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Strategies for Sustaining Small Family Restaurant Businesses

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Charlotte L. Cumbo

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Strategies for Sustaining Small Family Restaurant Businesses

by

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MBA, Keller Graduate School of Management, 2010

BBA, Sam Houston State University, 1986

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

The restaurant business is a highly competitive industry in which 30% of small restaurant businesses fail within the first year of operations. Grounded in Porter's five forces analysis conceptual framework, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that small family restaurant business owners used to sustain their business beyond five years of beginning operations. The purposive sample for this study included five small family restaurant business owners located in the southwest region of Texas who used key strategies to achieve sustainability beyond five years of beginning operations. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, restaurant owners' documentation, and member checking to validate and confirm data. Methodological triangulation analysis yielded four themes, including quality product and consistency, marketing, customer loyalty, and finance. A key recommendation is for small family restaurant business owners to use quality product and consistency as a strategy to achieve sustainability in a competitive industry. The implications for positive social change include the potential for sustainable small restaurant business owners to contribute to local communities' economic growth and sustainability by increasing employment opportunities and prosperity in local communities.

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Dedication

I dedicated this doctoral study to my spouse, Denise Cumbo for being my supporter and confidant. You pushed and prayed for me during those trying times and significant setbacks. You believed in me when there were times that I did not believe in myself. My mother, Gloria Cumbo has always supported and encouraged me to do my best. To my former high school coach Sandra Walker, who saw the best and demanded the best from a hard head youngster. If it were not for your tough love, where would I be? Thank you, coach.

A special thank you to Dr. Pamela Douglas-Ntagha for encouraging me to pursue my doctoral degree; to my deceased stepmother Bobbie Cumbo who instilled in me that I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me. Finally, I dedicate this study to my family and friends, who supported me with encouraging words and unconditional prayers, especially when I felt overwhelmed.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The restaurant industry is a major contributor to economic growth and sustainability in the United States (National Restaurant Association, 2021). In 2020, restaurant owners employed approximately 12.5 million people (National Restaurant Association, 2021). According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, approximately 30.7 (SBA, 2019) million small businesses operated in the United States of which approximately 64% were small restaurant owners (SBA, 2019). Unfortunately, 50% of small business owners failed to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of operations. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study will be to explore strategies that some small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

Background of the Problem

Most restaurants employ less than 50 employees and account for 659 billion in revenue (National Restaurant Association, 2021). The restaurant industry is a highly attractive market industry for small business owners seeking to enter a growing revenue generating industry (Nemeschansky, 2020). Due to market and revenue growth, the restaurant business is a highly competitive industry resulting in the need for small restaurant owners to implement strategies that support sustainability (Raab et al., 2018). Increased competition creates challenges for small businesses to survive, resulting in the need for small business owners to implement sustainability strategies (Sun & Lee, 2021).

Problem Statement

Small restaurant businesses experience low sustainability rates due to a highly

competitive business industry (Mun & Jang, 2018, p.68). Thirty percent of small restaurant businesses fail within the first year of operations (Nel et al., 2018, p.3). The general business problem is some small family restaurant business owners lack strategies for sustainability. The specific business problem is that some small family restaurant business owners lack competitive strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that some small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations. The target population consisted of five small family restaurant business owners located in the southwest region of Texas, who have implemented strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations. The implication for positive social change includes the potential for small restaurant business owners to contribute to local communities' economic growth and sustainability by increasing employment opportunities and prosperity in local communities.

Nature of the Study

The qualitative research method was the foundation for this study. Researchers use a qualitative method to explore a central phenomenon using social and other nonnumerical data (Kallio et al., 2016). The qualitative method was appropriate for this study because the intent was to use semi structured interviews and open-ended questions to conduct an in-depth exploration of small family restaurant business owners' lived experiences. Quantitative researchers use numerical data to test formulated hypotheses or

determine the mathematical relationships among variables (Lipowski et al., 2018). The quantitative research method was not appropriate for this study because I was not testing hypotheses or the relationship among variables. The mixed method consists of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies that enable the researcher to use nonnumerical and numerical data to explore and examine a single phenomenon (McKim, 2017). The mixed method was not appropriate for this study because there was no quantitative method needed to address this study.

For this qualitative study, I considered case study, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative research designs. A case study was the chosen research design for this study. Researchers apply a case study design to conduct an in-depth analysis of a complicated issue from different individuals' views and lived experiences (Harrison et al., 2017). I conducted a multiple case study instead of a single case study to explore and compare individual views and lived experiences of a central phenomenon involving more than one case or entity. Researchers use ethnographic designs to study groups' cultures (Hammersley, 2018). Ethnography was not appropriate for this study because my intent was not to study a group's culture. A phenomenological approach is appropriate when the researcher focuses on exploring individuals' shared worldviews of the meanings of personal lived experiences (Van Manen, 2017). Phenomenological design was not appropriate because I did not want to focus on exploring participants' shared views of personally experiencing a phenomenon. Narrative design is appropriate when the researcher's purpose is to explore a lived experience based on personal stories (Yin, 2018). Narrative design was not appropriate for this study because I did not intend to

research the central phenomenon based on participants' personal stories. A multiple case study design was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis of strategies small family restaurant business owners use to sustain business beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do small family restaurant business owners use to sustain business beyond 5 years of beginning operations?

Interview Questions

The following open- ended interview questions will address the research question:

1. What strategies worked best for sustaining your business beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
2. What strategies were least successful to sustain your business beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
3. How did you adapt your strategies to manage internal and external trends that influence your business sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
4. What strategies did you use to ensure the daily business practices aligned with the goal to sustain beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
5. How did you address the key challenges to implement the successful strategies for sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
6. What additional information would you like to share about the strategies and processes that contributed to sustaining your business beyond 5 years of

beginning operations?

Conceptual Framework

Porter's five forces analysis was the conceptual for this study. Porter's five forces five forces analysis provides business owners with a strategy to identify, analyze five forces analysis provides business owners with a strategy to identify, analyze, and manage five competitive forces that influence business performance (Pulaj, 2017). In 1979, Michael Porter introduced Porter's five forces analysis as a framework for business owners to develop a competitive advantage in the business industry by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of an industry's competitive environment (Porter, 2008). The five forces include (a) threat of new entrants, (b) rivalry competition, (c) threat of substitute products, (d) bargaining power of buyers, and (e) bargaining power of suppliers (Porter, 2008).

A research analysis of competition using Porter's five forces analysis could provide business owners with insights for implementing strategies to address their competitive position in correlation to their competitors (Gnjidić, 2018). Business owners can explore strategies to sustain or increase their competitive market advantage and profits by applying Porter's five forces analysis (Juliana & Nyoman, 2019). Porter's five forces analysis, therefore, provided a potential lens for me to analyze small family restaurant business owners' strategies to respond to competition within the restaurant industry based on the results of the analysis.

Operational Definitions

Business failure: The definition of failure differs depending on the business owner's conceptualization of failure. For this study, business failure is defined as a small business owner's involuntary exit from business industry due to key contributory factors that influence business sustainability (Jenkins & McKelvie, 2016).

Business model: Most scholars broadly define a business model as a concept for a business leader to apply to achieve competitive advantage, cash flow, and create value, in which business leaders use the term interchangeably to include but not limited to a strategic plan, business plan or economic model or value creation (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). For this study, a business model is a business leader's internal and external strategic decision-making activities to achieve value creation and competitive advantage (Lanzolla & Markides, 2020).

Competitiveness: Competitiveness is the ability of business owners to influence and sustain a certain market position within a specific market industry and apply their business competencies to influence profit value (Dhir et al., 2020). Competitiveness for this study will be business owners' ability to implement strategies to compete in rivalry industry.

Small business: The definition of a small business differs within various countries, as the United States Small Business Administration defines a small business as a business consisting of less than 500 employees (SBA, 2019).

Success: Success is the ability of a business owner to achieve preset financial and nonfinancial goals that support positive business performance (Yustian et al., 2021).

Sustainability: Sustainability is the ability or capacity to support short- and long-term aspects by implementing strategies and business models to overcome environmental challenges (Gauthier, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are those expectations considered true but are unverifiable (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). There were four assumptions within this study. The first assumption was participants' implemented strategies for achieving sustainability related to Porter's five forces analysis, specifically rivalry of competition. The second assumption was that participants would be open and honest in responses to interview questions and control bias. The third assumption was the collected data would address the central research question. The fourth assumption was the sample of participants would be representative of small family-owned restaurant businesses throughout the geographic location.

Limitations

Limitations are uncontrollable factors that potentially weaken the results of the study (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). There are three limitations to this study. The first limitation was time constraints to complete the study. The second limitation was the validation sources, in which the data collection and validation process included the researcher and participant. A third limitation was the participants' willingness to participate until data saturation was achieved.

Delimitations

Delimitations are controllable bounds or scopes of the study set by the researcher to improve the outcome of the study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Three delimitations applied to this study. The first delimitation was the geographic location, which was the southwest region of Texas. The southwest region of Texas is one of the most profitable regions for small business owners (National Restaurant Association, 2017). The second delimitation was the selected population, in which the study included five small family-owned restaurant business owners who have achieved sustainability beyond 5 years. A final delimitation was a private interview setting to assist participants with a clear focus on open-ended interview questions.

Significance of the Study

The study findings can be of value to small family restaurant business owners by providing information on strategies that contribute to sustaining a business beyond 5 years of beginning operations. If small business owners are to achieve sustainability, business owners must integrate strategies that contribute to sustainable development (Verreynne et al., 2016). Small family restaurant business owners in the southwest region of Texas who experience sustainability challenges resulting from competitive factors might learn from successful small family restaurant business owners. The results of this study could contribute to current and future small business owners integrating business acumen and improving processes for managing critical business environmental challenges and business sustainability. Restaurateurs might gain insights from this study on sustainability strategies that generate jobs and provide stable income for local families

resulting in decreasing local unemployment rates.

Contribution to Business Practice

Small family restaurant business owners face challenges with managing emerging trends in external environments that evolve from a decline in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, limited resources, increased competition, government regulation, and limited business knowledge and skills (Madeira et al., 2021). Some researchers have shown that efficacious business strategies can contribute to the sustainability of small business owners (Barbosa et al., 2020). The contributions of this study could influence small family restaurant business owners to use a structured analysis process for seizing environmental opportunities and addressing threats to increase their competitive positions and sustain beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

Implications for Social Change

Small family restaurant business owners are local and national economic drivers in the southwest region of the United States (National Restaurant Association, 2018). The implications for positive social change include the potential for small family restaurant business owners to contribute to local communities' economic growth and sustainability by increasing employment opportunities and prosperity in local communities. As small family restaurant business owners implement strategies to generate revenue and improve business sustainability, they increase the potential of employment opportunities and economic solidarity for families and attract other businesses within local communities.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of conducting this academic literature review for this qualitative case study is to explore strategies small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations. In 2016, there over 600,000 restaurant business owners in the United States (Lock, 2018). However, the sustainability rate of small restaurant business owners beyond 5 years of beginning operations was 30 % (Parsa et al., 2019). Researchers conduct a literature review to provide a synopsis and summary of previous research as it relates to a specific research topic (Paul & Criado, 2020). Scholars and researchers conduct a literature review to provide a structured content analysis of sources that support the relevance and contribution of innovative ideas and conceptual framework in a research study (O’Leary, 2018).

The literature review sources for this study will primarily consist of Google Scholar, United States Small Business Administration (SBA), Walden University Library, Business Source, Business Journal, Sage, and ProQuest. I will use 220 sources in the review of the literature for this study. Of the 225 sources, at least 85% will be peer reviewed and published in 2017 or later. Ulrich’s Periodical Directory will serve as a primary tool for verifying sources cited in the literature review are peer-reviewed. Most sources will include publications dates between 2017 and 2021.

Key search words used in these databases will include the following: *small business sustainability, strategies of small business owners, small business success, small family owned restaurants, industry analysis, five forces analysis, rivalry of competition,*

restaurant competition business leadership practices, deficiencies in small restaurant business, and comparison of successful small business owners to unsuccessful small business owners. The literature review sections in this study will comprise eight subject components, (a) Porter's five forces analysis, (b) rivalry of competition, (c) business models, (d) general overview of small businesses, (e) small restaurant businesses, (f) perceived small business success, (g) perceived small business failure, and (f) sustainability.

Porter's Five Forces Analysis

Michael Porter (2008) developed Porter's five forces analysis in 1979 as a model for business owners to analyze five critical factors that influence the external environment's strength and weaknesses. Business owners use Porter's five forces analysis to assess and evaluate a business industry's competitiveness and profitability (Omsa et al., 2017). Business owners develop strategies according to their analysis of the industry's competitiveness (Omsa et al., 2017). By applying Porter's five forces analysis, business owners can access and gain knowledge on their strategic position within the business industry (Caballero-Morales, 2021).

Porter's five forces analysis is based on the concept that the following five key forces influence an industry market and business owner's competitive position and profit capacity (Goyal, 2020).

- A. Rivalry competition. The larger the number of existing business owners in a business industry the greater the competition due to business owners competing for profits, customers, suppliers, and buyers. Low rivalry

competition increases the profitability of the business industry.

- B. The threat of substitute products. The greater the ability for customers to substitute goods or service the greater the competition. The more difficult it is for customers to substitute products the less competition resulting in higher potential business profit. Business owners must limit the ability or willingness of customers to substitute goods of service by establishing product or service differentiation to remain profitable.
- C. Bargaining power of buyers. The degree in which buyers influence prices impacts the attractiveness of the business industry. The more control buyers have on the capacity to demand a better quality of goods or services at a lower price, the less attractive the sector due to lower profit.
- D. Bargaining power of suppliers. Suppliers provide business owners with raw materials to produce a product or service. The stronger suppliers bargaining power, the greater the control suppliers have on price setting, which makes for a less attractive business industry.
- E. The threat of new entrants. Low barriers of entry into the business industry attract the desire and capacity of new business owners to gain market share, resulting in increased competition.

Porter established that the level of influence each force has on the performance and growth of a business industry differs as one or more competitive forces can significantly influence the degree of competition and profit in a business industry (Omsa et al., 2017). The stronger the competitive forces in a business industry, the less profitable

the industry is, resulting in a less attractive business industry (Saloi & Barman, 2020). Business owners use Porter's five forces model and analyze the intensity of competition to develop and implement strategies to leverage the competition within a business industry (Goyal, 2020). By monitoring and examining the competitive external challenges that the five forces impose on a business industry, business owners can compare and develop strategies to improve their competitive position and profitability (Saloi & Barman, 2020).

