According to Landoni et al. (2016), hair salon business owners have implemented designs to enhance the industry. Salon owners also incorporated innovation as an effective way to decrease risk by addressing current issues. Al-Ansari et al. (2013) coordinated a quantitative study to examine innovative characteristics and business performance in Dubai's small business market. The results of this study enhanced the positive impact of innovation on business performance. Evanschitzky et al. (2012) found in their study with 2,400 participants that innovation capacity had an insignificant impact on profitability measures in small firms. Evanschitzky et al. (2012) concluded that leaders consider innovation capacity as a

company profitability measure. Innovation is an essential driver for sustainable business growth, and successful design can propel a business forward in its sector.

Business owners change and adapt their small businesses to meet consumer demands. The frequency at which the business leaders innovate products and embrace continuous process improvement in a small business is another critical business strategy (Lofsten, 2016). As such, owners focus on continuous process improvement to revise their service, process, and products due to changing demands and customer satisfaction (Lam et al., 2014). Eaidgah et al. (2016) demonstrated continuous process improvement as a crucial requirement to acquire and maintain business success in a competitive market. Through product innovation, small business owners can categorize themselves as leaders and forward thinkers in the marketplace (Lofsten, 2016). Positioning in the market allows business owners to take advantage of and grow a strong customer base. Product innovation is one example of a necessary design for small business success (Taneja et al., 2016). Having innovative business practices means being a pioneer in a specific area of business. Business leaders can try new things, adapt, and change to meet the customer's needs. In this manner, small business owners can use flexibility and creativity to their advantage.

Strategic Alliances. Small business leaders can implement different strategies for sustainability and growth. Recent studies identified using strategic alliances as a viable sustainability strategy. Paradkar et al. (2015) found that alliances with partners were essential for firms in their study. A strategic alliance is an agreement between multiple business owners to improve their organizations' competitiveness in the market and

performances (Zhao, 2014). Effective partnerships between organizations may result in acquiring new customers due to increased market share and access. Ideally, when strategic objectives align and their resources complement each other, business partners can provide unique market access and new revenue streams. Likewise, strategic alliances align to the sustainable activity model's expanded focus to determine the limitations of the firm and identify which activities require partnerships with other firms in the industry, local investors, and to create added value for all involved (McPhee, 2014). While forming strategic partnerships, small business owners must use a competitive perspective to leverage their limited capabilities for the most improvement in business performance (Dunne et al., 2016). Strategic management involves business owners incorporating strategies to achieve their goals and significantly impact business sustainability.

Business Plans. Small business owners establish business plans to operate their businesses. The lack of a business plan can be problematic to the day-to-day operations due to the lack of a clear direction (Ellis & Kiely, 2015). Additionally, business leaders lacking business plans are a significant reason why financial institutions associate higher risk to small businesses. Financial institutions' anticipated risk exists due to low business survival rates (Ellis & Kiely, 2015). Kozubikova et al. (2017) noted that small business owners experience difficulty developing lasting competitive advantages and improving business performance because of increased globalization. A long-term competitive advantage and enhanced business performance are keystones of economic sustainability (Kozubikova et al., 2017). Business leaders and owners should implement a strategic plan to support their growth (Kozubikova et al., 2017). Therefore, business leaders should

implement a strategy for long-term goals and appropriate actions in business plans to be successful.

Business owners create strategic business plans to maintain a competitive advantage. Bendickson and Chandler (2019) stated that business planning is essential to understanding the company's status and direction. Warren and Szostek (2017) concluded that business owners use short- and long-term strategies to sustain their businesses. The firm's strategic approach is contingent on the type of business and, sometimes, the location. As such, industry owners focus on economic sustainability to help preserve the natural environment, and social responsibility to meet organizational strategic objectives to ensure responsible, ethical, competitive advantage, and ongoing success. However, the number of owners who effectively direct their organizations to be more effective remains unknown (Galpin et al., 2015). Business planning is crucial to the success and implementation of organizations' longevity strategies.

Business leaders use business planning to support business growth and efficiency. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) suggested that reliable and accurate business plans support employment growth. Leedy and Ormrod also indicated a possible weakness other than a lack of planning. Small businesses did not borrow funds from banks; therefore, there was no accountability to develop detailed business plans. As with proper business planning, mission statements are essential to business survival. Small businesses that conduct business without explicit strategic goals and mission statements cannot assimilate organizational complications (Duh & Letonja, 2013; Garriga, 2014). According to Kachaner et al. (2016), business owners can have a deliberate strategy to recognize

credible threats, interruptions, and opportunities for their businesses. Business owners should unfold a process creatively and systematically by generating comprehensive action plans that align with the strategies.

Infrastructure

Business owners can use the company infrastructure to enhance business operations. Infrastructure is relative to cost savings and reduced environmental impact (McPhee, 2014). Firms are required to implement strategies that improve financial and sustainability performance measures (Hassan et al., 2011). Efficient operations can generate cost savings and improve environmental performance for firms (McPhee, 2014). Value can also be created by identifying ways that firm infrastructure can impact operational processes within the organization.

Supply Chain Management. An effective and efficient operational business process can be supported by supply chain management. Business owners seek to achieve a competitive advantage through defined supply chain business processes and allow owners to connect to customers and other businesses. Some organizations attained product development and performance after adopting supply chain management (Hassan et al., 2011). Business leaders engaged in supply chain management develop new products rapidly and accomplish business growth (Hwang & Min, 2015). Likewise, the Toyota company's past success is partly due to internal knowledge-sharing activities within their supply chain management. According to MCPhee and Wheeler (2006), Toyota has invested significant resources into a set of activities for managing its supplier network. As a result, the organization can gain more value from its product and develop a

competitive advantage. To this end, the supply chain management process supports business owners' ability to sustain a competitive advantage in the industry.

Technology. There is a need to explore technology resources that drive business strategy in organizations. Implementing business planning strategies can support many small businesses with limited technological capabilities, especially those in the hair salon sector. Although business owners use technology to successfully operate their businesses, most of their employees are technologically disadvantaged or do not have time to attend technology training (Mpiti & Rambe, 2017). Apart from skill shortages, small business operators lack the necessary skills and knowledge to use technology effectively (Mpiti & Rambe, 2017). Business owners need a viable business strategy to support technological resources and planning.

The ability of owners to establish strategies based on their technological resources and activities to achieve competitive advantage and business growth is essential for their initial success (Szymaniec-Mlicka, 2014). Small businesses with abundant internal resources were still susceptible to failure due to poor financial infrastructure, misappropriated resources, and competitor resources' strength and existence (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015). Additionally, online resources are emerging training tools that many organizations can use and are accessible through multiple technology avenues. Yang et al. (2017) argued that technological resources do not contribute to competitive advantage or improve business performance in small businesses; however, it is the strategic use of technology in business processes that help drive business performance.

