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Effective Business Promotion Strategies Small Business Owners Use to Improve Revenue and Increase Business Viability

Shirley Owusu-Ankomah
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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Shirley Owusu-Ankomah

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Effective Business Promotion Strategies Small Business Owners Use to Improve

Revenue and Increase Business Viability

by

Shirley Owusu-Ankomah

MS, University of Maryland, 2018

BS, University of Maryland, 2016

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2024

Abstract

Small businesses are vital to national and local economies, yet many struggle to sustain operations in the long term. A significant concern for small business owners is the lack of effective promotion strategies, a key factor in business failure. Grounded in open system theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to investigate the promotion strategies employed by small business owners to improve revenue and increase business viability. The participants were six small business owners from Sekondi-Takoradi in Ghana's Western Region, who successfully utilized strategies to improve revenue and maintain their businesses. Data sources included semistructured interview data and business documentation. Through thematic analysis, five themes surfaced: (a) ensuring good customer relationship, (b) training personnel, (c) giving freebies/discounts, (d) exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and (e) reducing operational costs. A key recommendation is for small business owners to ensure customer satisfaction for repeat business and word-of-mouth advertising. The implications for positive social change include the potential for small business owners to generate employment opportunities, boost local and national economies, and enhance productivity by implementing strategies; such as, fostering strong customer relationships, training personnel, offering discounts or freebies, engaging in community outreach, and reducing operational costs. By sustaining these practices, small businesses can ensure continued employment and contribute to reducing poverty rates.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this doctoral study to the Almighty God. He carried me through all my tribulations and has brought me this far. All thanks and praise to His holy name. This is for you daddy, Joseph Max-Prince Ainoo (late). You always believed in me. I know you are smiling down on me up in heaven. You did great as a father. You sacrificed your own to keep us in line. Finally, to myself, Shirley Owusu-Ankomah (Ainoo), you made it through hellfire. You did not give up. You are unbelievable. Kudos!

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The intent of this doctoral study was to determine the most effective strategy of business promotions small business owners use to improve revenue and increase business viability, in a twin city (Sekondi-Takoradi), in the western part of Ghana (West Africa). The exploration of small business owners' business promotion strategies can inspire an effective model for aligning business promotion strategies with business viability. Understanding the background might assist small business owners in developing appropriate strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability.

Background of the Problem

Small businesses play an important role in terms of the development of an economy (Bello et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2022). In developing countries, small businesses are significant because they create jobs and employ the citizens of the country (Turner & Endres, 2017). According to Ayandibu and Houghton (2017), sustenance of small businesses is believed to be the key ingredient for the development of an underdeveloped economy. According to Peprah et al. (2016), the Capacity Development Centre (Ghana) estimated 92% of companies registered are small businesses. Small businesses are noted to contribute not less than 70% to the GDP of the country (Ghana) and therefore have a significant impact on economic growth, income, and employment. They also reduce risks such as poverty and crime rates of the economy. This study was designed to examine the business promotion strategies business owners in Ghana use to improve revenue and increase business viability. When small businesses are sustained, citizens stay employed and the poverty rate decreases (Adeleke, 2020; Ayandibu &

Houghton, 2017). This study went beyond existing studies since it utilized multiple sources of evidence (data source triangulation) such as literature review, interviews, archival data, and observations.

This study practiced data source triangulation. Data source triangulation involves the collection of data from different sources to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data. The benefits of triangulation include increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging, or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem (Yin, 2019). This provided fresh insight into the existing literature on business promotion strategies used by small business owners to improve revenue and increase business viability.

Problem Statement

Sustaining small businesses is one of the key ingredients for the development of an emerging economy (Bello et al., 2018, pp. 236-244). According to Essel et al. (2019, pp. 2), the Ghana Statistical Service reported 92% of businesses in Ghana were small businesses in 2015, 60% of the citizens were employed by small businesses, and above 22% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was attributed to small businesses. Fatoki (2018, pp. 25-39) mentioned that when small businesses fail, most citizens lose their source of livelihood which negatively impacts a nation's GDP. The general business problem is some small business owners (SBOs) struggle to remain viable. The specific business problem is that some small business owners lack business promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore the business promotion strategies that some small retail owners in West Ghana use to improve revenue and increase business viability. The participants were six small retail owners in Sekondi-Takoradi municipality who were able to improve revenue and sustain their businesses past at least five years. The findings will support social change by contributing to other small businesses' business viability, which can improve the standard of living of citizens. Also, the taxes these businesses pay to the government go into infrastructure that can lay the groundwork for enhanced community facilities and structures.