In applying Porter's five forces analysis, business owners can identify, evaluate and compare key competitive factors that influence their business performance and market growth within an industry (Kibaara & Mote, 2020). Because competition exists in any business industry, business owners can apply Porter's five forces analysis as a tool to categorize and analyze the degree of five critical environmental factors that influence and shape competition and profit within a business industry (Kibaara & Mote, 2020). Business owners' focus on Porter's five forces analysis differs within various industries based on the degree of impact each force has on a specific industry (Shokeen, 2016). Ayanbadejo (2020) applied Porter's five forces analysis to identify the competitive position of the cinemas industry due to the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown. Since COVID-19 and government lockdown, cinemas operating in the cinemas industry have been negatively affected by a high degree of substitute products, buyer bargaining power, and rivalry competition resulting in a significant decline in consumer demand and profit (Ayanbadejo, 2020).

Wonginchan and Promphakping (2018) showed bargaining power, rivalry

competition, and the threat of substitute products and services as significantly influencing the internet industry and competitive performance of 35 small internet businesses in Northeastern. Ogbadu et al. (2017) used Porter's five forces analysis to identify forces that affected SMEs operating within four sectors in Nigeria and implemented competitive strategies, such as low-price strategy and new product introduction strategy to achieve favorable performance outcomes. Entrepreneurs must understand the industry dynamics and market expectations to assess current and future adaptive capability and performance (Eshima & Anderson, 2017).

Once business leaders analyze Porter's five forces and the severity level of each force identified, business leaders can assess their business structure, competitive position, and opportunities (Ulubeyli, 2017). Michael Porter developed Porter's five forces analysis as a tool in which five competitive forces determine the profitability of an industry and shape a business's competitive position (González-Rodríguez et al., 2018). By using Porter's five forces analysis, owners and business managers can maintain awareness and understand industry structure, critical influencing forces, and the business's current market and competitive position so that they can take appropriate actions (Ulubeyli, 2017).

A literature review conducted by researchers showed that Porter's five forces were an effective model for analyzing the competitive environment as entrepreneurs and business managers focus on gaining or sustaining competitive advantage within an industry (Aithal, 2017). Porter's five forces assist business owners in focusing on choosing a direction that shifts the competitive forces within the business to achieve

favorable outcomes, market share, and sustainability from competitive pressures created by other business owners (Aithal, 2017). Porter's forces analysis is a framework in which individuals operating a business can analyze and categorize the most important forces affecting the intensity of competition and profitability level in an industry (Oliveira & Oliveira, 2018).

Regardless of the industry size, competition has a considerable influence on businesses' performance, growth, and sustainability due to companies competing for customers, suppliers, profits, products, and services (Fernández et al., 2019). Porter's five force analysis is a relevant tool for business owners to conduct industry analysis to determine business profitability and competitive advantage (Adelakun, 2020). The rivalry of competition, the threat of product substitutes, new entrants, and the bargaining power of buyers and suppliers continue to be critical factors for business growth, sustainability, and profit in any industry (Adelakun, 2020). The forces of competitive strategy are changing, and sustainability drivers for many of these changes (Aithal, 2017). Business owners can no longer afford to ignore the link between sustainability performance and the market's competitive landscape. The use of Porter's five forces shows that today's businesses are capturing value and creating competitive advantages by accounting for and managing sustainability risks and opportunities. For a business to be successful, owners should focus on the strategic position of their business in a competitive market (Aithal, 2017).

Business owners' and managers' knowledge of their competitive business position can enable them to implement strategic plans to maintain or improve their current

position within the industry (Dang & Yeo, 2017). Therefore, understanding the competitive position of an organization and its rivals is critical for small business owners sustainability (Dang & Yeo, 2017). Small business owners can apply Porter's five forces analysis to identify five forces in the external environment that challenges and affects their business' competitive position and implement strategies to improve or maximize their competitive position within the industry (Pervan et al., 2018). The level of influence that each of Porter's five external factors has on businesses within an industry can vary (Pervan et al., 2018). Due to the variances in the degree of influence, each factor presents, it is essential that business owners continuously monitor changes in the five forces and adjust their business strategies to maintain success and increase profit (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2019). The structural analysis of Porter's five forces can provide small businesses with a mechanism for monitoring five critical external elements that influence a business's growth and sustainability (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2019).

Leveraging competition and firm performance are essential for businesses' sustainability (Pan et al., 2017). Leveraging competition to improve business performance requires business owners to analyze and adapt to market trends (Eshima & Anderson, 2017). Small business owners' growth and sustainability are dependent on small business owners' capability to respond and adapt to changes within the businesses market industry (Eshima & Anderson, 2017). Porter's five forces analysis is a widely used theory by business proprietors for analyzing trends within a business industry in which business owners can implement business strategies to leverage competition over their competitors (Pan et al., 2017). In 2020, Hou et al. used Porter's five forces analysis

to study the competitiveness of dispersed energy resources in China. By applying Porter's five forces analysis, Hou et al. (2020) identified rivalry of competition and the bargaining power of buyers and suppliers to be the strongest of the five forces in the natural gas industry.

Rivalry of Competition

Rivalry competition is considered the strongest of Porter's five force analysis by business scholars (Yiannakopoulos et al., 2017). As such, business owners should conduct in-depth analysis to identify the opportunities and threats in the external environment and formulate strategies to enable business owners to outperform their rivals (Yiannakopoulos et al., 2017). Porter (2008) posited that rivalry competition measures the intensity of competition among existing businesses to pressure and limit each business's profit and market position within an industry. The rivalry of competition influences a business owner's performance based on existing competitors' ability to change the business industry (González-Rodríguez et al., 2018). The more significant the number of competitors and the number of equivalent products and services offered, the more intense the competition (Mas-Ruiz & Ruiz-Moreno, 2017). Also, the intensity of competition is high when businesses are equal in size and power (González-Rodríguez et al., 2018).

Businesses with multiple competitors should take competitive action to address external pressure to increase profit and market growth. However, not all business owners are equally able to use competitive actions to drive growth (Yang & Meyer, 2018). When applying Porter's five forces analysis to examine the structural environment of an

industry, the degree of competitive rivalry among existing businesses is one of the factors business owners should consider (Ghosh et al., 2016). The low intensity of competitive rivalry within an industry increases profit potential and market growth for existing businesses competing within that industry (Takata, 2016). In comparison, the high intensity of rivalry within an industry decreases profit potential and growth for existing businesses competing within that industry (Gosh et al., 2016).

The intensity of rivalry among existing businesses increases when there are similar brands, a lack of product or service differentiation, low industry growth, equally balanced businesses, diverse competitors, and a high risk of industry exit (Berendt et al., 2018). During periods of aggressive rivalry competition, successful businesses focus on distinctive brand and consumer group strategies to reduce competitors' market growth and sustainability potentially (Berendt et al., 2018). To support their success, successful companies should practice aggressive and deterrent competitive actions (Hughes-Morgan et al., 2018). Most business rivalries, specifically global SMEs, focus on their competitors' network position to strategize their future market position among competing businesses (Medlin & Ellegaard, 2015). Intense rivalry competition results in competitors using resources such as advertising, product innovation, technology, more attractive consumer services, and price competition to increase their competitive advantage (Medlin & Ellegaard, 2015).

Considering Porter's competitive rivalry force can assist business owners in using resources and implement strategic plans that will provide them with a competitive advantage (Ghosh et al., 2016). The ability of a business owner to identify and develop an

understanding of the intensity of rivalry competition is essential when analyzing the structural environment of an industry, so the business owner can implement competitive strategies to position the business to outperform its competition in profitability and sustainability (Choge et al., 2018). A study conducted by Kharub and Sharma (2017) indicated that rivalry competition was a critical determinant that affected small and medium enterprises' competitive advantage. By understanding and comparing rival businesses' essential strengths and weaknesses, a business owner can develop and implement strategies to influence the nature of competition in a more favorable direction (Choge et al., 2018).

Restaurants operating in the United States are subject to a high level of competition (Hallak et al., 2018). As a result, restaurant businesses should identify and analyze competitors in the market environment so managers can adjust strategies to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and enhance profit within the restaurant industry (Hallak et al., 2018Lee). Rua et al. (2018) defined competitive advantage as the leverage of power a business owner must influence the business performance of competitors through market growth and competitive strategy.

Competitive rivalry force enables a business manager to create and sustain competitive advantage and firm performance (González-Rodríguez et al., 2018). A study of 339 small and medium Spanish wine businesses by Lorenzo et al. (2018) showed that managers analyzed and compared competitors' current market positions to implement competitive advantage strategies to improve business performance and sustainability. The power of business owners within a business industry to limit their competitors' power to

increase or sustain market growth and profit results in competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2015).

Business owners should maintain awareness and respond appropriately to competition to hold a competitive advantage over rival competition (Gao et al., 2017). Depending on the degree of competition, business owners and managers must decide what competitive action or behavior to sustain or improve the business's competitive position (Gao et al., 2017). Rivalry competition influences the level of risk business owners and managers are willing to take to improve business performance (To et al., 2018). Business owners and managers must focus on rival competition to respond appropriately to competitors who are motivated to influence market position through price competition, product and service differentiation, advertising campaigns, product innovation, advanced technology, merger, or acquisition (Uhlenbruck et al., 2017).

Identifying and understanding rivalry competition assists businesses in implementing strategies to increase or sustain competitive advantages based on competitive boundaries, customer preferences, and changes in the industry (Gur & Greckhamer, 2018). Rivalry competition develops naturally between companies in the same market as they compete for geographic, customer, and product markets, resulting in competitive behavior (Gur & Greckhamer, 2018). Business owners who demonstrate aggressive rivalry competition can potentially result in aggressive practices such as mergers and acquisitions (Uhlenbruck et al., 2017). Business managers and entrepreneurs need to analyze rival competitors' positions related to industry-orientated, strategic groups-oriented, manager-oriented, and customer-oriented and respond strategically (Gur

& Greckhamer, 2018). Lack of focus and a competitive strategy in a highly competitive industry can be detrimental to small businesses competing within an industry (Uhlenbruck et al., 2017). Due to the elevated level of competition within the restaurant industry, restaurant owners need to identify their key competitors (Gao et al., 2018). Small restaurant owners must identify their competitors' strengths and weaknesses for them to offer competitive products and services (Gao et al., 2018).

The Threat of Substitute Products

According to Porter's five forces, the threat of substitutes of products and services in any industry is a significant concern for a business when competitors can successfully attract consumers to switch products or services (Mugo, 2020). Business owners increase the threat of substitutes when consumers see the value of switching a service product due to cost savings, minimal brand loyalty, quality, and performance (Mugo, 2020). Several businesses in India were affected by the wind power industry offering coal-fired power energy as a substitute product for wind power energy (Irfan et al., 2019). A study conducted by Irfan et al. (2019) showed that businesses' ability to offer coal-fired energy as a substitute product at a lower cost with greater efficiency in the wind industry significantly affected profitability and competitive advantage. Mugo (2020) used Porter's five forces analysis to explore the influence each of the five forces had on the telecommunication industry in Kenya. Mugo (2020) showed that businesses operating in telecommunication were significantly affected by the high level of substitute products that affected competitive advantage, profit, and sustainability.

The threat of substitute products is critical for business owners to consider when

analyzing an industry's external environment (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2019). Business owners' ability to offer substitute products and services can affect other businesses' competitive structure of an industry if many consumers choose to buy the substitute products or services (Goyal, 2020). The availability of close substitute products can increase an industry's competition, resulting in a decrease in profit and sustainability for business owners in the industry (Goyal, 2020). The restaurant industry offers various food products and services that make it sufficient for restaurant business owners to offer comparable products and services to customers (Enthoven & Brouwer, 2019). If businesses in an industry fail to differentiate themselves from substitutes through product performance, marketing, brand loyalty, or other means, they will suffer profitability and growth potential (Enthoven & Brouwer, 2019).

The greater the capacity for business owners can offer quality products and services to consumers with similar benefits at lower costs, the greater the influence on other business owners' profit and sustainability in the industry (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2019). The threat of substitution products or services is high when rivals or businesses outside the industry create consumer value by offering a similar product or service (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2019). The fewer opportunities customers have to substitute products or services, the greater the business owner's ability to achieve product sustainability (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2019). The ability of other businesses to offer substitute products increases the need for business owners to focus on product differentiation to limit consumers' feasibility of switching to comparable products or services (Pervan et al., 2018).

Moreover, businesses can increase the threat of substitutes when consumers see the value of switching a product or service due to cost savings, little brand loyalty, quality, and performance (Enthoven & Brouwer, 2019). Most retail businesses applied Porter's threat of substitute analysis and determined consumers online shopping has substituted consumers shopping in stores due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in the government requiring lockdowns and social distances in the retail industry (Sheth, 2020). Due to lockdowns and social distancing because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many consumers have substituted online shopping services instead of traveling to physical businesses (Sheth, 2020).

Bargaining Power of Suppliers

In industry analysis, suppliers provide a product or service to buyers (Taherdoost & Brard, 2019). Suppliers can increase competition and affect the profit of businesses in an industry by increasing the bargaining power of suppliers through increased pricing, product differentiation, and supply availability and delivery (Taherdoost & Brard, 2019). According to Porter's five forces analysis, suppliers' bargaining power is high when suppliers can control businesses' products and services related to the cost of switching, availability and delivery, and differentiation (Zainal-Abidin & Mohd-Roslin, 2020).

Hobbs (2019) conducted a study on the increase in suppliers' bargaining power in the food chain industry to the COVID-19 pandemic in which the increased buyer demand for specific products and services has resulted in product and service shortages. According to Hobbs (2019), government regulations on price increases, consumers' ability to substitute, and low brand loyalty have limited bargaining power of suppliers in

the food chain industry are limited in their bargaining power due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has decreased suppliers' bargaining power in the retail and restaurant industry due to increased consumers' online shopping and home food consumption (Strange, 2020).

Bargaining Power of Buyers

Porter's five forces analysis includes buyers' bargaining powers as a competitive force in the industry due to buyers' capability to influence businesses' profitability (Zhang et al., 2018). The more options buyers have to choose from products or services, the more influence the buyers have on the prices businesses owners charge for their products and services (Zhang et al., 2018). The bargaining power of buyers is high if a significant number of buyers exist in an industry and the feasibility to switch products or services exists due to price sensitivity or limited to no product differentiation. The bargaining power of buyers is the degree of influence buyers or customers have on the businesses to offer lower prices or improved quality of products or services (Mondliwa et al., 2019). Business owners were affected by buyers' ability to influence the value or cost of products or services offered within an industry (Mondliwa et al., 2019). Maharani (2020) posited that based on Porter's five forces analysis, buyers' bargaining power in the healthy catering industry is high due to the number of buyers influencing the sellers' pricing. According to Chen (2019), retail buyers can increase the bargaining power of buyers by decreasing the bargaining power of suppliers.