Implementation of technology resources and activities can improve sustainable business efficiencies and operational procedures.

Leaders use technology to help sustain their business. Business owners can address sustainability with technology (Aagaard & Lindgren, 2015). Sakas et al. (2014) found that business owners should avoid unnecessary changes in technology infrastructure, and companies should concentrate on strengthening their current infrastructure. Gottschalk (2016) noted that technology infrastructure supports the foundation and influences efficiency that optimizes knowledge sharing. Lew et al. (2015) conducted interviews with eight organizations to explore how organizations use technology as a competitive advantage in Malaysia. The authors found that firm leaders needed to ensure that all technology users understood the benefits of using information technology, maximizing the operations process, and improving efficiency by obtaining utility capability. Technology is a major part of a firm's value chain and a source of competitive advantage (Porter, 2007). Small business owners who leverage technology to achieve a sustained competitive advantage remain in business longer (Hitt et al., 2016). Business owners should leverage technology as a resource to enhance operational efficiencies and versatility.

Cash Management and Working Capital Strategies. Effective cash and working capital management is essential for achieving a positive cash flow. Cash is necessary to run a business and is a crucial factor in its potential for long-term success. Businesses with limited access to financing must effectively use working capital to avoid cash flow inconsistency (Tran et al., 2017). A company must have enough cash for

making payments for expenses and purchases, cash flow activities such as day-to-day activities of the business, and selling goods and services at a profit to meet market demand. Ogbeide and Akanji (2017) found that cash flow from financial ventures improved insurance companies' financial performance. Cash flow is essential to business sustainability. Business leaders should use cash management to effectively manage working capital.

Managing working capital is a challenge for U.S. organizations. The effective management of working capital is necessary to meet business operations and investment needs. Anastasia (2015) study concluded that insufficient business assets are one of the primary reasons for small business closures. Anastasia (2015) also asserted that small business owners' lack of access to capital makes them economically disadvantaged and leads to business failure before 5 years in operation. Small business owners should implement working capital strategies to improve the success of their small businesses.

Small business owners can diversify finance options to support business growth. Finance is an essential component of a business, and small business owners must find innovative ways to offset start-up and operational costs (Turner & Endres, 2017). Poor working capital mismanagement causes a cash flow challenge for many small businesses (Karadag, 2015). Many small business owners use bootstrapping as an internal source of funding the start-up and growing the business when traditional funds are not available. In a study in Nigeria, Afolabi et al. (2014) found that bootstrapping techniques decreased the external financing gap for small firms. A major benefit for small businesses using bootstrapping is maximum production and services, higher business sales, and more

investment opportunities. Additionally, financial planning helps business owners calculate their financial targets, such as sales made per employee, a substantial profit margin, and a good investment return (Karadag, 2015). Karadag (2015) discovered that small business owners must have financial management and financial planning skills. Strategic financial planning should be used by business owners to identify best business practices that will reduce organizational costs.

Financial Strategies. Business owners use financial strategies for business survival. Decreasing debt ratios, building economic surpluses and owners' equity, and increasing assets can be difficult for many small business owners (Roulet et al., 2017). Qualifying for a bank loan is sometimes challenging for small business owners, as banks have reservations on whether owners can repay (Krishnan & Ganesh, 2014). Lack of capital and restricted access to credit is detrimental to small businesses (Chimucheka & Mandipaka, 2015). Small business owners need access to initial start-up funds and need a steady cash flow to sustain their businesses. Parsa et al. (2014) posited that many small businesses fail due to insufficient start-up capital and limited credit opportunities. Successful small business owners develop financial strategies to ensure their cash reserves availability to overcome economic challenges and sustain future growth (Sihite, 2015). Business leaders should use financial strategies to manage finances and achieve business objectives.

Small business owners should have basic accounting skills and knowledge to evaluate the financial performance of the business. Conversely, owners who lack a business accounting skill set are at a higher risk of failure (Burritt & Schaltegger, 2014).

The absence of appropriate accounting skills and knowledge can limit business owners' ability to develop successful business strategies and lead to business failure. Relevant and factual financial information is essential for business owners to create an effective system (Ezejiolor et al., 2014). Because small business owners have a limited budget and resources, accounting knowledge is critical for business growth and development. According to Banham and He (2014), business owners may profit from seeking to outsource processes. When a business owner decides to open a business, the strategic plan should include remaining financially stable to sustain it (Churet & Eccles, 2014). Business owners with good accounting skills can support the growth and longevity of their businesses.

Business owners strive to ensure their organization is financially viable. Seeking best practices from other businesses can be useful to small business owners. Small business owners can look to other firms as a means of professional development and can ask for advice or seek counsel from a business advisor (Kuhn et al., 2016). Small business owners should search for ways to expand and advertise their business aggressively to secure profitable opportunities for a sustainable future (Hörisch, 2015).

Business Failure in the Hair Salon Industry

Many business owners experience some struggles in the beginning of new business ventures. Researchers have indicated that small business failure occurs because of barriers such as the inability to access required financing, low or no marketing, lack of adequate information and communication technology, missing skill sets required for the business, lack of innovation, poor human resource management practices, lack of access

to skilled employees, and government bureaucracy and regulations (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016). Small businesses contribute to industrialization (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014). Specifically, hair salons play a critical role in creating jobs in the United States. About one million hair salons in the United States provide employment opportunities for about 1.4 million people (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Understanding business failure is critical to business survival. Hair salon owners should be familiar with and pay attention to industry structure and growth. Hair salons generate \$47 billion in revenue in the United States each year (SBA, 2016). Although hair salons contribute substantially to the economy, hair salon owners continue to face significant challenges operating small salon businesses (Amisano, 2017). Horne and Ivanov (2015) studied the typical problems small business owners encountered when they started their businesses. Business owners' methods to diagnose and address these problems can determine the business's long-term success (Horne & Ivanov, 2015). Horne and Ivanov identified possible solutions to the three most common issues: lack of formal protocols and structure, emphasis on short-term profits, and focusing only on the known. Small business owners could avoid business failure by understanding the difficulties others have experienced when opening a salon business. More importantly, small business owners must learn from those who used successful business planning strategies to maintain their longevity. Understanding small business hair salon failures is essential to help reduce future shortcomings that could cause significant impacts on the business planning strategies and the operational processes set in place by business owners.