A decrease in retail suppliers' ability to offer product differentiation or innovation can increase the products offered to buyers (Chen, 2019). A study conducted by Chelsula

and Kiriinya (2018) showed that customers in the telecommunications industry used cost switching and quality products as bargaining buyer power to create competition in the price cost of products and services among telecommunication businesses. A key determinant of businesses' sustainability is business owners' ability to reduce the power of buyers' influence to increase competition in an industry by influencing the cost of products and services, resulting in a decrease in business profitability (Chelsula & Kiriinya, 2018).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, buyers' bargaining power to increase online shopping has decreased in-store shopping, which has resulted in an increased competition of businesses supplying online shopping products, services, and pricing (Sofyan & Fantini, 2021). The results of a study by Sofyan and Fantini (2021) showed that the bargaining power of buyers had influenced competition among small and medium businesses in Magetan Regency that functioned in a similar industry due to challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Hobbs (2019) conducted a study on the increase in suppliers' bargaining power in the food chain industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in the increased buyer demand for specific products and services, resulting in product and service shortages. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the bargaining power of suppliers in the food chain industry due to government regulations on price increases, consumers' ability to substitute, and low brand loyalty limited in their bargaining power (Hobbs, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has decreased suppliers' bargaining power in the retail and restaurant industry due to increased consumers' online shopping and home food consumption (Strange, 2020).

The Threat of New Entrants

The threat of new entrants in an industry occurs when business owners are attracted to industry profitability, low entry barriers, and economic value (MacDonald & Ryall, 2018). The threat of new entrants can also occur through mergers, acquisitions, innovation, and modern technology, which affect the level of competition and sustainability of existing businesses (MacDonald & Ryall, 2018). According to Porter's five forces analysis, a high threat of new entrants in an industry can increase competition and decrease the profit capability of existing competitors (Mehjabeen, 2018). A low threat of new entrants makes an industry less competitive and increases the profit potential for the existing firms.

Porter's analysis of the threat of new entrants provides business owners insight into how likely new entrants will enter the industry (Mehjabeen, 2018). In the Smartphone industry, the threat of new entrants is high due to increased consumer

demand for smartphones in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2019). Mehjabeen (2018) applied Porter's five force analysis which showed a high threat of new entrants in the Bangladesh Bank due to the growth of mobile banking, e-commerce, low bargaining power of buyers, and low banking deposit cost.

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is a business owner's ability to implement strategies that enable the business to outperform its competitors (Wu et al., 2017). Recently business industries have experienced increased competition due to health and humanitarian crises, government regulations, and sanctions because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bartik et al., 2020). A business can achieve a competitive advantage within an industry by increasing customer value (Moses & Osunsan, 2018). Business owners who focus on achieving a competitive advantage over their competitors can generate excessive profit and position the business to achieve sustainability and market growth (Wu et al., 2017). Regardless of the size of a business, business owners should focus on implementing competitive advantage strategies such as product innovation, customer loyalty, and product or cost differentiation to remain competitive and achieve sustainability (Moses & Osunsan, 2018). Achieving a competitive advantage can be essential for business owners to measure performance (Moses & Osunsan, 2018).

Business owners' ability to analyze their competition is one of the best ways to show opportunities and threats related to achieving a competitive advantage. Abdolshah et al. (2018) conducted a study using Porter's identified three generic strategies, product differentiation, cost reduction, and focus on competitors, in which results showed that

implementing the strategies increased competitive advantage. Small family business owners can potentially increase their competitive advantage over their competitors by creating customer shared value (Nishioka et al., 2018). Results of a study conducted by D'Souza and Taghian (2018) showed the importance of small businesses focusing on competitive advantage by implementing environmental sustainability practices.

Small business owners who maintain an awareness and understanding of their competitive environment can implement strategies that achieve and sustain competitive advantage by offering products and services that add to customer value (Kuncoro & Suriani, 2018). Business owners of all sizes compete with rivalries for market share and should prepare to achieve sustainable competitive advantage by offering innovative products and services that create customer value (Kuncoro & Suriani, 2018). Small businesses can achieve competitive advantages by focusing on environmental sustainability, in which small businesses offer competitive pricing and price differentiation (Walsh & Dodds, 2017). The importance of business owners creating and setting up strategies to achieve competitive advantage has influenced Ibrid Al-Razi Pharmacies operating in the E-marketing to focus on cost leadership, focus, and differentiation (Obeidat, 2021).

Business Models

Over the years, business models have increased focus by business theorists and other business practitioners, as the models provide businesses with a concept and roadmap on how companies create value, profit, and sustainability within a business industry (Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017). Business practitioners and leaders widely

use business models within the business industry, but the ambiguity of providing a standard business model definition exists (Lüdeke-Freund & Dembek, 2017). According to Climent and Haftor (2021), a business model is a systematic plan established to provide business owners with a decision-making process to generate customer value, profit, competitive advantage, and sustainability. Teece (2018) defined a business model as a framework for businesses to leverage capabilities with customer demands to create value and sustainability based on actions. For this study, a business model is a business leader's concept or framework for making universal decisions that contribute to value creation and competitive advantage (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018).

Businesses can use business models to create and develop customer value through the sale of products and services or as a conceptual tool for companies to apply to maintain sustainability and competitive advantage (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018). Kim et al. (2021) postulated that business models serve as a tool for business owners to improve business efficiency. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and government restrictions, small restaurant business owners used a formulated business model to identify critical factors that affected restaurant business owners' sustainability and strategies to improve sustainability (Kim et al., 2021). Business owners need to develop strategic plans and innovation to identify current and future business trends that influence a business's sustainability resulted in the evolution of business models (Gorevaya & Khayrullina, 2015). A study by Pedersen et al. (2018) showed that the implementation of business models provided business leaders with the concept for achieving sustainability, improved performance, and added value.

When fundamental forces influence the value of a business or industry, business owners must be able to use a business model to adapt to the new dynamics of the business environment (Hacklin et al., 2018). A literature review conducted by Wirtz et al. (2016) showed that business models are an essential tool for assisting business owners with aligning value business activities to market information, innovation, and products and services to achieve competitive advantage within the industry. As a result, business owners may adopt or integrate differing business models to develop and implement strategies to achieve sustainability, market growth, and competitive advantage within an industry (Hacklin et al., 2018).

Business models are an essential for assisting businesses in achieving sustainability (Coenz et al., 2020). Business models provide a systematic method in which business owners operate their businesses to achieve sufficiency in value creation, business adequacy, and sustainability (Cosenz et al., 2020). Business owners can achieve sustainability and competitive advantage by focusing on gaps in environmental, social, and economic drivers of value creation within the business and developing a dynamic business model to improve and maintain shortcomings (Cosenz, 2020). The theoretical concept of business models provides a tool for business owners to implement operational and value configuration strategies to control the customer base and adapt to environmental changes, product and service offerings, and resource appropriation mechanisms (Fjeldstad & Snow, 2018). Business models provide entrepreneurs with a process for implementing a plan to optimize their efficiency to achieve a competitive advantage, value proposition, market growth, and sustainability (Bocken & Short, 2016).

Theorists and researchers have formulated various business models to help business owners and leaders analyze the competitive environment to identify factors that may influence their proficiency (Teece, 2018). Several business models are available for business owners (Long et al., 2018). In addition to Porter's five forces analysis, other commonly used business models that assist business owners in analyzing business and industry environment to achieve sustainability are the resource-based view (RBV), pestle, and swot (Long et al., 2018).

Resource Based-Value Model

The Resource based value (RBV) model enables businesses to utilize their resources to strategically achieve competitive advantage and sustainability (Khan et al., 2018). Wernerfelt developed the resource-based view model in the 1980s (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018). Wernerfelt conceptualized that a business should focus on implementing strategies to achieve sustainability and competitive advantage by analyzing and using the internal resources and capabilities of a business instead of focusing on analyzing the competitive environment (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018).

According to RBV, not all the resources of a firm will be strategic resources. Business owners' capability to maximize internal resources can determine business sustainability (Khan et al., 2018). The result of a study conducted by Khan et al. (2018) showed that SMEs could achieve positive performance and sustainability by applying strategies from the RBV model. Although RBV is a widely used model, critics theorize that the RBV model does not allow business leaders to consider external factors that influence the business environment (Torres et al., 2018). Therefore, business owners who

use RBV Model may fail to consider critical external factors, such as customers and market trends. The literature review by Torres et al. (2018) explained the importance of businesses implementing sustainability strategies to address the external environment.

The PESTLE Model

The PESTLE model enables businesses to develop and implement competitive strategies to achieve sustainability based on external factors that influence consumer behavior, such as environmental analysis of political, economic, social, technological, and economic (Dalirazar et al., 2020). PESTLE is an acronym for political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental, which Francis Aguilar considered vital influencers of business sustainability and market position (Dalirazar et al., 2020). The PESTLE model allows businesses to implement strategies to achieve competitive advantage and sustainability based on business owners understanding and managing six macro-environmental factors that influence businesses' processes (Aziri & Ismail, 2020). Porter's five forces model is a resource for businesses to achieve competitive advantage and sustainability based on business owners' ability to identify and leverage strengths and weaknesses of five critical external factors that affect the businesses' industry environment (Aziri & Ismail, 2020).

SWOT Model

Albert Humphrey formulated the swot business Model in the 1960s. SWOT is the acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that affect a business (Phadermrod et al., 2019). A significant advantage of the swot model is that it enables business practitioners to implement strategies to achieve sustainability based on internal

and external business environments (Phadermrod et al., 2019). Unlike Porter's five forces model, the swot model contains resources for businesses to analyze internal and external business environments (Zhao et al., 2016). In applying the swot model, business practitioners provide subjective information by conducting brainstorming to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and not prioritize issues or offer solutions that may limit business relevance due to subjective information (Phadermrod et al., 2019). The swot model allows business owners to analyze their business position from a macroenvironment (Birru et al., 2022). Business owners use Porter's five forces to analyze their business's microenvironment (Birru et al., 2022).

General Overview of Small Businesses

Some governments and researchers classify a small business according to the number of employees or average annual revenue (SBA, 2018). However, the definition of a small business differs from a global perspective (Page & Söderbom, 2015). The U.S. Small Business Administration defines a small business as a firm comprised of less than 500 employees (SBA, 2019). European countries define a small business as a firm with 50 to 250 employees, while the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) defines a small business consisting of 100 to 200 employees (Page & Söderbom, 2015). For this study, the definition of small business is a business consisting of less than 50 employees.

Small business owners are significant contributors to economic growth and employment across the nation (Karadag, 2015). In most countries, small and medium businesses were significant contributors to Gross Domestic Product (GDPs), contrary to business challenges (Opinya, 2015). In the United States, small businesses contributed to

more than 50% of economic and employment growth (SBA, 2015). In Kenya, a low-income country, small businesses contributed to 75% of overall employment (Opinya, 2015). Small business owners supply more job opportunities but experienced a lower success rate than larger businesses (Page & Söderbom, 2015). Although small and medium businesses face many sustainability challenges, small and medium businesses continue to contribute significantly to any country's economic growth and development (Coda, 2108).

Small business owners have been responsible for economic growth since the 1980s resulting in increased economic growth, competition, and innovation (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017). According to SBA (2018), in 2015, small businesses employed 58.9 million people, in which most small business owners with less than 20 employees experienced the greatest increase. Small business owners contribute to the development of larger businesses. In 1964 Bill Bowerman and Phil Knight started Nike as a small business that became one of the largest shoe corporations (Childs & Jin, 2018). Pappas Restaurant, Inc. is a family-owned restaurant that has grown to become one most successful restaurant groups in the Southwest Region. Most small business owners experience challenges with achieving sustainability due to insufficiency in establishing or maintaining a competitive advantage (Barbosa, 2020). Due to the significant contributions of small and medium businesses, governments worldwide are focusing on strategies to increase sustainability for small and medium businesses (Ndiaye et al., 2018).

Small Restaurant Businesses

Small restaurant business owners are key contributors to economic growth and development within the United States (Hallak et al., 2018). Small and medium restaurant entrepreneurs positively contributed to the performance of the restaurant industry through product and market innovation (Lee et al., 2016). The National Restaurant Association (2017) forecasted that restaurant industry sales would net \$799 billion in sales, in which nine out of 10 would have fewer than 50 employees. According to the Small Business Administration (2015), nine out of 10 restaurant owners are small business owners, and 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years. As a result, some small restaurant business owners are subject to fail within the first 5 years.

The National Restaurant Association (2015) reported that 60% of small restaurants fail within 1 year, and 80% go under 5 years. Potential small restaurant owners do not realize the specific set of performance demands that evolve from owning and managing a restaurant (Lee et al., 2015). One of the primary reasons for the failure of small restaurant businesses is the owners' need for a comprehensive strategic plan. Small business owners should develop and implement a strategic plan that includes market research, analysis of competitors and customers, and realistic budget projection (Parsa et al., 2015). The National Restaurant Association (2016) reported that the restaurant industry is the second largest private sector in the nation in which economic growth, retention of human capital, easy entry and exit barriers, market growth, technology, and high buyer power are important environmental challenges that influence restaurant owners' sustainability. To achieve sustainability, some small restaurant business owners

focused on proactive sustainability practices and environmental, marketing, and management strategies to strengthen their competitiveness within the restaurant industry (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2018).

Small restaurant owners should develop and implement strategies to resolve environmental challenges. A strategic plan is a systematic process for a business leader to analyze internal and external factors that affect the competitive business position and develop goals to achieve or sustain business competitiveness (Demir, 2017). Due to the highly competitive environment, small restaurant owners should implement a strategic plan to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage (Jogaratham, 2018).

The environment in which owners of small restaurant businesses function can determine the businesses success (Franca et al., 2016). Franca et al. (2016) defined success as the awareness and implementation of business practices that support positive business performance resulting in business sustainability beyond 5 years. Some attributes of the competitive environment that can influence small restaurant owners' success are demographic location, growth rate, and product differentiation in the restaurant industry (Neyoy et al., 2017). To be successful, small restaurant business owners must implement strategies to leverage resource capacity to achieve a performance level that enables positional advantage and competition sustainability in the restaurant industry (Jogaratham, 2017).

Most small family restaurant owners take on small business managers who set up, own, and function as a manager of the business operations (Ikemefuna & Enoch, 2016). Small family restaurant owners find the restaurant industry challenging due to the

elevated competition resulting from low entry and exit barriers, a considerable number of product and supplier substitutes, and existing competition (Ikemefuna & Enoch, 2016).

Mun and Jang (2015) posted that restaurant owners challenges with limited resources and increased competition resulting in decreased capital and lowered operational performance. As a result, some small family restaurant owners focus on developing strategies to gain a competitive advantage in the restaurant industry due to aggressive market competition and limited resources (Ikemefuna & Enoch, 2016).

Perceived Small Business Success

Business researchers have provided different definitions of success; for example, Eshima and Anderson (2017) defined success as a business owner's ability to formulate an understanding of market industry dynamics and apply adaptive capabilities to achieve growth and sustainability. According to Eshima and Anderson (2017), success is the ability of business owners to adapt to changes in the market industry, resulting in increased revenue, market growth, and sustainability. Business scholars and owners view success as a business owner's ability to manage internal or external factors that directly influence the business owner's current and future activities to support sustainability (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). Some business owners and practitioners use various business models, such as Porter's five forces, pestle, and swot analysis to identify key determinants which influence the business success (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017).

Porter's five forces model is an influential tool for identifying five critical competitive factors (threat of new entrants, threat of substitutes, bargaining power of customers, bargaining power of suppliers, and competitive rivalry) that influence the

business success (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). The PESTLE model serves as a resource to achieve success by analyzing six key internal factors (Political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental) that affect the success (Kabakova & Plaksenko, 2018). Business owners-managers can apply the swot model to detect key factors that influence strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). Based on the broad definition of success and for this study, success is the awareness and implementation of business strategies that support positive business performance resulting in business sustainability beyond five years (França et al., 2016).

Globally small businesses are major contributors to economic growth in established and developing countries (Sadegh, 2018). However, some small business owners fail to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years (França et al., 2016). Small business owners play a vital role in the success of their businesses (Amato et al., 2017). As a result, small business owners should develop an understanding and awareness of how achieving a competitive advantage contributes to sustainability (Amato et al., 2017). Some small restaurant owners identified that achieving awareness and focusing on innovation, product value, debt, and business age as key determinants significantly influenced small businesses' competitive position and success (Felix & Dos Santos, 2018). Other small business owners focused on using knowledge management to achieve success by increasing their competitive advantage and simplifying business procedures and operations (Wang & Yang, 2016).

Competitive advantage, social responsibility, and the internal environment are essential success factors for small businesses (Campbell & Park, 2017). Small business

owners achieve success by implementing strategies to manage the internal environment, competitive advantage, and social responsibility (Campbell & Park, 2017). An essential factor that contributes to the success of any size business is a business owner having a short term strategic plan of 1 to 5 years and a long term strategic plan of 5 plus years in which the business owner implements strategies to identify and monitor essential environmental factors and establish goals to manage those factors (Demir 2017). A strategic plan provides a systematic process to achieve success whereby owners analyze environmental factors and develop goals to achieve or sustain business competitiveness (Demir, 2017).

Small business entrepreneurs' ability to manage internal resources, such as business competency and technology practices, is critical to the success of a small business (Mohamad et al., 2017). Due to limited resources, the success of small business owners relies heavily on the owners being competent in managing critical factors such as human capital, business acumen, finances, product and service, innovation, skills, business reputation, and technology resources to provide competitive advantage resulting in business success (Mohamad et al., 2017). Other small business owners implement strategies to adapt to innovation and external factors, such as changes in the market, customers, suppliers, industry, competition, regulations, and economics, as key determinants of success. A study conducted by Distanont and Khongmalai (2018) showed that small businesses' main contributing success factors were innovation, external environment, and competitive advantage.

Determining success factors will differ within small businesses due to small

business owners contrasting goals and motives for establishing their businesses (Mohamad Radzi et al., 2017). Some small business owners perceive focusing on using resources and finances to achieve efficiency in competition, customers, and market, resulting in business success (Eltahir, 2018). Other small business owners perceive that establishing strategies to attain competitive advantage to improve efficiency and differentiation contributes to a successful business (Sun & Lee, 2019).

Additionally, Cater and Young (2016) identified vision, strategic planning, family dynamics and disposition, development of successors, conflict management, social responsibility, and willingness to take risks as essential factors that contribute to the success of small family businesses. Some small restaurant business owners define success as the consumers' knowledge and evaluation of a business's product and service, and business owners' creation of a clear vision (Naderi et al., 2018). Small business owners' ability to implement competitive advantage strategies helps them outperform their competition, resulting in success within a business industry (Sun & Lee, 2019).

Perceived Small Business Failure

Business practitioners' definition of business failure ranges from a narrow to broad scope (Khelil, 2016). Despite the significance of understanding the concept of business failure, business owners and practitioners lack a clear definition of business failure (Jenkins & McKelvie, 2016). The concept of business failure can range from one to several dimensions that can result in business owners ceasing to operate (Dias & Teixeira, 2017). The failure of a business may be the voluntary or involuntary cessation of business owners' operations due to closure or bankruptcy (Khelil, 2016). Business

owners' lack of knowledge and skills to manage resources can result in business failure (Jenkins & McKelvie, 2016). Subsequently, business failure can be attributed to business owners' decreased finances and increased expenses or subjective criteria, for example, a business owner's assessment of business underperforming based on goal as contributing factors in business failure (Jenkins & McKelvie, 2016).

Business scholars' inability to establish a standard definition of business failure makes defining small business failure a complex concept to define (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). Hyder and Lussier (2016) concluded through examining 143 small businesses that lack of capital inflow, poor business planning, and inadequate staffing were contributory factors in the failure of small businesses. Dias and Teixeira (2017) conceptualized business failure as a business ceasing functioning due to underperformance in finances, growth or set expectations. Dias and Teixeira further suggested business failure was contingent on a business owner unwilling exiting the business industry due to reaching a tipping point.

Fernández-Olmos and Ramírez-Alesón (2017) identified key internal and external factors that contribute to the failure of small businesses, which include the economic environment, industry lifecycle, and the age of the business. Due to limited resources and business age, small businesses often find it challenging to address changes in the economic environment, for example, recessions, innovation, technology, government regulations and competition (Fernández-Olmos & Ramírez-Alesón, 2017). Small business failure rate of start-up and underdeveloped businesses is greater due to challenges of managing factors that impact on business viability, such as technology,

competition, innovations and changes in government regulations (Ramírez-Alesón, 2017). Business owners' inability to manage operational disruptions in the business cycle can fail (Wagner et al., 2017). A business cycle is defined as the current economic conditions of a state compared to output measures of the national economy, such as the Gross National Product and Consumer Index (Wager et al., 2017).

Byrne and Shepherd (2015) contributed small business failure resulting in an increase in expenses while there is a decrease in profits resulting in businesses incapable of drawing equity. Sallem et al. (2017) reported the failure of small businesses was due to inability to compete or sustain competitive advantage in the business industry. Other factors Sallem et al. identified as contributing to the failure of small businesses are (a) lack of accounting knowledge and standards to make sound financial decisions, (b) lack of information and communication technology resources to manage cash flow, business records, expenditures, customers, and suppliers, (c) limited financial resources to support internal environment, and (d) poor record keeping. Karadag (2015) theorized inadequate financial management knowledge, failure to develop a strategic plan, lack of business-related training, and inadequate managerial capabilities result in the failure of small businesses.

Putra and Cho (2019) postulated that small businesses are significant contributors to the economy in which small restaurant businesses contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. Small restaurant businesses are vulnerable to failure due to limited resources, poor leadership, and high employee turnover. Parsa et al. (2015) conducted a study on reasons small restaurant businesses fail. Results of Paras et al.'s study showed that

demographics and size were primary factors that resulted in the failure of small restaurant businesses. Khan et al. (2019) posited lack of managerial capabilities in a highly competitive environment will result in small business failure.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a broad concept for which researchers lack a standard definition (Moore et al., 2017). In a study conducted by Moore et al. (2017), the lack of a universal definition for sustainability was one of the significant challenges for researchers and business practitioners to understand how to address issues related to sustainability. Geissdoerfer et al. (2017) described sustainability as systematically balancing of internal and external economic, social, and environmental factors. For this study, sustainability is the ability or capacity to support short and long-term aspects by implementing strategies and business models to overcome environmental challenges (Gauthier, 2017). Business leaders have begun to focus more on the critical components of business sustainability (Panwar et al., 2015). As a result, leaders in business industries have shown an increased focus on sustainable trends and innovation practices due to challenges in consumer concerns, government regulations, climate change, technology revolution, and social responsibility.

Most small enterprises have shown a lack of focus on integrating sustainable strategic practices due to limited resources, lack of awareness and knowledge of sustainable management tools, and benefits of achieving social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Shields & Shelleman, 2015). Small businesses' history regarding sustainability showed that most small business owners engaged and implemented

strategic planning strategies for sustainability when faced with specific components of sustainability that influence businesses from a social, economic, or environmental perspective (Del Giudice et al., 2017). Jansson et al. (2017) posited that small business owners showed limited knowledge and usage of sustainability management tools compared to corporate businesses. In conclusion, the authors provided reasons why large businesses showed increased knowledge than SMEs (Jansson et al., 2017). According to Del Giudice et al. (2017), small business owners have demonstrated an increased focus on environmental sustainability due to external pressures, such as social, economic, and ecological conditions that influence SMEs' organizational-level sustainability.

Over the decades, increased trends in environmental, social, and economic factors, such as climate change, social and humanitarian issues, corporate social responsibility, health and safety, employee welfare, and consumer product and services concerns, have forced businesses of all sizes to include focusing social, environmental and economic factors on achieving sustainability (López-Pérez et al., 2017). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) concepts of social expectations and business relationships from the perspective of society, government, and humanitarian perspectives have prompted SMEs to focus on external sustainable innovation and practices (Adams et al., 2015). Trends in environmental, social, and economic factors have resulted in small businesses demonstrating an increased focus on implementing management tools to overcome operational barriers related to sustainable innovation and practices (Johnson and Schaltegger, 2016).

Also, environmental, social, and economic factors that influence sustainability

have resulted in small business owners focusing on social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Sealy, 2015). As a result, the need for small business owners to develop frameworks to improve knowledge and awareness, and achieve sustainability has increased (Seay, 2015). Some small business owners have faced challenges with limited resources and have implemented sustainability-oriented innovation practices to implement incremental changes in values, products, processes, and methods to achieve social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Adams et al., 2015).

However, literature review and strategic analysis of sustainability trends and innovation demonstrate that business leaders of a small, medium and large companies focus on maintaining existence, growth, and achieving success given challenges in internal and external environments (Jansson et al., 2017).

SMEs have explored the implementation of open innovation to remove challenges in achieving sustainability due to limited resources (Mennens et al., 2018). According to Ahn et al. (2015), business leaders apply open innovation as a systematic process for business leaders to use external and internal ideas to increase sustainability knowledge and performance. Mennens et al. (2018) identified SMEs integrated innovation with knowledge management as a conceptual tool for developing sustainability from attaining a competitive advantage based on service innovation. The integration of innovation and knowledge management provides a systematic process in which SME leaders use various technology, open communication, and human factors in developing products, services, and strategies that allow the leveraging of sustainability (Ahn et al., 2015).

Martinez-Conesa et al. (2017) conducted a study on SMEs to test the relationship

of SME leaders who used internal and external open innovative management tools and knowledge base management to achieve sustainability. Martinez-Conesa et al.'s (2017) study showed a positive correlation between the SMEs' usage of knowledge base management information technology-supported operations and commitment-based human resource practices to achieve sustainability. Some SME leaders used an interpretative structural model to achieve environmental sustainability, which consisted of business leaders identifying factors that influence economic sustainability (Martinez-Conesa et al., 2017). An in-depth literature review on the SMEs use of an interpretative framework to achieve environmental sustainability identified that there were four critical success factors for environmentally sustainable product innovation, which were market, knowledge of law and regulation, inter-functional collaboration, innovation-oriented learning, and investment in research and design (de Medeiros et al., 2014).

Schimmenti et al. (2016) conceptualized the importance of small businesses focusing on external sustainable practices, in which small business owners integrated social and environmental performance into products, processes, and organizational structures for sustainable practices. Schimmenti et al. (2016) explored the importance of sustainability by integrating social and environmental performance into the wine business. Schimmenti et al. (2016) study indicated that small business owners who integrated social and environmental performance into the business environment achieved sustainability. A study conducted by Seay (2015) showed the importance of incorporating sustainability practices and a value-added framework to engage business managers, shareholders, and other key stakeholders in the importance of sustainability for long-term

value.

The importance of sustainability has resulted in a trend in paradigm thinking of small business owners, as sustainable trends have transitioned from profit and growth focus to include an increased focus on indicators that influence social, environmental, and economic sustainability of business performance (Silvius & Planko, 2017). Small family business owners' focus on sustainability and environmental behavior might differ from other businesses to achieve socioeconomic wealth (Doluca et al., 2018). Doluca et al. (2018) conducted a study of family-owned and non-family-owned businesses regarding the level of focus on environment-related activities, innovation, and performance to achieve sustainability. Results showed family-owned businesses showed a minimal focus on responding to environment-related activities to achieve sustainability (Doluca et al., 2018). Small family business owners should focus on developing a clear understanding of environmental factors that influence their business sustainability (Wang, 2016).

Some SMEs challenged with limited resources have implemented sustainability oriented innovation practices, which have allowed SMEs to apply incremental changes in philosophy, values, products, processes, and methods to achieve social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Adams et al., 2015). Performance gaps significantly influenced small business owners' sustainability, in which a study indicated that the smaller the business, the larger the performance gaps (Boswell, 2014). Some small business owners experienced a 2 ½ % dispersion in the rate of return. Sirén et al. (2012) selected a random sample of 153 small businesses located in Finnish to analyze business managers' processes and methods, standards, and routines that might improve the

exploitation of resources and benefits based on strategic planning and business performance, in which results indicated exploration of new businesses related to strategic plan but not related to business performance.