Transition

In Section 1, I shared the foundation and background of the problem, the problem statement, the purpose statement, and the study's nature. I justified the use of the sustainable activity model as the conceptual framework. Additionally, I provided the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of this research study. The literature review supported the need for comprehensive research to identify the business planning strategies some hair salon business owners have used to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

In Section 2, I discuss the study's purpose, my role as the researcher, selection of participants, data analysis, research method, design, population and sampling, data collection instruments and technique, ethical research, reliability, and validity. Section 3 includes the findings and results, implications for social change, recommendations for action, suggestions for future research, and discussion of the study's applicability to professional practice. The section also includes a conclusion to the study.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I provide more specific information and elaboration about the study components discussed in Section 1. Section 2 includes the purpose statement and information on the role of the researcher. I also address the selection of participants, research design and method, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to explore business planning strategies that hair salon owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The target population included seven hair salon owners in the Southern region of the United States who successfully sustained their business beyond 5 years. The implications for social change include expanding the number of hair salons by identifying successful business planning strategies that owners can use to sustain their business beyond 5 years in operation. The ability to sustain more hair salons beyond 5 years could support more local communities. More revenue for hair salon owners, employment opportunities for employees, and enrichment for customers could enhance local communities.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher has a crucial role in the data collection process in a qualitative study (Sutton & Austin, 2015). As the researcher, my role in the primary data collection was to collect information from small business salon owners. I undertook this study because of my interest in the topic under study. I have an interest in owning a hair salon

and successfully sustaining the business. My interest in becoming a successful small business owner began when I enrolled in cosmetology school. Although I did not complete the entire hair program, the experience and knowledge I gained during this time sparked my curiosity to identify planning strategies to sustain a hair salon business. However, I strove to not allow my views to affect participants or influence the results of this qualitative study. Rothstein and Shoben (2013) suggested that not allowing personal interpretations throughout data collection is a crucial part of the role of the researcher. I sought to mitigate bias as much as possible when collecting data.

To help reduce bias, I did not interview small business salon owners who I knew or who had rendered services to me. A researcher should avoid participants with whom a past or current relationship exists, to mitigate bias and increase the validity of the results (Rothstein & Shoben, 2013). Research participants are sources of information; therefore, researchers are responsible for protecting research interviewees. Thomas (2015) recommended that to avoid research bias, researchers must align with the values and ethical philosophies outlined in the *Belmont Report*. The *Belmont Report* is an essential document for individuals involved in research (Miracle, 2016), as it contains concepts such as (a) respect for people, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Belmont Report, 1979). I aligned with the *Belmont Report* protocol to minimize risks, protect participants' rights, and display respect to all participants.

I used an interview protocol (see Appendix B) to conduct semistructured interviews using open-ended questions with hair salon owners to explore their business planning strategies on sustainability. The interview protocol consists of interview

questions to facilitate meaningful dialogue with participants (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I wrote notes during data collection and the data analysis process. I followed the interview protocol to mitigate bias while conducting interviews with all participants. Interviewing participants and asking interview questions consistently the same way during the interview process helped prevent bias. To make the interviews more meaningful, I followed the interviewees rather than led them through the interview process. After completing the interviews and interpreting the data collected, I conducted member checking interviews to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. To collect additional information, I reviewed participants' company documents, including business and marketing plans.

Participants

Qualitative case studies involve recruiting participants with experience in the phenomenon of study (Yin, 2017). This multiple case study included seven hair salon owners who have used strategies to sustain their businesses for more than 5 years. For this study, interviewees met the following eligibility guidelines: (a) be a hair salon small business owner in the Southern region of the United States, (b) have been in operation for a minimum of 5 years, and (c) have used successful business planning strategies to sustain their business.

To identify potential participants for this study, I used the Board of Cosmetology website to review a list of current hair salon owners in Georgia. The Board of Cosmetology database included the names, locations, and license status of all salons. I contacted hair salon owners by phone to determine eligibility. During this process, I

introduced myself and shared the reason for making contact, explaining the study's purpose and eligibility for participation. In verifying participants' qualifications for interviews, researchers help ensure that they will collect related information specific to the research topic (van de Wiel, 2017). After confirming the prospective participants' interest and eligibility for the study, I obtained their email addresses to forward them the informed consent form. An established relationship between the researcher and participants is essential for a qualitative study (Chan et al., 2017). My strategy to establish a working relationship with participants began with the initial telephone call to hair salon owners. At this time and as I continued to build my relationships with participants, I was able to determine participants' eligibility criteria and detect alignment to the research question.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The three types of research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Yin, 2017). The selection of a research method and design is an essential part of a study. Researchers have control over selecting the most suitable research method for their study (Almalki, 2016). I used the qualitative research method to conduct this study. Qualitative research is a methodology of inquiry to explore, understand, and gain meaning from individuals or groups that concerns a social or human problem (Corti & Fielding, 2016). Researchers' first objective is to establish a research question that can create awareness and understanding about a phenomenon (Turner et al., 2017).

Researchers use the quantitative approach to examine relationships between quantitative variables to test a hypothesis. Statistically significant inferences made from comparing samples taken from a larger population are generalizable to larger populations in quantitative methods (Laher, 2016). According to Southam-Gerow and Dorsey (2014), the mixed-method approach includes qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The mixed-method approach is suitable when researchers want to explore the quantitative and qualitative aspects concurrently (Sparkes, 2015). Neither the quantitative method nor the mixed methods approach was appropriate for this case study because I did not seek to determine conclusions based on testing multiple hypotheses.

Research Design

The case study design was the most appropriate design to answer the research question. Researchers implement a case study approach to consider real-life situations to cultivate strategies (Cinneide, 2015). Case study researchers review specific scenarios probed and identify practical strategies instead of theoretical suggestions (Cronin, 2014). Furthermore, researchers use a multiple case study design to collect, present, and analyze data in an open-minded way (Yin, 2017). I used a multiple case study design for this study that included real-life situations related to business strategies.

Phenomenological, ethnographic, and narrative are other qualitative research designs that I considered but ultimately determined were not appropriate for this study. Researchers use the phenomenological research design to explore the meanings of participants' lived experiences with phenomena (Errasti-Ibarrondo et al., 2018). The phenomenological design did not apply to this study because I did not explore the lived

experiences of participants. Ethnography describes experiences based on cultural groups' behavioral patterns and beliefs through participant observation over long periods (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I did not select this design because the research did not involve describing or interpreting cultural groups. Yin (2017) contended that researchers incorporate the narrative structure to evaluate experiences related to a study. Furthermore, researchers use the narrative approach to ascertain the diversity and levels involved in the narrative (Jones, 2016). The narrative design was inappropriate for this study because I did not research participants' life stories to determine business planning strategies.