Transition

Section 1, I introduced the foundations of this study, which consisted of (a) problem statement, (b) purpose statement, (c) nature of the study, (d) research question, and (e) interview questions. Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations consisted of assumed facts assumed to be true, parameters not within my control and identified bounds of study. I concluded Section 1 with significance of the study and review of professional and academic literature. The review of academic literature consisted of a critical analysis and synthesis of conceptual theory and concept of study. In section 2, I re-introduced the purpose statement, discussed the role of the researcher, participants, and research method and design. In this section, I also included information on population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instrument, data collection techniques, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity of the study.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 contained a detailed analysis of the research process. Specifically, I provided an in-depth analysis of (a) role of the researcher, (b) population sampling, and (c) ethical research. Ethical research included detailed information on the purpose of ethical research and participant consent form. Next, I described the data collection instrument, technique, and analysis. I concluded section 2 with a discussion of the reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that some small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of five small family restaurant business owners in the southwest region of Texas who have implemented strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years. This population was appropriate for this study because the restaurant industry is a critical economic driver in the southwest region of the United States (National Restaurant Association, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that some small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of five small family restaurant business owners located in the southwest region of Texas, who have implemented strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years. This population was appropriate for this study because the restaurant industry is a critical economic driver in the southwest region of the United States (National Restaurant Association, 2017). Identifying strategic trends of small family restaurant business owners in southwest

region of the United States might provide current and future small family restaurant business owners with insight to improve the overall small business success rate. The implication for positive social change includes the potential for small business owners to contribute to local communities' economic growth and sustainability by increasing employment opportunities and leveraging market competition. The implication for positive social change includes the potential for small business owners to contribute to local communities' economic growth and sustainability by increasing employment opportunities and leveraging market competition.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this qualitative case study was to develop and implement a systematic data collection process aligned with a central research question. In a qualitative study, the researcher's role is to develop and implement a systematic process to ensure that collected data aligns with a central research question, and transcribed data provides a non-bias opinion (Peterson, 2019). As the primary research instrument, I planned to collect data by formulating and using semi-structured interview questions that aligned with an identified problem statement and central research question (Johnson, 2020). My role in the data collection plan was to establish interview protocol and boundaries to conduct semi-structured interviews with recruited participants.

As a formal manager of a small franchise restaurant in Houston, I have experience developing and implementing strategies to achieve sustainability. Although I have not owned a small business, I have developed business relationships with small business owners, community supporters, and customers, in which some business owners have

sustained business past the first 5 years of beginning operations. My previous restaurant management experience and rapport with small restaurant owners who have achieved sustainability beyond the first 5 years of beginning operation will not influence or introduce bias into this study. A researcher may develop a non-bias interest in researching a central phenomenon based on knowledge or experience of a related research problem (Johnson, 2020). I complied with controlling and maintaining bias in this study based on my leadership professional and ethical standards.

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research wrote the *Belmont Report*, which sets up ethical guidelines for the researcher, such as (a) respect for humans, (b) beneficence, and (d) justice when involving humans in a research study (Department of Health, 2014). I reviewed and followed the *Belmont Report*, in which I adhered to the ethical guidelines related to the respect, beneficence, and justice of human participants. Before selecting and interviewing participants, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to support human participants' ethical practices and confidentiality. According to contents in the *Belmont Report*, the researcher must apply for approval for (a) consent of the human subject (disclosure information, comprehension, and voluntary participation), (b) assessment of risks and benefits (nature and scope of risks and benefits and system utilization) and (c) selection of subject before conducting research study (Department of Health, 2014) before soliciting human participants. I asked participants standard open-ended interview questions to allow the participants to respond to their lived experiences and viewpoint. Researchers follow an interview protocol as a methodological framework

for planning and conducting an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon as participants present new ideas from a lived experience (Nowell et al., 2017).

Understanding research bias allows the researcher to avoid potentially misleading results (Shaw & Satakar, 2018). To mitigate bias and avoid viewing data from my perspective, I used bracketing and member checking to ensure reliability, credibility, rigor, and validation in the data collection process. In a qualitative study, researchers use bracketing to formulate a self-awareness of assumptions related to a central phenomenon using open-ended interview questions and field notes (Dempsey et al., 2016). I applied member checking, where I asked participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the transcribed collected data. According to Zairul (2020), researchers use member checking to control bias by allowing participants an opportunity to review, clarify and validate the accuracy of the data collected.

Participants

Determining eligibility criteria for participants involves the researcher establishing screening guidelines to ensure selected participants share similar characteristics and insight on a central research question (Johnson et al., 2020). Selecting participants with similar characteristics helps the researcher collect appropriate and meaningful data to answer the central research question (Farrugia, 2019). For this study, participant eligibility criteria consisted of five small family restaurant business owners in Texas's southwest region who (a) were over 18 years of age, (b) employed fewer than 50 employees, and (c) owned a restaurant beyond 5 years of beginning operations. I used purposive sample to select the sample for this study. Purposive sampling is a common

technique used in a qualitative research study, in which the researcher selects a sample based on participants' knowledge and experience about a central research question (Farrugia, 2019).

Gaining access and establishing a working relationship with participants is crucial for a researcher because participants are the primary data source in a qualitative study (Riese, 2019). Upon approval from IRB, I utilized the Small Business Association and National Restaurant Association databases to gain access to a listing of at least 15 small family-owned restaurant business owners in the southwest region who meet the established eligibility criteria. I contacted potential participants via telephone and email (see Appendix A) to give an overview of the study's purpose and invite participants to the study. I sent a formal consent letter for participants to review and sign electronically (see Appendix B). I focused on establishing and sustaining trust by demonstrating transparency through continued communication, being respectful, and encouraging participants to be engaged throughout the research.

I established a working relationship with selected participants by building and maintaining trust. The researcher and participants are an integral part in a qualitative research study in which establishing a working relationship that builds and sustains trust is a primary factor (Riese, 2019). To effectively support a working relationship and trust, I negotiated and communicated clear and concise boundaries, codes of conduct, completion of a consent form, and promoted open and honest communication. I allowed participants to express their thoughts and ideas, review field notes and audio recordings, and provide feedback about transcribed data and themes. I applied other strategies to

build working relationships and trust by providing participants with a list of the interview questions and ensured confidentiality and anonymity of participants' names and collected information.

Research Method and Design

Choosing an appropriate research method and design is essential to a research study in which the researcher determines the appropriate method to collect data on a central phenomenon (Patten & Newhart, 2017). Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method are the three types of research methods (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2017). The qualitative research method requires the researcher to apply inductive reasoning to acquire and collect non-numerical data based on identified themes (Patten & Newhart, 2017). Researchers use the quantitative research method to collect and use measurable numerical data to test hypotheses and generate statistical data (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2017). Researchers utilize mixed method to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods and collect non-numerical and numerical data (Patten & Newhart, 2017).

Research Method

I chose the qualitative research method to obtain an in-depth exploration and understanding of strategies small family restaurant business owners use to sustain business beyond the first 5 years of beginning operations from human experiences. Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore social interactions and obtain responses based on participants' lived experiences, behaviors, and values (Kim et al., 2017). I applied the qualitative research method to conduct semi-structured one-on-one interviews using open-ended interview questions, which enabled a deeper exploration

into the how and why responses of participants. Researchers use a qualitative method to collect non-statistical data to explore what, why, and how of a central research question (Kozleski, 2017).

The quantitative research method involves the researcher identifying variables and formulating hypotheses to test the significance of cause-effect or correlation relationships between variables (Kim et al., 2017). Researchers use a quantitative research method to conduct research based on statistical data (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). A mixed method approach consists of both quantitative and qualitative research methods in which the researcher includes statistical and social data within a single research study (Park & Park, 2016). The intent of this study was not to test hypotheses or apply a combination of statistical and semi-structured data. As a result, quantitative and mixed method were not appropriate for this study.

Research Design

Qualitative research design entails conducting data collection from one of the four common approaches, ethnography, phenomenological study, case study, and narrative study. For this study, I explored in-depth study of a central and complex research question related to strategies small family restaurant business owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years of beginning operations. The intent was to apply multiple resources to explore and identify holistic views and common themes related to *what*, *how*, and *why* small family restaurant business owners implemented certain strategic practices to sustain business beyond five years of operations. As a result, I selected a qualitative multi case study as the research design aligned with the focus of this study.

Case study design entails the researcher focusing on a central and complex research question in which the researcher applies social science to develop an in-depth understanding of factors related to a central research question (Kross & Gius, 2019). A bounded setting and holistic inquiry are essential components of a case study, which the researcher uses to capture relevant data from multiple sources that provide a detailed representation of the phenomenon research question (Harling, 2012).

For this study, ethnography research, phenomenological study, or narrative research designs were not appropriate. Researchers conducting an ethnography study a specific culture group through observation, interaction, and interview (Ploder & Hamann, 2021). This study did not require studying a culture. As a result, ethnography was not an appropriate research design for this study. The phenomenological study is appropriate if a researcher is interested in conducting a study on participants shared lived experiences (Bliss, 2016). Researchers use narrative study to study a formulate research question through story telling by participants (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The narrative study was not an appropriate research design for this study, as the purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon through an individual's lived experience and not through a story. A multi case study was most appropriate for this study due to the logical reasoning of conducting an in-depth understanding of a central research question of what strategies small family restaurant business owners use to sustain business beyond five years of operations.

Data saturation refers to the point at which no new information exists or identified codes and themes emerge for the researcher to obtain on a central phenomenon resulting

in the collected data being redundant (Lowe et al., 2018). In qualitative research, a critical part of the research is for the researcher to achieve data saturation. Failure of the researcher to achieve data saturation compromises data collection and analysis (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). To achieve data saturation, I interacted with participants answering and asking questions, recording additional information, and reviewing and obtaining feedback until no new information, codes, or themes emerged. At that point, I assumed data saturation had occurred.

Population and Sampling

The selected population for this qualitative case study included a purposive sample size of five small family restaurant business owners located in the southwest region of Texas. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher identifies and applies specific criteria to select a sample population (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling is one of the most cost effective and time saving methods for a researcher conducting a qualitative case study, in which the researcher selects participants to provide rich, in-depth information related to a central research question (Palinkas et al., 2015). Determining the proper sample size in qualitative research is based on the researcher's judgment related to the purpose of the study, established conceptual framework, and experience or view of interest (Malterud et al., 2016).

In a qualitative study, the selected sample size should be sizable enough to collect in-depth information and achieve data saturation in which no new information or themes emerges (Etikan et al., 2016). This study consisted of a purposive sample size of five participants in which I achieved data saturation by asking open ended interview

questions to participants, and providing participants the opportunity to offer additional information, and review transcribed and coded data until the no new information was exposed resulting in redundancy of data. If I had not achieved data saturation during data collection or analysis process, I would have followed up with participants for clarification and confirmation. Data saturation occurs when the researcher identifies no new information and repetitive data information occurs (Saunders et al., 2018).

The criteria for selecting participants consisted of small family restaurant business owners over the age of 18, located in the southwest region of Texas with less than 50 employees, who have sustained business beyond 5 years of beginning operations. The southwest region of Texas is one of the most prominent cities for small restaurant business owners (National Restaurant Association, 2017). I based the interview setting on the participants' convenience, in which I provided them the option to be interviewed virtually, at their business location in a private and conformable environment free of interruptions or on the phone. Before conducting the interview, I explained to the participants the purpose of the interview, the terms of confidentiality, the format of the interview, and the expected length. I also provided participants with a consent form and an informed method for collecting data. Participants received a written consent form informing them of their right to refuse to participate in the study.

Ethical Research

Establishing and implementing ethical guidelines enable researchers to protect and respect human participants' rights and preserve the integrity of research data (Thomas & Pettitt, 2017). Before conducting this study, I obtained approval from the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University, in which I followed the three-basic ethics of research involving human subjects guidelines. The three ethical guidelines are (a) the principles of respect of persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Belmont Report, 1979). The final doctoral manuscript included the Walden IRB approval number 10-29-21-0494124. Prior to engaging in the interviews, each participant received an emailed invitation (see Appendix A) and consent form (see Appendix B) written in clear, understandable format to include the invitation, purpose, length of study, and sample of interview questions.

The consent form contained a disclaimer informing participants of the right to decline or withdraw at any time prior to or during the study without penalty (Thomas & Pettitt, 2017). The participant consent form contained contact information in case participants had any questions regarding the study (Thomas & Pettitt, 2017). I emailed each participant a consent form to include a disclaimer. Additionally, I requested for participant to review and indicate their consent by replying to the email with the words “I consent” before participating in the interview process.

Ethical research builds trust and accountability and protects the rights and privacy of human participants (Meyer, 2018). I protected the privacy of participants by using acronyms instead of participants’ actual names. Ethical research consists of researchers informing participants that participation is voluntary and no compensation or incentives for their participation in the study will be distributed (Custers, 2016). To adhere to ethical standards, I informed participants in the consent form that participation was voluntary and involved no monetary or incentive reward. I also inform participants of resources that

would be used to collect data, such as field notes, audio recorder and business documents.

In maintaining ethical standards and IRB compliance, the researcher needs to include in the consent form the right of participants to withdraw at any point of research phase and receive clarity on the offering of any form of incentive (Thomas & Pettitt, 2017). In building a robust ethical research study, the researcher should provide participants the opportunity to review collected and transcribed data and the outcome of the study (Custers, 2016). I utilized member checking to allow participants the to review and confirm transcribed data, codes, and themes. I will store all collected data in a locked and secured cabinet drawer for 5 years. After 5 years, I will destroy all collected data, delete electronic data, and shred written data.

Data Collection Instruments

For this qualitative case study, I served as the primary data collection instrument in which I used multiple data collection sources to include (a) semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix C), (b) an audio recorder, (c) note taking, audiovisual data and (d) documentation review as additional instruments in the data collection process. In a qualitative study, the researcher collects data by utilizing a social interaction data collection method, which can consist of one-on-one interviews, observation, focus groups, archived records, documentation, and audiovisual (Morse, 2015). As the primary data collection instrument, the researcher conducts a semi-structured interview to collect relevant data from participants' lived experiences, in which the interviewer can offer additional insight into the central phenomenon (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

I followed interview protocol (see Appendix C) to set interview boundaries,

ensure alignment of interview and research questions and conduct one on one semi-structured virtual interviews using 6 open-ended interview questions to explore participants' lived experience, as related to achieving sustainability beyond the first 5 years of beginning operations. The researcher follows the interview protocol to ensure alignment of the interview and central research questions and essential data collected prior to and post interview (Yeong et al., 2018). In a qualitative case study, the data collection process consists of the researcher formulating open-ended interview questions to conduct semi-structured one on one interviews with set social boundaries (Smith & McGannon, 2018). I used audiovisual, audio recorder, note taking, and documentation review to capture the participants' responses and support the findings of collected data. Researchers utilize audiovisual note taking as a data collection instrument to accurately capture participants' responses and interpretations to interview questions (Nicolaou, 2021). Researchers review documentation to record data that aligns with responses (Baskarada, 2014). I asked participants to voluntarily share financial documents to support sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

The researcher enhances the reliability and validity of qualitative data by seeking each participant's approval, recording responses, and reviewing supporting documentation to interpret and conceptualize data relevant to the central phenomenon (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Member checking is the validation of data reliability in which the researcher allows each participant to review, provide input, and confirm the interpretation of their responses (Morse, 2015). I used member checking as a validation process to share transcript review, coding, and theme categorizing for collaboration and

feedback regarding misrepresentation and correction of captured data. In a qualitative study, researchers apply member checking to improve the reliability and validation of data in which inaccurate or unrelated data is removed based on follow up and clarification from participants (Smith & McGannon, 2018).

Data Collection Technique

The qualitative data collection technique involves social interaction, in which the researcher contacts participants to set up one on one semi structured interviews in a controlled environment (Rosenthal, 2016). The data collection technique for this qualitative case study will consist of a triangulation technique to include (a) obtaining approval from IRB for consent to solicit human participants, (b) identifying and contacting potential small business owners, (c) conducting semi-structured, virtual one on one interviews, (d) audio recording each interview, (e) reviewing relevant documents and (f) member checking. Researchers triangulate multiple data collection sources to show the credibility, validity, and rigor of collected data (Farquhar et al., 2020). The ability of a researcher to collect data using multiple resources provides flexibility to explore multiple dimensions to gather data on a central phenomenon (Farquhar et al., 2020). I collected data using an auto recorder and field notes as resources to capture data related to a central research question and topic.

For this study, I provided participants with a disclaimer outlining the purpose of the interview and the opportunity to withdraw from an interview at any point during the interview session. I obtained the IRB consent by completing and submitting IRB consent form. Additionally, I asked each participant to participate in a 60-minute semi-structured

virtual interview, in which I asked the participants six open-ended interview questions related to strategies small family restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years of beginning operations. Participants had the choice to conduct the virtual interview using Zoom, WebEx, over phone, or in person. Virtual interviews have become a popular and effective method for researchers to collect data in a qualitative study due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Sah et al., 2020). Researchers use interviews as a data collection technique to establish rapport and obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' concepts and motives for specific actions (Rosenthal, 2016). Participants had the the opportunity to ask additional questions.

Interviews provide the researcher with the opportunity to obtain in-depth clarification as relates to ambiguous responses to interview questions. The advantage researchers have in conducting semi structured interviews is the feasibility of adjusting, changing, or expounding on participants' responses (Dowling et al., 2016). The two most significant disadvantages of the interview technique are the length of time and the ability to control bias. I utilized member checking to review, interpret and validate relevant data. In addition, I provided participants the opportunity to review, confirm and offer feedback on data interpretation to ensure clarity in coding and applied themes. Member checking enables the researcher to establish credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative data collection by allowing the participants to review, validate and provide informative feedback on the interpretation of data (Brear, 2019).

Data Organization Technique

Researchers use data organization techniques to organize, track, analyze, and

safely store collected data (Hamilton & Finley, 2019). I used NVivo as a tool for organizing, tracking, analyzing collected data. NVivo is commonly used computer software by researchers conducting a qualitative study to manage, analyze and store collected data (Maher et al., 2018). NVivo is commonly used computer software by researchers conducting a qualitative study to manage, analyze and store collected data (Maher et al., 2018). Researchers apply a combination of reviewing, analyzing, and transcribing data using an audio recorder to identify common themes and apply codes aligned with a research question (Skjott & Korsgaard, 2019). To protect the confidentiality of participants, I applied a coding and labeling system to differentiate each participant and emerging theme.

Researchers must ensure the confidentiality and autonomy of collected data by storing the contents of collected data in a secure environment (Cypress, 2018). I will secure all electronic data on an encrypted thumb drive and secure the thumb drive in a locked safe to be destroyed 5 years after completing the study. In addition, I will safely store all field notes, my reflective journal, and other hardcopy documents in a locked safe and shredded after 5 years of study completion date. Subsequently, I will permanently delete audio recorded data from the electronic storage device to safeguard the participants' confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Methodological triangulation consists of the researcher utilizing various sources to analyze participants' responses to interview questions and documents on a central phenomenon (Heesen et al., 2019). Researchers use methodological triangulation in

conducting data analysis to analyze, compare, and confirm data gathered from participants on a phenomenon (Heesen et al., 2019). As the primary instrument of this study, I collaborated with participants to schedule a date, time, and setting to conduct a 60 minute semi structured interview with each participant. I used an audio recorder and field notation to collect data during the interview with each participant. Relevant business documents to support the small business owner's business disposition were reviewed and collected. I utilized NVivo and Microsoft Word to organize, manage, transcribe, label, code, and identify common themes.

I used methodological triangulation to conduct data analysis for this qualitative case study. Methodological triangulation involves the researcher utilizing various sources to analyze participants' responses to interview questions and documents on a central phenomenon (Lawlor et al., 2016). In applying the methodological triangulation process, I included three in-depth processes: one on one interviews, collection and reviewing of business documents, and streaming of collected data through transcribing, coding, and labeling common themes. I interpreted the data by reviewing and comparing audio-recorded data and handwritten notes until there was a clear and concise interpretation of responses and formulated identifiable patterns established. I used identified patterns to streamline text, create codes, label, and apply themes using NVivo.

In a qualitative study, the researcher uses NVivo, field notes, and an audio recorder to streamline, identify, label, and code emerging themes (Maher et al., 2018). Establishing a data analysis process enables the researcher to manage, reformat, and continuously review data to understand, transcribe, code, classify, and categorize data to

support the rigor of findings (Lester et al., 2020). In the data analysis process, I included a continuous review of manual and recorded data to understand and identify emerging, track and transcribe data simplify, categorize, label, and code identified themes in a written format, and summarize findings.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are essential to support consistency and accuracy in measuring a central phenomenon (Cypress, 2017). In a qualitative study, reliability and validity are two key concepts researchers use to define and measure the research findings' trustworthiness and rigor (Cypress, 2017). Richards and Hemphill (2017) posited that qualitative research results are subjective; the researcher is the primary data instrument and applies interviews and observations as primary data collection instruments (Richards & Hemphill, 2017). Based on the subjective data collection and analysis processes establishing reliability and validity poses a challenge due to the need to control research bias (Richards & Hemphill, 2017). Therefore, researchers can enhance reliability and validity in the results of a qualitative study by assessing credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Richards & Hemphill, 2017).

Reliability

Reliability in a qualitative study ensures the researcher's trustworthiness through consistency and adequacy in which the research method yields the same results when applied multiple times (Maher et al., 2018). In measuring a research instrument's reliability, the researcher applies the same data collection method, analysis, and interpretation to yield the same or comparable results over repeated periods consistently

(Maher et al., 2018). The researcher's ability to show reliability by achieving repetition in findings establishes the research method's dependability. Reliability is similar to dependability, in which dependability includes consistency in obtaining similar or identical results if the researcher replicated the study (Morse, 2015).

A qualitative researcher can apply triangulation and member checking to establish and measure a qualitative study's reliability and dependability (Shoaib & Mujtaba, 2016). According to Earnest (2020), researchers use the triangulation method to include member checking to support the dependability of the research study by providing participants with the continuous opportunity to confirm the completeness of research data. Triangulation is an essential method for the researcher to show reliability and dependability in which the researcher uses multiple data sources or methods to analyze data (Shoaib & Mujtaba 2016).

Member checking enhances the reliability and dependability of data by allowing participants to review, validate, and provide feedback on transcribed data to ensure accuracy (Birt et al., 2016). In this study, I used standard semi formal interview questions, interview protocol, audio recorder, and field notes to create an audio audit trail to establish consistency in replicating findings. To govern data accuracy, I reviewed and summarized collected data, asked participants follow-up questions that required clarification, and used member checking to allow participants to review and clarify data. Hadi and Closs (2017) conceptualized that using more than one resource to capture data, providing participants with standard open-ended interview questions in a controlled setting, and allowing participants to review and provide feedback on data analysis assist

researchers with obtaining detailed information to support findings in a research study.

Validity

Validity is the researcher's ability to show that the data instrument used accurately measured the intended results of a study (Rose & Johnson, 2020). According to Rose and Johnson (2020), validity in a qualitative study can be challenging due to the subjective nature of data collection and interpretation, resulting in the researcher's need to account for trustworthiness, personal biases, and data accuracy in the research findings are not influenced. As a result, credibility, transferability, and confirmability are standard criteria used to measure validity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility is the researcher's ability to show that the depth of the information gathered accurately measures the study's findings (Nowell et al., 2017). Transferability relates to other respondents' ability to generalize and apply findings from a study to other settings or situations. Confirmability is how well the research findings support the actual data collected. Nowell et al. (2017) conceptualized the data triangulation method, prolonged engagement, observation, member checking, and data saturation as techniques researchers use to fulfill credibility, transferability, and confirmability in qualitative studies.

Strategies I applied to show credibility, transferability, and confirmability were data triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, purposive sampling, and data saturation. Throughout my data collection and analysis, I utilized data triangulation, which involved using multiple resources, such as in-depth interviews, field notes, and audio recorders, to collect data (Nowell et al., 2017). To establish the credibility of the study, I used prolonged engagement and member checking in which participants by

asking semi structured interview questions related to a specific research question and provided the opportunity to review and verify field notes, audio recordings, and transcribed notes to confirm the accuracy of interpreted data (Birt et al., 2016).

I demonstrated transferability using purposive sampling and data saturation to provide an in-depth and detailed description of participants and the research process to show the study results related to other contexts and situations. The purposive sampling concept entails the researcher setting criteria to select participants who can provide in-depth information on a central research question based on their related experience and knowledge (Etikan et al., 2016).

Credibility

Credibility is an essential criterion for the researcher to demonstrate the trustworthiness and value of research findings related to a central research question (Etienne et al., 2018). The researcher uses member checking and methodological triangulation strategies to support credibility through transparency of collected and analyzed data, reproducibility of the results using the same data collection process, the robustness of outcomes, and replicability of research results (Etienne et al., 2018). The triangulation method enables the researcher to apply multiple sources in the data collection and analysis process to strengthen the credibility of the researcher's findings (Morris & Paris, 2021). The researcher establishes credibility through transparency with participants in the interpretation, transcribing, coding, and validation processes (Morris & Paris, 2021). To establish credibility, I used member checking in data collection, analysis, and finding. In addition, I executed methodological triangulation in which I

used multiple sources, such as open-ended interview questions, audio recorder, field notes, and NVivo, to collect and analyze the data.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the criterion used by researchers to show trustworthiness in which the researcher's data interpretation and findings represent participants' responses (Nassaji, 2020). Researchers can show confirmability by using audit trail and reflexivity strategies to present data and findings so that the accuracy can be confirmed by others (Nassaji, 2020). To show confirmability, the researcher can use an audit trail to track the data collection and analysis process to demonstrate how the researcher conducted the research and ascertained the research results (Carcary, 2020). Subsequently, the researcher's ability to demonstrate reflexivity in research controls the bias in a qualitative study. Reflexivity is the ability of the researcher to reflect on the role and effect the researcher contributed to the research, data collection, and analysis process, and findings of a research study (Dodgson, 2019). I used the audit trail to support the tracking of data. I demonstrated reflexivity by developing an interview protocol and creating transparency through member checking to ensure the confirmability of this study.

Transferability

Transferability is the ability of the researcher to demonstrate that other researchers or interested audiences can apply the exact findings of the researcher's study to other research contexts and settings (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019). To establish the transferability of results, the researcher uses member checking to present a detailed description of the research topic, interview protocol, data collection, and analysis process

and findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I utilized member checking and interview protocol to provide a detailed description of the interview, data organization technique, participant criteria and collected data and analysis process.

Data Saturation

Researchers in a qualitative study achieve data saturation when the study's information becomes repetitive and no new information, themes, or coding appears in the data collection process (Hennink et al., 2019). According to Constantinou et al. (2017), achieving data saturation through data rigor is a critical methodological principle in a qualitative study. To ensure data saturation, I conducted prolonged engagement and member checking to obtain in-depth information and rigor, at which point reoccurring themes and codes appeared in data analysis. I achieved confirmability by using field notes, an audio recorder, and NVivo to create a detailed audit trail of research activities, data collection methods, and data interpretation to alleviate research bias. Hadi and Closs (2016) posited that a detailed audit trail of all research activities establishes confirmability in a study by providing other respondents with the sources to review and validate the findings' relevance.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I began by discussing the purpose statement of my research study and the role of the researcher and participants. Next, I discussed (a) the research methodology and design, (b) population and sampling method; (c) ethical research; (d) data collection instruments, (e) data collection technique, and analysis. I concluded Section 2 with a discussion on the reliability and validity of my study. Section 3 begins

with an introduction of the purpose statement. Next, I discussed the presentation of findings to include the research question, themes, and the relation of themes to the conceptual framework. Section 3 further consisted of (a) application to professional practice, (b) implications for social change, (c) recommendations for action, (d) recommendations for further research, (e) researcher reflections, (f) conclusion, and (g) appendices and table of contents.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

This qualitative multiple case study aimed to explore strategies that some small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations. Participants for this study included five small family restaurant business owners located in the southwest region of Texas who have implemented strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations. The data collected originated from one on one semi-structured interviews and a review of the company and public documents. I used utilized hand notes, audio recording, NVivo, and Microsoft Word to transcribe, organize, code, and identify four common themes (a) marketing, (b) product quality and consistency, (c) customer service, and (d) finances that participants use to sustain their business beyond five years of beginning operations. I applied member checking to achieve validation, confirmation, and data saturation and identified common themes. The findings showed strategies small family restaurant owners use to achieve sustainability beyond five years of beginning operations.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do small family restaurant business owners use to sustain business beyond 5 years of beginning operations? I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews via face to face, phone call, and Zoom with five small family business owners to identify strategies small family restaurant business owners use to sustain business beyond 5 years of beginning operations. I also reviewed participants' financial documents, and recognition

Awards, and reviews. The five participants were in the southwest region of Texas and had sustained their family business beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

To protect participants' privacy, I labeled participants as SRBO1, SRBO2, SRB3, SRBO4, and SRBO5. All five participants responded to the same six interview questions aligned with the central research question. Four common themes, product quality and consistency, marketing, customer loyalty, and finances emerged from the transcribing and coding of the data. This section includes findings and alignment of each theme with Porter's five force analysis. In addition, I compared the findings to existing literature to confirm, disconfirm or extend knowledge of the research topic. Table 1 shows the occurrence of frequency of the four themes.

Table 1

Frequency of Participants' Responses Related to Strategies Small Family Restaurant Business Owners Use to Sustain Business Beyond 5 Years of Beginning Operations

| Theme | Frequency |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Quality product and consistency | 38 |
| Marketing | 25 |
| Customer Loyalty | 37 |
| Finances | 30 |

Theme 1: Product Quality and Consistency

The first theme that emerged from the participants' response and data analysis

was product quality and consistency. Participants emphasized the importance of focusing on product quality and consistency to sustain their business. All participants stressed that offering and maintaining product quality and consistency enabled them to establish and maintain the business name, product differentiation, and brand loyalty, resulting in a competitive advantage that promotes sustainability. According to participants, offering customers product quality and consistency can establish product differentiation that sets them apart from existing and future competitors.