Data saturation confirms the validity of a qualitative study (Barratt et al., 2011). Data saturation occurs when information has been collected from multiple sources, and no new data are present (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I reached data saturation by conducting semistructured interviews and member checking and by reviewing each organization's documents and records to ensure there was no new information.

Population and Sampling

Researchers use purposeful sampling to define eligibility standards to identify participants who meet specific criteria (Dorney, 2016). Williams and Needham (2016) argued that different components could potentially impact purposeful sampling sizes, such as the research question, study design, and other focus area elements. Purposeful sampling involves meaningful dialogue with participants who can coherently share information (Palinkas et al., 2015). I used purposeful sampling for this research study to engage with participants who wanted to share content relevant to the research study.

The sample included seven hair salon owners in the Southern region of the United States who have executed successful strategies to increase their business longevity. According to Yin (2014), large quantities of participants are not required in case studies because data are collected from multiple data methods until data saturation is met. Data saturation includes using multiple sources of evidence to ensure that rich data are collected (Yin, 2017). Data saturation is attained when no new data are present (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used multiple data collection methods such as conducting semistructured interviews, engaging in member checking, and reviewing company documents to ensure data saturation.

The interview setting can impact the quality of the interview process (Murshed & Zhang, 2016). Semistructured interviews that occur in a comfortable environment can provide the interviewees privacy and the opportunity to gain trust (Harrison & Taylor, 2016). I conducted semistructured interviews in a private setting to allow a comfortable environment that ensured a quality interview process for participants. The eligibility criteria to select participants included the following: (a) be a hair salon small business owner in the Southern region of the United States, (b) have been in operation for a minimum of 5 years, and (c) have used successful business planning strategies to sustain the business.

Ethical Research

Researchers provide an informed consent form to participants to protect participants' confidentiality (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). Consent forms must contain pertinent details for interviewees to review and decide whether to participate in a study

(Ennis & Wykes, 2016). After calling to verify their eligibility, I emailed each participant a consent form to read and sign electronically by replying to my email with the wording “I consent to this study.” The participant consent form informed interviewees that I would collect some company information and record their experiences. The participant consent form clarified to participants that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that withdrawing was possible at any part of the process, without penalty. Some researchers choose to use incentives to encourage prospective interviewees to accept their role as participants in a study (Lewin, 2015). There was no compensation or incentives offered to interviewees in this study.

Ethical principles are essential for researchers to consider when conducting interviews (Greenwood, 2016). After receiving approval from Walden University’s Institutional Review Board (approval no. 08-25-21-0026303) for this study, I moved forward to the interview process. I collected data from semistructured interviews with seven hair salon owners. During the interview process, I conducted myself ethically and professionally. Robson and McCartan (2016) suggested that researchers incorporate ethical concepts throughout the research project. Researchers should store data electronically in a password-protected hard drive and a locked, secure location (Tella, 2015). I was careful during the process of gathering and storing participant data. I saved data on an external hard drive and will delete the information after 5 years. All research and written documentation were stored in a secure personal filing case. After the 5-year time frame, all documents will be shredded to ensure the confidentiality of each participant’s information. Protecting the privacy of interviewees is crucial (Bloom et al.,

2014). To ensure the confidentiality of business and participant names, I used keywords, such as P1, P2, P3, and so forth.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments can include interviews, observations, historical records, company documents, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2017). I was the primary data collection instrument in the data collection process. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix B) as a guide during the interview process to conduct interviews and review company documents.

Data collection is essential to a research study's overall validity and reliability (Göttfert, 2015). Researchers enhance the study's validity and reliability through triangulation by conducting semistructured interviews, member checking, and document reviews (Birt et al., 2016). Moreover, member checking is known for providing the maximum benefit for reliability and validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I triangulated data by conducting semistructured interviews, using member checking, and reviewing company documents. This increased the validity and reliability of the study.

Data Collection Technique

Qualitative researchers need to use several data collection techniques to collect data in a qualitative case study. Data collection should involve gathering information from qualified participants. Yin (2017) emphasized the need to use numerous sources of evidence in case of study research, enabling researchers to focus on a broader range of conceptual insights through triangulation and leading to more compelling and valid research findings. According to Yin, semistructured interviews featuring open-ended

questions provide freedom of expression to interviewees and allow them to share their insights, thoughts, and experiences. After receiving consent forms from participants, I contacted each individual to discuss scheduling interviews using Zoom. I conducted semistructured interviews using open-ended questions, followed by member checking interviews and organizational documentation review, including the business plan, to collect data and thoroughly explore the phenomenon.

The first data collection technique that I used in the study was semistructured interviews with the seven participants. Each interview did not last longer than 1 hour. There are advantages and disadvantages to each data collection technique. Researchers benefit from building rapport and engaging with participants (Pandey & Chawla, 2016; Yin, 2017). Moreover, semistructured interviews provide an advantage for the researcher to connect with interviewees, observe their body cues, and retrieve valuable responses from participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Smith and McGannon (2018) noted that a disadvantage to using preset interview questions is the possibility of overlooking critical information for the research study.. I conducted semistructured interviews so that I could take advantage of building rapport and engage with participants. I audio recorded the interviews for accuracy but fully engaged in them to assess participants' body language and facial expressions. As Yin (2017) noted, missing these cues is a potential disadvantage of interviews that are audio recorded.

The interview process included the interview protocol and interview questions (see Appendix B). I established a convenient time to meet with each interviewee for the interview. Each interview time block was no longer than 1 hour. The semistructured

interviews with participants included two phases: executing an interview protocol and conducting member checking. Interview protocols are more relevant when interviewers build rapport, offer two-way dialogue to expand the conversation, and provide the interview process's purpose and rules (Hamilton et al., 2017). The interview protocol (see Appendix B) included introducing the study, interview questions, conducting the interview, thanking interviewees, and follow-up member checking. The interview protocol was used as a guide to remain on task.

The second data collection technique included an organizational documentation review. This included reviewing the business plan and other company documents such as business plans and social media or company websites. For multiple-case studies, a key approach for using multiple data collection techniques is developing a system to capture field notes to maintain evidence and vital information (Yin, 2017). I stored notes about each organization's documents and organized the notes in a database.

The process of member checking can decrease researcher bias on interviewee information, which can eliminate data misrepresentation (Yin, 2014). I summarized interview responses based on my interpretation after the initial interviews from recordings and scheduled member checking with participants. The purpose of member checking interviews was to confirm that responses collected with participants are accurate. Therefore, member checking interviews enhanced the reliability and validity of the study.

Data Organization Technique

Researchers must record data and maintain organized records of information. Qualitative researchers must follow specific guidelines during the data collection process (Yin, 2017). Researchers use NVivo software to enhance the rigor of the research (Alderfer & Sood, 2016). For organizational purposes, to keep track of data and log data, I used a reflective journal, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and NVivo 12 Pro.

Additionally, NVivo 12 Pro assisted me in organizing my notes, documents, and all data collected during the interview process. Researchers must store the data collected for research in a safe and reliable place to protect study participants (Sabar & Ben-Yehoshua, 2017). All raw data, logs, and documents were stored in a secured file cabinet for 5 years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is essential to the quality of qualitative research. Researchers use methodological triangulation to enhance data quality, integrity and improve the study's reliability (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Data, investigator, methodological, and theory are the four triangulation types (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Methodological triangulation is a common type of triangulation for qualitative research. Researchers use methodological triangulation to synthesize various methods used to gather data (Yin, 2017). Researchers also implement triangulation within a study to enhance understanding of a phenomenon (Amankwaa, 2016). I collected data from multiple sources such as interviews, reviewed of business documents, and used methodological triangulation to enhance the research study's overall quality.

I analyzed data using Yin's five-step process. Yin's (2017) five-step data analysis process involves (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) drawing conclusions for the data. I first compiled and assembled the interviews' data, including the follow-up member checking interview and business documents review. Next, I disassembled the data from all data sources. Qualitative researchers rely on computer software to help correlate and understand data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). According to Andersson and Öhman (2016), researchers use NVivo to organize and analyze the data by coding and creating categories. NVivo was used to organize and analyze data through coding to identify themes in the study. After doing so, I reassembled data collected from interviews and documents into categories.

Researchers conduct data interpretation to better understand the meaning of the data collected. Researchers categorize themes in the study during the data analysis process (Yin, 2017). Moreover, researchers need to ensure the study's themes correlate with the literature and the conceptual framework (Harrison & Taylor, 2016). I used NVivo 12 Pro software to aid in the interpretation of the data to ensure alignment with the literature and conceptual framework. After this step, I developed conclusions.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is a critical process that researchers use to ensure the research's consistency (Birt et al., 2016). Reliability refers to how the researcher will address dependability (Cook, 2012). Turner et al. (2017) affirmed that triangulation involves using different sources to validate data. I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix

B) to conduct semistructured interviews with participants. Using an interview protocol provided consistency, thus enhancing dependability in the study. Researchers can also use member checking for participants to review and validate the data collected from interview responses. Therefore, as the primary data collection instrument, I also included follow-up member checking with participants to verify the interview responses' validity.

Validity

Researchers seek to ensure the validity of research findings by applying credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). Researchers must acknowledge the qualitative research method to maintain the research's validity and credibility (Call-Cummings, 2016). In qualitative research, the implementation of different data sources and methodological triangulation increases the research's trustworthiness (Birt et al., 2016). Credibility provides value to the research findings of a study. Member checking is a qualitative research technique for exploring research outcomes' credibility (Thomas, 2016). In this study, I established credibility by using methodological triangulation and member checking to ensure that data was interpreted accurately by participants.

Confirmability is the process in which the research findings are confirmed by someone other than the researcher of the study (Anney, 2014). Confirmability refers to the accuracy of research findings considering the researcher's biases (Nowell et al., 2017). To improve the credibility and confirmability of findings, researchers apply triangulation, conduct follow-up member-checking interviews, and use practical interview questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I attained confirmability for this

research study using methodological triangulation and member checking during the interview process.

Transferability is an essential aspect of the implementation of qualitative research findings (Cope, 2014). Transferability occurs when the research findings are useful to readers and can be replicated in future research studies (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017).

Researchers ensure the transferability of methods and research findings by explaining the study's limitations (Yin, 2017). One way I demonstrated transferability was by following the interview protocol.

Transferability occurs when readers determine if the research findings can be replicated in their research studies (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers reach data saturation in a case study when they cannot find new information or themes. In this case study, I reached data saturation after the seventh participant using multiple data collection techniques when no new information was found. As such, I also adhered to the interview protocol and engaged in member checking.

Transition and Summary

I explored business planning strategies that hair salon owners have used to sustain in business beyond 5 years using a qualitative multiple case study. In Section 2, I presented the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and a description of my relationship with potential participants. I shared details about ethical research standards, the data collection instruments, the data collection and organization techniques, and data analysis processes. I also reviewed details of reliability and validity. Section 3 begins with an introduction including the purpose statement, the research question, and the

presentation of findings. Section 3 further includes (a) application to professional practices, (b) implications for social change, (c) recommendations for actions, (d) recommendations for further research, (e) reflections for this study, and ends with a summary and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore business planning strategies that hair salon owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. I collected data during semistructured interviews with seven hair salon owners in the Southern region of the United States who successfully sustained their business beyond 5 years. The selected hair salon owners answered six open-ended interview questions. The answers from the interview questions helped me answer the research question that underpinned this study: What business planning strategies do hair salon owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years? Once I reached data saturation, I proceeded by following Yin's (2014) triangulation and data organization process: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding to analyze the information. I used NVivo 12 Pro to categorize and identify common themes. The three primary themes that emerged from data analysis were the importance of marketing, cash management, and creation of a good business plan (see Table 1).

Table 1

Emergent Themes

Nodes/Themes	Number of respondents	Number of times the theme was addressed
Marketing	7	21
Cash management	7	9
Business plan creation	6	12

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was, What business planning strategies do hair salon owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years? I contacted 10 hair salon owners for an interview, with all 10 hair salon owners expressing interest in participating in the study. I then sent the 10 hair salon owners an email consent form to participate, but only seven responded indicating “I consent.” I conducted the interviews using the video platform Zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made face-to-face meetings unfeasible due to health risks.

Salon owners who participated in the study had 10 years or more of experience in the cosmetology industry, with a combined total of 150 years of experience. I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix B) to mitigate bias while conducting interviews with all participants. I used data collected from semistructured interviews with open-ended questions and reached data saturation after the seventh participant interview. Each interview did not take longer than 1 hour. I transcribed each participant’s interview audio. I reviewed company documents and websites to triangulate my findings and explore the business planning strategies that hair salon owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Member checking was used to ensure the credibility of the interview data.

I assigned participant numbers (e.g., P1, P2, . . . P7) for identification and tracking purposes to ensure confidentiality of data. I used the NVivo 12 Pro software to categorize, determine, and analyze the main themes in the data collected. These strategies included marketing, cash management, and the creation of business plans.