Business owners who focus on product quality and consistency can create a strong customer value proposition by bringing products distinct from their competitors to light. (Juliana & Nyoman, 2019). When the threat of substitute products is high, and a business owner offers product quality and consistency, customers consider the product a unique commodity and are less likely to switch products (Juliana & Nyoman, 2019). In addition, customers buy products from businesses with the expectation that they provide them with product quality and consistency, resulting in business owners establishing a brand name and product differentiation (Mendocilla et al., 2020).

SRBO1 stated that due to the importance of maintaining product quality and consistency, she mostly does everything hands-on, in which she buys, preps, and cooks the food items that she serves in the restaurant. SRBO1 denoted that within the business experience of her owning and managing a restaurant, she discovered that sustainability in the restaurant business is dependent on product quality and consistency. SRBO1 indicated that achieving product quality and consistency requires following a standard process and procedure each time while prepping, cooking, and serving food to the

customers. SRBO1 stated, “We have been in business for 27 years in which being consistent in our food quality has allowed us to develop our business' name and reputation.” SRBO1 discussed that they formulated a reputation for signature foods in the Houston metropolitan area by offering product quality and consistency to customers. SORB1 stressed that celebrities, professional athletes, and government officials continue to stop in to purchase their signature foods. According to Porter's five forces concept, a business can achieve sustainability by offering unique quality products that customers value (Islami et al., 2020).

SRBO2 identified that consistency in producing and offering quality products that attract and retain customers should be the primary purpose of sustaining any business. items to our customers that were different from others in quality and consistency. For example, SRBO2 initially started out as a sandwich shop, and as the community changed over time, SRBO2 changed its business to offer more quality products to customers within the community. They added barbecue with signature sauce and catfish-shrimp poor boy sandwiches to their menu items. SRBO2 emphasized that their business name and reputation for consistency in offering quality product are well known, so it is critical that they continue focusing on improving their products to ensure quality and consistency to maintain a competitive advantage over their competitors.

SRBO2 further stated that they are not anticipating adding many new products because they offer common foods that are popular among all demographics and cultures. SRBO2 stated, “Product quality and consistency provide for product differentiation which sets us apart from other restaurant entities in our area.” The restaurant industry is

highly competitive due to the numerous existing entities and low barriers for new owners to enter the market (Hidaya et al., 2019). As a result, business owners who establish and sustain product differentiation can better position themselves to achieve a competitive advantage based on brand and customer loyalty (Hidaya et al., 2019).

SRBO3 stated that the restaurant business is a very competitive business due to customers having the liberty to obtain similar or substitute products from various restaurant entities. As a result, SRBO3 stressed that he would add and remove items from the food menus to maintain consistency in offering quality products that attracted and retained customers. SRBO3 stressed that product quality and consistency are the primary reasons customers return to their restaurant. According to SRB3, customers are the ones who confirm product quality, so when the majority of their customers' perception of quality and consistency changes, they must be open to adding or removing items to retain that quality and consistency. Business owners can achieve sustainability by consistently promoting and offering quality products that meet customers' expectations (Hidayat et al., 2019).

SRBO4 stated that product quality and consistency are essential because it allows customers to know what to expect each time they visit and buy a food product from their restaurant. SRBO4 discussed that to promote product quality and consistency, he developed and implemented a vision for his restaurant that emphasized the importance of product quality and consistency. SRBO4 denoted that building product quality and consistency in a business vision are vital for establishing, focusing, and aligning daily goals to maintain a business's primary purpose. SRB4O said, "Our vision defines a

shared purpose, commitment, and direction of what we want to accomplish and how.”

SRBO4 further indicated that providing customers with quality products and consistency has helped him sustain and grow his business. A clear and concise business vision provides business owners with a roadmap for achieving sustainability, growth, and competitive advantage within their business industry (Muhonza et al., 2021). Business owners can create and implement a vision for their business to guide standard processes and practices that contribute to product quality and consistency (Muhonza et al., 2021).

SRBO5 indicated that she had been in business for 22 years, in which quality products and consistency were essential elements to the sustainability of her business. SRBO5 discussed that the foundation of her business was pretty set because her Grandparents previously owned the business. As a result, she needed to maintain the same consistency in product quality that her grandparents established. SRBO5 said, “Whatever my grandparents did, I had ensured I was consistent with doing.” SRBO5 further indicated that product quality and consistency were critical factors in developing a brand and business name that sets them apart from their competitors. For this reason, it is essential to develop products that align with our known brand.”

The existing literature supports this practice. Product quality and consistency are determined by how often a business produces a product that meets customers' expectations (Sitanggang, 2019). Most businesses within a specific industry offer customers the same or similar products (Wantara & Tambrin, 2019). As a result, business proprietors must focus on product quality and consistency as a strategy to build customer loyalty (Wantara & Tambrin, 2019). Business owners who can provide product quality

and consistency can achieve sustainability. Customers are more liable to cater to and buy products from businesses that regularly meet or exceed their expectations (Sitanggang et al., 2019).

The product quality and consistency theme aligned with Porter's five forces analysis in which businesses can achieve sustainability by offering product quality and consistency, resulting in increased competitive advantage (Shi et al., 2020). Business owners can apply Porter's five forces analysis concept to achieve a competitive advantage over existing competitors by establishing product differentiation to decrease customers' desire to purchase substitute products from competitors. Porter's five force analysis concept is predicated on five competitive forces one of which is one is threat of substitutes. According to Porter's five forces analysis model, the level of competition for business proprietors in an industry that offer similar or substitute products will be high (Ferdinand & Tresyanto, 2020). Due to most restaurant owners' feasibility in offering similar or substitute products, the level of competition is high in the restaurant industry, resulting in restaurant owners needing to focus on product quality and consistency to support sustainability (Ferreira et al., 2022). Product quality and consistency promote brand and consumer satisfaction and loyalty, contributing to business sustainability (Ferreira et al., 2022).

Business owners can influence and limit consumers wanting to buy substitute products by offering consumers product quality and consistency (Appiah et al., 2021). The ability of businesses to offer substitute products can affect the sustainability and market position of businesses competing within an industry (Appiah et al., 2021). By

offering product quality and consistency as a sustainability strategy, small family-owned restaurant owners can increase consumer product demand (George, 2019).

Theme 2: Marketing

The second common theme that emerged from the participants' responses was marketing. All participants stressed that marketing is an essential strategy for promoting a business name, products, and services and retaining and attracting customers. Participants stated that due to the high level of competition in the restaurant industry, marketing is an essential strategy for business owners to use to develop, grow and sustain a business. Marketing is vital to small business growth and sustainability due to the high competition among small businesses (Mauzu & Shehu, 2021). All four participants indicated that marketing through social media is one of the most effective resources to build a customer base and distribute flyers. Business owners use social media, the internet, and mobile applications to achieve sustainability by implementing competitive marketing strategies such as brand loyalty, product and price differentiation, and special promotions that reach many customers (Mauzu & Shehu, 2021).

SRBO1 indicated that marketing is essential as, over time, the clientele, culture, and environment change, resulting in people wanting diverse types of food. As a result, SRBO1 often distributes fliers to advertise and offer different promotions. In addition, SRBO1 stated that due to their product differentiation and location, they experience limited competition with our products. However, SRBO indicated the importance of continuing to market their products due to changes in demographic and people wanting to try different types of food products. SRBO5 also indicated that they monitor the

demographics to adjust to changes in our external environment that may affect their business sustainability.

SRBO2 stated that the worst thing that happened to him externally was when the city started a development project near his business resulting in roads and freeway closures, which affected his clientele. SRBO2 indicated that due to the road and freeway closures, he had to do a lot of marketing and advertising to let people know that his restaurant still existed and was opened for business. SRBO2 further discussed challenges in the progress of his business due to being in a gentrification area where people move in and out, which hinders the progress of our business. As a result, SRBO2 emphasized doing a significant amount of marketing in the community and neighboring schools to promote business and show community support. In addition, SRBO2 stressed the importance of using marketing as a strategy to assist with building his business' name and reputation. SRBO2 stated that marketing helps build customer loyalty and keeps a footprint in the community, which is a crucial factor for business sustainability.

SRBO3 indicated the importance of monitoring the restaurant market for changes in customer preference and making the needed changes to retain customers and increase profit. SRBO3 responded that he uses marketing strategies to research restaurant competition in the surrounding areas to see what new and existing competitors are selling and then determine strategies to create product differentiation by doing things differently. We have to make changes. For example, we had a pool table inside our business in which we were more like a café in which we sold food. In exploring marketing opportunities, we discovered we could increase business if we converted the area occupied by the pool

table to a dine-in area. So, we decided to make our business more like a dine-in restaurant by taking out the pool table and adding a seating area.

SRBO3 further denoted that they inputted more tables and chairs, which allowed them to market their dine in services, as most customers wanted to dine in and socialize. Another marketing strategy SRBO3 pointed out using to assist their business sustainability was technology, which enabled him to use social media for marketing business. SRBO3 discussed how online marketing had assisted them with sustaining business during COVID-19, in which they used the website and social media to market and promote online ordering, curbside pick-up, and door dash. SRBO3 stated, “We also use the radio for the advertisement of our business, as well as post and distribute fliers. The COVID-19 pandemic forced restaurant businesses to change how they marketed their business (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). One must be willing to make changes based on the external environment. Significant changes in business industries' external environment have promoted most business owners to use marketing strategies to achieve sustainability and competitive advantage by promoting their business, products, services, and pricing to a larger scale of customers (Malesev & Cherry, 2021).

SRBO4 stated that marketing their business through social media is their gateway to inform and attract customers. For this reason, SRBO indicated that developing and implementing a market plan is essential. Specifically, digital and social media enable businesses to reach a large customer base on a frequent and timelier basis (Malesev & Cherry, 2021). SRBO4 denoted that marketing is a big part of communicating who they are, what they offer, and how they do it. Businesses across industries can use social

media to reach current and potential customers to market their business names and product awareness (Malesev & Cherry, 2021). SRBO4 further indicated that due to the importance of marketing, he developed and implemented a market plan to reach his target audience, promote business, and share his restaurant's vision and product offerings.

SRBO5 responded that marketing is vital due to the need to adapt and make changes due to the economy. Based on the economy, we must continue to market to our customers who work in different industries in order for us to sustain our business. Our business location is in an oilfield town, and as the economy affects the oil workers' employment, it affects us. Economic downturns affected how we did business because we geared our meals towards many employees in the oil industry. For the past few years, we have faced different challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in us using other marketing strategies to remain open. For example, we use online services to market curbside and door dash services. Business owners can continue connecting and promoting their products and services by increasing their marketing using online and digital technology (Hoekstra & Leeflang, 2020). Business owners use online and digital technology to promote and advertise business names, products, and services in which customers can access and review special promotions and restaurant menus and order food (Brewer & Sebby, 2021).

Due to the growing competition and changes in the external environment, marketing strategies allow most business owners to achieve sustainability by implementing competitive market strategies that attract and retain customers (Muazu & Shehu, 2021). Businesses can use marketing for advertising and promoting business

names and locations, products, pricing, and promotions to a broad customer base through social media and the internet (Muazu & Shehu, 2021). Marketing is also essential for business proprietors to use during economic downturns and disruptive external environment events to achieve sustainability (Bajkó et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic affected businesses globally. Most business owners market their brand name, location, changes in operations and customer services, products, and promotions using online digital and social media to customers (Bajkó et al., 2022).

The marketing theme aligns with Porter's five force analysis by providing business owners with a resource to achieve sustainability by leveraging competitive rivalry, substitutions, buyer power, a new entry, and supplier power (Sahir & Rosmawati, 2020). Porter's five forces analysis concept is predicated on business owners' awareness and focuses on five critical external factors that shape the success of a business within a specific industry (Bartunek, 2020). Marketing resources are a crucial part of a business owner's strategy to sustain a competitive advantage over competitors (Sahir & Rosmawati, 2020). Porter's five forces concept entails business owners' analyzing and leveraging marketing opportunities to gain and sustain their business position within an industry (Bartunek, 2020). Marketing is aligned with Porter's conceptual framework as restaurant business proprietors can use marketing strategies to achieve sustainability by creating a competitive advantage by offering and promoting competitive prices, products, brand name, and location (Ferdinand & Tresyanto, 2020).

Theme 3: Customer Loyalty

The third primary theme identified from the data analysis was customer loyalty.

All participants indicated that focusing on customer loyalty is essential for achieving sustainability in their restaurant business. They have also developed and implemented customer loyalty programs such as special promotions and discounts. Participants agreed that customer loyalty increases customers' potential to return, solicit products and brand names to other customers, and positively contribute to a business's profit resulting in sustainability (Uddin, 2019). Business owners who promote customer loyalty in a competitive industry that offers consumers similar products and services can achieve sustainability. Customer loyalty promotes repeated customers buying products from the same entity (Uddin, 2019). The frequency of customers returning and purchasing products from the same business and promoting the business's name and products to other potential customers determines customer loyalty (El-Adly, 2019).

SRBO1, SRBO4, and SRBO5 responded that customer loyalty derives from their business sustainability which focuses on retaining and building a solid customer base by offering exceptional and consistent customer service and consistency in product quality. SRBO5 indicated that to establish and maintain sustainability. They focus on building customer loyalty by offering exceptional customer service and being accountable for their customers' satisfaction by catering and consistently offering a quality product. Customers are business owners' most valued asset as they are the primary source for businesses' generating profit (Tien et al., 2021). As a result, customer loyalty fosters a competitive environment in which business proprietors focus on customer loyalty as a strategy to build a solid customer base to achieve sustainability (Tien et al., 2021).

All participants agreed that focusing on customer loyalty as a strategy for

sustainability requires them to interact with and listen to their customers' suggestions, feedback, and concerns and respond and seek opportunities to consider and potentially implement suggestions. SRBO2, SRBO3, and SRBO4 indicated that their customers suggested creating music and more patio seating for relaxation and entertainment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulting from the government implementing social distance impacting social gathering, SRBO2, SRBO3, and SRBO4 responded that they still provide music for customers to listen to while the customers wait in their vehicles for their food orders or curbside pick-up. Businesses can increase sustainability by increasing customer valuation by implementing strategies to promote customers wanting to buy products (Lin et al., 2020).

Additionally, participants agreed that customer loyalty involved being actively involved in the community with sponsorship and community needs. All participants indicated that building customer loyalty requires contributing to their community to allow customers and others to see that, as business owners, they are interested in more than just selling food and making a profit. They are also interested in the value and welfare of their community. SRBO2 denoted that contributing to the community has contributed significantly toward building a reputation and remaining in business beyond five years. SRBO3 stated that customer loyalty is current and potential customers seeing and knowing they are interested in giving back to the community. SRB3 provided an example in which occasionally they distribute free food and donate bicycles for kids to the community, as well as purchase and donate school uniforms and athletic uniforms to the local high school basketball team. SRBO4 stated, "People enjoy and patronize knowing

we care about our community.” Consumers expect and value businesses that value and support the community (Widad et al., 2021).