The research participants were hair salon owners who have succeeded in implementing effective strategies to sustain their businesses for over 5 years. As participants noted, there were some challenges along the way such as location, insufficient cash flow, poor infrastructure, and limited time with family. Business planning, the implementation of multiple business strategy activities, and their willingness to adapt to change provided growth opportunities over the years. In this section, I discuss and align each theme with the literature and the conceptual framework, the sustainable activity model. The model was appropriate to the study population because owners of hair salons focus strategies on their business' practical impacts to maximize efficiency and profitability (see McPhee, 2014).

Theme 1: Marketing

Data Collected

All of the participants emphasized the importance of marketing. P3 stated, "I used billboards and passed out business cards and always found customers that worked in public places to continue to pass on the word." P1 and P3 used radio station advertisements to market their businesses. P4 stated, "I used marketing and advertising to let people know that I was in business. P5 explained, "My business strategy was making sure that I had a good advertising system going. And once clients were in place, I made sure to communicate with them and ask them to do reviews and things like that." P2 shared that ads on Craigslist helped promote her salon.

There are different marketing strategies that can be used to promote a business. Participants used business cards and flyers to promote their businesses. P6 stated, "I

would advertise the salon with business cards. I also advertised free haircuts at the beginning of the school year sometimes. I would advertise bringing two kids in getting one free discount.” P6 also noted using window advertising to increase visibility for the business and to promote products and services. P7 suggested the implantation of marketing to inform customers about new arrivals and to create demand among customers.

All participants noted that social networking provide their salons persistent growth. P1 shared that social media has positively impacted her business. Additionally, P1 suggested that all hair salon owners should use social media to promote their services and also look at what competitors advertise. P7 stated, “Facebook is the key. We receive most of our business from Facebook. We promote our services, sell hair, and jewelry.” P5 stated, “Retail was a big part of the business, especially during the pandemic. I was able to sell products to customers.”

Some participants shared that community involvement was helpful for marketing their business. P1, P4, P6, and P7 encouraged community involvement as a way to support their hair salons and other local small businesses. Participants shared that community involvement can include local events where businesses come together to offer services and assistance. P6 gained visibility from attending church. P4 shared that she was well known in the community. She participated in the Fourth of July parade and also joined the Chamber of Congress.

Participants stated they used email marketing and believed that the implementation of email marketing helped them to enhance sales. P5 noted “sending out

specials and discounts that helped keep in touch with clients and promote specials” and added, “We advertise so we get a good number of walk-ins.” P3 would send an e-blast to everyone on their client list about discounts and specials. P1 took the time to study trends and discover consumer needs to market to them better. P1, P3, P4, P5, and P6 indicated that they regularly conduct discount promotions as a best practice to sustain a business. All participants mentioned that advertising helps to procure customers, and it is their job to keep the customers coming back.

Subthemes: Good Customer Service and Word of Mouth. Participants shared that good customer service and client referrals provide their salons persistent growth and name recognition. Participants agreed that happy customers bring more customers by word of mouth, which is in accord with existing literature (e.g., **Podlesni**, 2017). The importance of good customer service to retain customers also had a high frequency and is a common approach in the literature (see **Schaupp & Bélanger**, 2014). P1 explained that she focuses her business resources on keeping existing customers satisfied with quality products and services. P1 and P3 expressed that if they do not take care of our customers someone else will. P6 stated, “Building a good clientele by treating people the way I want to be treated and word of mouth created good revenue.” P1 and P4 shared that their business has grown over the years through word of mouth. P5 noted that many of her customers came from clients that brought new customers. P3 shared the importance of making sure customers are pleased with the service and make sure the salon is clean when they come into your business. P2 stated, “Word of mouth helped me choose the best salon location for clients.” P6 and P7 shared that they evaluate the effectiveness of

their strategy by the number of referrals given to others about the services and customer recommendations.

All participants shared that marketing and good customer service supported their business cash flow. P3 emphasized the need to keep their customers happy and improve customer service to sustain cashflow for the business. P3 added,

I had a goal to make sure I made appointments within 30 minutes to an hour apart to give customers time enough to come in, get their hair done, and leave in a good amount of time because time is always valuable to customers.

P5 shared that good customer service is a collaborative effort on the part of all staff and a significant driver in providing working capital for their business.” P6 shared that diversity was an important component of her marketing plan. She added, “I was always thinking of ways to get more people in my chair and make more money each week.” All participants noted that marketing strategies helped sustain their businesses in some way during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Correlation to the Literature

The first theme that emerged was marketing, which seven participants shared was a key critical success factor in sustaining a business. Hanssens and Pauwels (2016) noted that small business owners find value in focusing marketing efforts on components that benefit the business's accountability and profitability. Pophal (2015) posited the significance of marketing for small companies and shared that business owners should focus their advertising and marketing efforts to sustain the business. Marketing involves several factors that are relevant to small business sustainability.

Leaders use marketing strategies to help promote the business. Many hair salons owners focus on social media marketing as an important tool in growing and sustaining their businesses. Small business owners implement social media marketing strategies to expand communication channels with their customers (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). Customers and repeat business are important for business growth. Ramasobana et al. (2017) found that small business owners who focus on marketing strategies that meet customer needs have greater chances of sustaining their business beyond 5 years within a competitive market. The findings from this study aligned with the authors' conclusions and demonstrated that participants used some form of marketing to successfully sustain their business beyond 5 years.

Relevancy to the Conceptual Framework

Marketing directly relates to McPhee's (2014) sustainable model because the creation of marketing activities across the business can improve performance and probability and have a positive impact on the firm's reputation. The value of an organization is based on more than just the profit margin and includes reputation, brand value, and license to operate (McPhee, 2014). Small business owners need to know their customers and build the types of relationships that encourage continued future business from them. The findings from this study support that marketing business planning strategies support hair salon owners' businesses. The main objective of using the sustainable activity model is to identify actions that help the organization gain a competitive advantage and increase performance.

Effective marketing can be a solution to sustaining a business. McPhee's (2014) sustainable activity model is directly linked to adding value that supports the improvement of business activities by improving the quality of business sustainability and a firm's competitive advantage. According to a study by Podlesni (2017), to have longevity within business, business owners must be aware of and incorporate successful marketing strategies into their business processes. Podlesni found that marketing is vital to a business's sustainability by growing, building relationships with, and exchanging best practices with value for consumers, clients, associates, and all major stakeholders. In the collected data, I highlighted those marketing strategies hair salon owners used when marketing to reach more customers, build relationships, and impact their overall business performance and profitability.

In summary, the relationship of marketing to sustaining and growing a business brought me to the conclusion that hair salons owners who have a basic understanding of marketing have a higher probability of remaining in business than hair salon owners who do not. Adequate marketing provides hair salon owners a competitive edge. In this study, hair salon owners who had been in business for more than 5 years understood how to apply that knowledge to their specific product and/or service. Findings from this study aligned with the literature, which indicated that having the marketing business planning strategy in place is essential for hair salon sustainability (see Pophal, 2015).