Business owners can achieve sustainability by building customer loyalty (Strenitzerová & Gaňa, 2018). Customer loyalty is an essential metric for measuring a business's success. The value customers place on a business and the business' products results in customers being consistent in returning and purchasing the product (Strenitzerová & Gaňa, 2018). Most business scholars define customer loyalty as a long-term commitment in which the customer consistently returns to buy products or services from a specific business and promotes the business name and products to other potential customers (Arsian, 2020). Business owners can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage by implementing customer loyalty as their business strategy (Arsian, 2020).

Business owners focusing on customer loyalty as a strategy to achieve sustainability is congruent with Porter's five forces analysis (Ferdinand & Tresyanto, 2020). When a business owner can implement a strategy that decreases the likelihood that customers within the industry will seek competitors or substitute products provides a competitive advantage for the business owner (Ferdinand & Tresyanto, 2020). By establishing and maintaining customer loyalty, business owners can increase the probability that customers will return, revert to purchasing products from competitors, attract new customers, establish product differentiation, and promote business names (Khairawati, 2020).

Theme 4: Finances

Finances were the fourth primary theme that resulted from the study findings.

Each participant mentioned the importance of developing and implementing financial strategies to sustain their business. All participants indicated that a business could not exist without the appropriate finances to support operating the business. Finances are an essential determinant of a business owner's profit and ability to pay expenses to support sustainability (Kimanzi & Gamede, 2020). SRBO1 stated that cash flow was not a concern due to her business location, clientele, and product quality and consistency. However, SRBO1 expressed that allowing others to manage her business and handle funding negatively affected her finances due to others' mishandling of funds. As a result, SRBO1 took a hands on approach in which she managed all finances, including ordering and buying supplies, to ensure the appropriate finances to support working capital.

SRBO2 and SRBO5 expressed limited finances negatively affect their working capital availability. SRBO2 indicated that he needed more working capital to offer competitive food menu items such as fried food or barbecue to customers when he first opened. SRBO2 stated that when he first opened his business, it was a sandwich shop. Over time, he implemented a finance plan that enabled him to operate at a breakeven point. SRBO2 noted that using a finance plan enables him to be better aware of how much target profit he has to make each day before he opens. SRBO2 further stated that his financial strategy enables him to know and manage overhead costs such as gas, lights, food, employees' salaries, and other expenses.

SRBO2 further expressed that managing and planning his finances allowed him to make the needed changes and additives in his menu items to adjust to the changes in the community and sustain a profitable business. Lack of finances to support working capital

affects business owners' sustainability due to insufficient funds to pay short and long term debts and make investments for growth (Bushe, 2019). Working capital is financing available for business owners to pay current and short-term expenses, including but not limited to suppliers, overhead costs, employees, rentals, taxes, and creditors (Bushe, 2019).

SRBO5 responded that having proper finances to support working capital is extremely important. According to SRBO5, she started on a minimal budget. She did not have the finances for working capital, resulting in her need to create and implement a budget to build her working capital to sustain her business. In addition, SRBO5 stated that implementing a budget and managing expenditures to ensure expenses do not exceed profit has assisted her in sustaining her business for over 5 years of beginning operations. Insufficient finance strategies to manage working capital can negatively affect a business owner's sustainability (Zalaghi et al., 2019). Business owners can better manage their working capital and other financial resources by developing and implementing a budget as an internal control to plan and manage revenue and expenses (Zalaghi et al., 2019). A budget provides businesses with a finance tool for reviewing and tracking assets, expenses, cash flow, and profits to forecast, plan and adjust finances to sustain business performance and meet and improve business operation needs.

Finances are a critical element for the sustainability of any business due to the need for business owners to generate and maintain sufficient funds to sustain their business operations (Howell, 2019). By focusing on finance as a strategy for sustainability, business owners know how much funding they have and need to support

short and long-term debt and future investments. As a result, business proprietors can use finances as a key performance indicator for businesses to measure their ability to optimize cash flow and profits to support sustainability. In addition, business owners can increase sustainability by ensuring the appropriate funds are available to operate, pay expenses, generate profit, and promote market growth and development (Howell, 2019). Business proprietors who implement finance strategies can improve and sustain the demand for commodity prices, inventory control, and economic downturns (Park & Kim, 2021).

Finances align with Porter's five forces analysis based on participants' responses. Participants use finance to generate profit through investments in product quality and consistency to reduce the substitute of their products and optimize cash flow to generate additional profit. Small restaurant business owners can use Porter's five forces analysis to align finance strategies to measure and achieve a profit above the industry average and promote competitive advantage through investments in market growth, product differentiation, and offering competitive pricing (Amanda et al., 2022). Finances are a central strategy for business owners to measure performance based on a business owner's ability to generate profit within an industry (Rachapaettayakom et al., 2020). Porter's five forces consist of businesses achieving profit by business owners conducting industry analysis and comparing the level of business power over rivalry of existing competition, the threat of new entrants, buyers' bargaining power, suppliers' bargaining power, and the threat of substitutes (Bartunek, 2020).

Applications to Professional Practice

The restaurant business is a highly competitive industry resulting in the need for small family business owners to implement strategies that will support sustainability. Additionally, small family restaurant owners must implement strategies that support sustainability due to the considerable amount of existing competition, low barriers for new restaurant owners to enter the industry, and increased buyer power of consumers due to the feasibility of consumers switching products. The study findings indicated 4 common themes that other small business owner might apply to achieve sustainability beyond five years of beginning operations.

Based on my findings from this study and supporting literature, product quality and consistency, marketing, customer loyalty, and finances are critical strategies that current and future business proprietors can use to potentially improve business practices that support sustainability within a business industry. Business owners can use product quality and consistency to establish product differentiation, attract and retain customers, and increase profits. Future and current business proprietors can potentially build and establish clientele by using marketing strategies to promote business names, products and services and advertise special promotions and discounts. Customer loyalty strategies can assist businesses with building a solid customer base in which customers are motivated to return and make purchases consistently and frequently contributing to sustainability. Finally, business owners should implement financial strategies to manage and generate revenue and pay expenses to support sustainability.

Implications for Social Change

Small restaurant business owners are a major contributor to local communities' economic growth and development due to the numerous small restaurants operating within the restaurant industry (Dani et al., 2022). The literature review in this study showed that most small restaurant businesses need more strategies to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of operations. The study results showed that some small family restaurant business owners use product quality and consistency, marketing, customer loyalty, and finances as critical strategies to sustain their business beyond five years of operations.

The implications for positive social change included the potential of small family restaurant business owners to contribute to local communities' economic growth and prosperity. Small family restaurant business owners might apply the findings of this study to support generating profit and sustainability, which may increase the need for employment opportunities and generate prosperity and economic growth in local communities.

Recommendations for Action

In my conducting the literature review and findings of this study, I showed the importance and benefits of small family restaurant owners developing strategies that can assist with the sustainability of their business beyond 5 years of operations. Based on the emergent outcomes of this study, my recommendations include potential and current small family restaurant business owners considering the benefits of implementing product quality and consistency, marketing, customer loyalty, and finances as strategies to assist

with the sustainability of their business. Other small business owners, potential entrepreneurs, and academic business scholars should review the study and consider the importance of using the four key themes to achieve business sustainability by establishing a competitive advantage within their business industry.

Based on my analysis of the participants' information, I also recommend that business owners focus on product quality and consistency as a strategy to attract and retain customers. The literature review findings showed that customers expect and value consistency in buying quality products and will seek to purchase substitute or similar products that meet their expectations from other businesses. Businesses exist to sell products and services to consumers, and the loss of customers affects business owners' profits and sustainability.

Small businesses can use marketing to promote the business name, products and services, building and maintaining a customer base. Participants indicated that market strategies enable them to promote their business name, products, special promotions, and discounts, and increased awareness of their existence due to changes in demographics, increased competition, and environmental changes. Small business owners should use marketing strategies, such as social media, flyers, and other technology, to build and promote their business, establish and reserve clientele and generate profit to sustain their business.

My findings of the study showed that customer loyalty is an essential strategy that participants use to achieve sustainability. Participants use customer loyalty programs to promote and encourage customers to return and purchase products consistently. Customer

loyalty is a good indicator that a business meets customer expectations and encourages other potential customers to purchase products for the business. The recommendations from the study include small business proprietors using customer loyalty to increase the likelihood of customers returning and buying products on a frequent and consistent basis to sustain their business.

Finally, I recommend that small business owners use finances as a strategy to plan and manage revenue and expenses. Small businesses should develop and implement a budget to assist with forecasting, planning, and monitoring efficient revenue to pay business expenses and show a profit. Results of the study show the importance of business owners generating sufficient profit to support growth, working capital, investments, and other business expenses to sustain the business.

It is essential to share the study results to potentially benefit other interest reviewers by providing them with insight into exploring a central research question that may be relevant to business sustainability. Based on the potential benefits of this study for current and potential small business owners and business academic scholars, I plan to disseminate this study to participants and publish peer-reviewed journals such as ProQuest, professional restaurant business associations and Small Business Association. Additionally, I will seek opportunities to share results at business seminars and training and with business colleagues.

Recommendations for Further Research

Despite the relevant contribution of the study, interested audiences should consider conducting a quantitative or mixed method to test further the relevance of the

four identified themes with a larger population size. A major limitation of this study was the size sample due to time constraints. I selected five participants were chosen to represent small family restaurant business owners throughout the southwest region of Texas. The sample size for this study was relevant given the time constraints but limited the transferability of the findings. Recommendations would be for future researchers to conduct a similar study using a larger sample size to validate or identify other vital strategies that small family restaurant businesses or other small business owners might use to achieve sustainability.

Reflections

Despite the Doctoral Business Administrative study being a long and challenging process, I found it a rewarding experience. I developed a greater understanding of critical time management and planning. I experienced many personal and work obligations that compromised my study time. However, I had a strong support group and mentors, which assisted in my becoming a conqueror. I learned that mapping to the Walden DBA Rubric, developing and following interview protocols, and completing the IRB training assisted me with mitigating bias during the data collection and analysis process. A key lesson I learned was that collecting data using one-on-one interviews is challenging due to schedule conflicts and cancellations, resulting in the need to apply and offer participants more than one resource to conduct interviews, such as conference call, Zoom, or WebEx.

Conclusion

This qualitative multiple case study was aimed to explore strategies some small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of

beginning operations. I used the methodological triangulation method to collect and analyze data, including face-to-face interviews via face to face, audiovisual, and conference calls. I applied the same analogy to conduct member checking. Upon achieving data saturation, I proceeded to analyze the data. The data analysis included labeling and coding data in which 4 main themes emerged. I linked the 4 primary themes to the literature review and Porter's five force analysis. In my study findings, I showed that product quality and consistency, marketing, customer loyalty, and finance might be critical strategies for small family-owned restaurant business owners to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of operations.

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Appendix A: Letter of Invitation

Letter of Invitation

Walden University DBA Student

[Insert date]

[Company name]

[Company Address]

[City, State, Zip code]

Dear [insert name]:

I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a doctoral research study entitled Strategies for Sustaining Small Family Restaurant Businesses. I am seeking your assistance to assist me in collecting data for this doctoral research study. The purpose of the study is to explore strategies that some small family restaurant business owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

The research will include a 20-minute semiformal open-ended interview questions to explore strategies that small business family restaurant owners use to sustain and improve business success beyond 5 years of beginning operation. Information obtained for the interview is confidential and in accordance with Walden University's Internal Review Board kept secure. Participants will receive no compensation; their names and company affiliations are confidential and not published in the doctoral study or elsewhere

Your participation could provide valuable information that supports the success of current and future small family restaurant business owners. Your decision to participate is voluntary, and you may stop the interview process at any time. Furthermore, you agree to provide documents that may help understand the strategies that have been successful in sustaining your business. You may request a copy of your transcribed interview, and a copy of the research results will be available upon request. Thank you for your consideration to take part in this study.

Sincerely,

Charlotte L. Cumbo

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

(Name of the Study)

INTRODUCTION:

The Department of Business Administration at the Walden University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with the university or researcher.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies small family restaurant owners use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations.

PROCEDURES:

You will be asked to participate in a 20 minute one on one interview in a controlled environment collaborated between you and the researcher. An audio recorder and handwritten notes will be used to collect information. As a participant, you have the right or option of having taping stopped at any time. The researcher will access and transcribing the recordings. The recordings will be stored (security) and stored for 5 years in which all recordings and notes will be erased/destroyed.

RISKS:

There are no anticipated risks associated with this study.

BENEFITS:

There are no expected benefits, gifts related to participation of this study.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS:

There are no monetary awards associated with the participation of this study.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your name will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use a study number or a pseudonym rather than your name. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless (a) it is required by law or university policy, or (b) you give written permission.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION:

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive. However, if you refuse to sign, you will not be able to in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION:

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to the researcher.

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Charlotte Cumbo via phone xxx-xxx-xxx or email at wwwwww@www.www.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

If you agree to participate in this study please sign where indicated, then tear off this section and return it to the investigator(s). Keep the consent information for your records.

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study and the use and disclosure of information about me for the study.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Type/Print Participant's Name

Date

Participant's Signature

Appendix C: Interview Protocol and Questions

- I. Open salutations and introductions of researcher and participant(s).
- II. Present consent form, review contents, and answer questions and concerns of participant(s).
- III. Give participant copy of consent form.
- IV. Remind participant of recorded interview.
- V. Turn on recording device, introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification; note the date and time.
- VI. Begin asking interview questions in sequential order.
- VII. Follow up with additional questions.
- VIII. Discuss data analysis and member-checking with participant(s).
- IX. Thank the participant(s) for their part in the study. Confirm contact numbers for follow up questions and concerns from participants.

Interview Questions

The central research question for this study is: What strategies do small family restaurant business owners use to sustain business beyond 5 years of beginning operations?

The following open-ended interview questions will address the central research question:

1. What strategies worked best for sustaining your business beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
2. What strategies were least successful to sustain your business beyond 5 years of beginning operations?

3. How did you adapt your strategies to manage internal and external trends that influence your business sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
4. What strategies did you use to ensure the daily business practices aligned with the goal to sustain beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
5. How did you address the key challenges to implement the successful strategies for sustainability beyond 5 years of beginning operations?
6. What additional information would you like to share about the strategies and processes that contributed to sustaining your business beyond 5 years of beginning operations?