Theme 2: Cash Management

Data Collected

All participants mentioned the importance of cash management. P2, P3, P5 and P6 shared that setting realistic targets over a fixed period helped them manage cash flow. P7 recalled managing cash differently when starting her business 44 years ago. She received an SBA loan and had to manage the business cashflow to repay the loan. P2 mentioned the use of strategic planning to meet financial obligations. By engaging in such planner, P2 created profits for their business by determining the number of booth rentals needed to help cover business salon expenses.

The use of accounting can assist business owners with critical information regarding profit and loss, liabilities, and assets for business planning. Some hair salon owners in the study used their accounting skills or an outside accountant to assist with cash management. For instance, P1 stated, "I have an accounting degree which helped me with cash management." P4 shared that she had an accountant to help evaluate the financial performance of her business. P5 shared that accounting software assisted with cash management for her salon, including retail. All participants used cash management as a business strategy to sustain their hair salons.

Correlation to the Literature

The second theme that emerged was cash management. Effective cash management is essential for achieving a positive cash flow and for sustaining a business. Small business owners must find innovative ways to offset start-up and operational costs (Turner & Endres, 2017). Cash management includes management of accounts

receivable, accounts payable, and inventories (Lin et al., 2016). A company must have enough working capital to make payments for expenses and purchases, engage in day-to-day activities of the business, and sell goods and services at a profit to meet market demand. Cash is necessary to run a business and is a crucial factor in its potential for long-term success.

Finance, therefore, is an essential component of a business. Businesses with limited access to financing must effectively use working capital to avoid cash flow inconsistency (Tran et al., 2017). The turnaround of cash indicates the efficiency of working capital management (Karadag, 2015). The effective management of working capital is necessary to meet business operations and investment needs. Therefore, by monitoring the cash conversion cycle, business owners can identify and improve cashflow consistency related to working capital (Lin et al., 2016). Successful small business owners develop financial strategies to ensure their cash reserves availability to overcome economic challenges and sustain future growth (Sihite, 2015). The findings of this study were consistent with the research that effective cash management is essential to small business sustainability.

Relevancy to the Conceptual Framework

The cash management theme aligned to the conceptual framework of the study, the sustainable activity model, particularly concerning the evaluation of how activities can be changed or adapted to minimize negative impacts on the firm that otherwise might reduce profitability and damage the firm's reputation (McPhee, 2014). Hair salon owners should ensure that they have a strong customer base to provide revenue streams to meet

their working capital needs. The data collected may highlight an effective way to increase profits is to grow the business. Internal working capital could improve with higher retention of customers and adding new consumers. Koryak et al. (2015) noted that small business owners' two essential functions are identifying sustainability opportunities and budgeting for resources to take advantage of those opportunities. Lussier and Corman (2015) found that sustainable businesses are ones that have owners who fully understand essential functions and management. Business owners create strategy and implementation plans that incorporate financial prosperity to ensure the supply of resources and support for future growth and expansion (Churet & Eccles, 2014). Therefore, cash management increases the possibility of organizations' future longevity.

Theme 3: Creation of a Good Business Plan

Data Collected

All seven participants shared the importance of establishing a business plan. Most of the participants created business plans while others kept their plans for their business in their heads. Business plans were required for most loans. Participants mentioned that having a good business plan assisted them in sourcing SBA loans and other loans for their business. P3 and P6 shared that they developed a business plan that maximized business opportunities and performance. P4 noted taking a course on how to prepare a business plan because of its importance. She added that her business plan included a projected income analysis that was crucial to her business success. P5 shared that having a savings bank account should be part of business planning. Hair salon owners can use this account to help cover business expenses during unforeseen circumstances such as the

COVID-19 pandemic. P2 explained, “I started from the ground up, so I could understand each step of the way. You have a better chance of keeping a business open if you’ve established a plan and know the importance of each step.”

Subthemes: Importance of Good Staff and Salon Culture. P2, P3, and P5 indicated including the importance of hiring staff with the right skills as a key business survival strategy in their business plans. P5 stated, “salon staff can influence the culture of the business and can help sustain the hair salon.” Some participants mentioned incorporating a management strategy in plans that will help business owners oversee salon workers number of clients per week. Participants shared that plans could help owners develop business goals and strategies to sustain business performance and growth.

Correlation to the Literature

The third theme that emerged was the importance of developing a good business plan. Small business owners establish business plans to provide an operational guideline to operate their businesses and show possible investors. Bendickson and Chandler (2019) stated that business planning is essential to understanding the company's status and direction. Warren and Szostek (2017) concluded that business owners use short- and long-term strategies to sustain their businesses. In this study, business plans were highlighted as crucial to the success and implementation of organizations' longevity strategies.

Business owners use business planning to support business growth and efficiency. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) suggested that reliable and accurate business plans support

employment growth. According to Kachaner et al. (2016), business owners can have a deliberate strategy to recognize credible threats, interruptions, and opportunities for their businesses. From the findings, the authors and participants' responses made clear that business owners benefit from creating business plans. Business owners can align their vision with corporate process to make processes strategically congruent by generating comprehensive action plans that align with their strategies. Therefore, hair salon owners should implement a strategy for long-term goals and appropriate actions in business plans to be successful.

Relevancy to the Conceptual Framework

Business planning gives an organization direction. The sustainable activity concepts help define the strategies required for effective business strategy implementation (McPhee, 2014). The sustainable activity model supports how business leaders develop a plan of strategic action that impacts change on how they interact and how value is created (McPhee, 2014). Business owners build a plan that includes the current state of the organization, the future goals for the business, and a process to achieve those goals. Business plans align to one of the sustainable activity model key constructs to support business growth by aligning corporate vision with long term goals and targets developed by owners (Kozubikova et al., 2017). Implementing the sustainable activity model into business planning is applicable and may help business owners identify opportunities to influence firms' continual growth momentum. From the data collected, it was determined that business owners need a viable business plan to support resources, planning, and sustained growth. In conclusion,

the study findings demonstrated that hair salon owners should use business plans to improve their ability to sustain their businesses.

Applications to Professional Practice

The results of this study may help identify business planning strategies that hair salon owners could use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The themes identified in this study were marketing, cash management, and creation of a good business plan. The strategies discussed in the findings may contribute to business practice by providing useful information for salon owners who seek to expand or maintain their business beyond 5 years. The strategies could also be helpful for small business owners, in general, who are struggling to maintain their businesses for more extended periods; particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hair salon owners in this research study provided examples of marketing, cash management, and business planning practices that helped support their businesses. Business sustainability is a concept that empowers any entity to continue to thrive (Basu et al., 2015). This study's research findings may be used as viable strategies for successfully operating small businesses. Hair salon owners' implementation of different business planning strategies may also increase profitability and decrease the rate of business failures.

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this study may impact positive social change. Hair salon owners may learn new business planning strategies that help them to (a) refine strategies for business sustainability, (b) enhance business plans, (c) increase employment, and (d)

raise contributions to both state and local economies, all of which contribute to remaining in business. Profitable businesses boost the economy, leading to higher employment rates in the community, consequently leading to higher tax revenue that could enrich the community.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to explore business planning strategies that hair salon owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The results of this study could help hair salon owners create new strategies for sustaining their businesses. For instance, the research results could have positive implications to help owners manage their businesses, improve performance, and sustain their business for both current and future generations. The findings from this study may assist hair salon owners to implement effective business planning strategies used by the participants.

Effective business strategy is essential to the growth and survival of small businesses. Blackburn et al. (2013) studied business growth, profits, and determined lucrative firms tend to grow at a steady rate over a long time. Small business owners incorporate strategies for long-term success and to strengthen the organization. I recommend that hair salon owners implement effective marketing strategies, manage cash effectively, and incorporate business plans to enhance profits and sustain future growth.

Business owners must continue to enhance their skill levels and ability to sustain their businesses. Business owners develop skill sets through work experience and use them to adapt to new situations that enable their business to succeed (Holloway &

Schaefer, 2014). Learning is an active process that allows business owners to expand their knowledge by reflecting on previous successes and failures (García-Palma & Molina, 2016). I recommend that small business owners attend training or conferences focused on business sustainability and seek literature to gain and adopt effective business planning strategies.

I will provide the participants in this study with a summary of the findings. I also plan to share the findings with other small business owners who are seeking insights on business planning strategies. In addition, I plan to attend training, symposiums, and business conferences to share the research results with leaders interested in this study and to publish the results in business and academic journals.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this study, I explored the business planning strategies seven hair salon owners used to achieve business growth and sustainability. There were three limitations provided in this study. First, data saturation was limited to two data collection techniques when there were multiple data collection methods used in a case study design. Second, the study was limited to a qualitative method. Third, the research study design was limited to a case study design.

Future studies could expand on strategies hair salon owners may have used to operate a successful business. A recommendation for further research is to conduct a quantitative or mixed-method research study on the correlation between client relationships to profits. Further research can explore strategies of large hair salon enterprises which may result in diversified business planning strategies used to sustain

their businesses. I recommend the use of other research designs for further research which could enhance the results of the findings. Additional research could improve the validity of the study findings by using different study participants and geographic locations. The primary focus of this research study was on sustaining activities. Another recommendation for further research is to focus on the combination of sustaining and product-focused activities to determine if the data collected may produce different results.

Reflections

Writing this research study was an unprecedented experience. I found the process to be exhilarating at times; however, there were also challenging moments of the physical and mental labor of completing the DBA doctoral study that left me utterly drained. Even though I received a great deal of advice and support, I was still unprepared for the rigorous process.

As I reflect, earning a doctorate was always a lifelong educational goal for me. The doctoral study experience has helped me to learn and grow as a scholar-practitioner. Through research, I have acquired a deeper understanding of the business planning strategies that hair salon owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I developed a keen interest in becoming a successful small business owner several years ago that sparked my curiosity to identify planning strategies to sustain a hair salon business. I did not allow my views to affect participants or influence the results of this qualitative study.

Conducting the interviews at the most convenient time for participants', allowed interviewees to express themselves freely and allowed me to gain an in-depth

understanding of the strategies they used to sustain their businesses. I am forever grateful to the seven participants who carved time out of their busy schedules for me. The participants were knowledgeable, informative, and provided valuable new insights into the research topic. I hope hair salon owners will use the study findings to sustain business profits and growth.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to explore business planning strategies that hair salon owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of operation (United States Department of Labor, 2017). Small businesses' viability is crucial to the economy's growth, but the number of thriving businesses decreases (SBA, 2016). Hair salon owners face significant challenges when opening and operating small salon businesses (Amisano, 2017). I selected the sustainable activity model as the conceptual framework for the study. McPhee's (2014) sustainable activity model concepts can be used to provide insights on business planning and its adoption by hair salon owners.

I interviewed seven hair salon owners to gain insights on the business planning strategies they used to remain in business over the years. To ensure the validity and reliability of the interviewee responses, I used member checking, triangulation of the data, and data saturation. Following data analysis, these three themes emerged: (a) marketing, (b) cash management, and (c) creation of a good business plan. Small business owners may apply the findings from this study to their business practices for positive change in their sustaining activities.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Sustainable Activity Model Illustration



Charity T. Adams, MBA · 2:47 pm

Hello Mr. McPhee,

I hope you are well. I am writing to ask for your permission to use your Sustainable Activity Model Figure (picture) in my doctoral study?

I look forward to hearing from you!

Charity



Wayne McPhee · 4:21 pm

Hi Charity,

Yes, you have my permission to use the Sustainable Activity Model figure in your study.

Wayne

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Participant Pseudonym: _____

Interview Date: _____

Interview Duration: _____

What I will do	What I will say
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce myself • Review the consent form and respond to questions and/or concerns. • Review the interview process. • Ask the participant for permission to record the interview process. 	<p>A. Hello Mr./Mrs. XXX. My name is Charity Adams. I am a doctoral student in the Business and Administration program at Walden University researching Business Planning Strategies to Sustain Hair Salons. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to participate in this study. You have read and understand the content of the agreement in the informed consent form. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know. Once all of your questions are answered, we can start our interview.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn on the audio device to start the recording of the session. • Start the interview process beginning with questions #1 through #6. • Ask probing questions. • Collect business documentation such as annual reports and written business plan. • Close the interview protocol. • Provide the participant with a detailed explanation of the member checking process and an overview of the next steps in the process 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What business planning strategies did you use for sustaining your business beyond 5 years? 2. What business planning strategies did you find most effective for sustaining your business? 3. How did you implement business planning strategies? 4. How did you measure and evaluate the effectiveness of your business planning strategies? 5. What key challenges did you have to overcome to sustain your business beyond 5 years? 6. What additional information would you like to share about business planning strategies to sustain your

business beyond 5 years?

Wrap up interview thanking participant.

Thank you again for taking time to share your experiences with me. I will transcribe the interview data and return it to you over the next few days to review the process to ensure the interview data is correct.

Schedule follow-up member checking interview.

I would greatly appreciate it if we can agree on a time to meet and review the recordings and interpretation of the interview for approximately 45 minutes or less.