Nature of the Study

Researchers use quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods for conducting studies. Researchers using quantitative methods examine variables' characteristics or relationships among variables, which are measured numerically and analyzed using a range of statistical and graphical techniques (Indu & Vidhukumar, 2020). The qualitative research method is appropriate when the problem requires more than a yes or no hypothesis (Turner & Endres, 2017). The use of quantitative variables does not provide the depth to identify and explore strategies in the small business settings which makes the quantitative method inappropriate for this study. The qualitative method is suitable for this study as it provided the depth of understanding across several businesses in a dynamic context and complex business practices. The mixed-methods is not suitable for this study since it is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Bazeley, 2019; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). According to Yin (2019), the qualitative method is

expected to enable a richer understanding of a complex phenomenon, hence, the qualitative method was better for the proposed study's purpose than both the quantitative method and the mixed-methods.

Three principal qualitative research designs are phenomenology, ethnography, and case study. Phenomenology is a way of describing something that exists as an integral part of the world in which we are living (Bazeley, 2019; Newman et al., 2021). It does not necessarily provide definitive explanations, but it does raise awareness and increases insight about the meanings of participants' experiencing phenomena. The phenomenology design is not suitable for this study as it studies an individual's personal experience only and cannot explore and compare business promotion strategies used by some small business owners to increase business viability. Ethnography is a branch of anthropology that provides a scientific description of individual human societies (Newman et al., 2021). Ethnography design deals with real-life human environment and can be a disadvantage when researchers are not sufficiently familiar with the social mores of the people being studied or with their language (Newman et al., 2021). Ethnography design is not suitable for this study because of its focus on specific societal characteristics when the businesses that are the subject of this study operate in multiple social situations and norms. Yin (2019) stated that a case study design offers an in-depth adaptable approach for analyzing specific societal and developmental disciplines issues. The use of a multiple case study design supports an in-depth, adaptable approach suitable to study the circumstances and actions of multiple business owners. Yin (2019) concluded that using a multiple-case study design enable obtaining information from more diverse

organizations in a complex environment which can describe and compare business promotion strategies that some small business owners use to improve revenue and increase business viability.

Research Question

What business promotion strategies do some small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi use to improve revenue and increase business viability?

Interview Questions

1. What business promotion strategy or strategies have you used to improve revenue and increase business viability?
2. What was the process you used to develop and implement that business promotion strategy to improve revenue and increase business viability?
3. What financial, educational, or other support or resources did you use to develop and implement that business promotion strategy?
4. What were the key challenges you faced when implementing that business promotion strategy to improve revenue and increase business viability?
5. How did you address the key challenges in implementing the business promotion strategies for improving revenue and increasing business viability?
6. What else would you like to add that would increase the understanding of business promotion strategies that small business owners use to improve revenue and increase business viability?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides a possible lens for understanding the context and findings of the study (Newman et al., 2021). Open systems theory provided the contextual foundation for this study. The general systems theory was developed in the 1940s by the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1950). According to Carroll and Tosi, Von Bertalanffy defined systems as “elements in standing relationship.” Von Bertalanffy (1950) found the general systems theory within the field of biology during 1950 to gain a whole perspective of the parts that function within an organism and concluded organizations’ systems must be identified to interrelate and acclimatize to external business environment changes. The open systems theory deals with economic, political and social factors that impact change or survival of small businesses (Barnes et al., 2020). Using open systems theory enables researchers to identify both distinct parts and their interrelationships within the system instead of addressing only individual patterns (Carroll & Tosi, 1977). Understanding and applying open systems theory can benefit participants including stakeholders and policymakers in the business community to gain a comprehensive view of the key processes involved in a small business environment, and in particular, the business of a small business.

Small business owners are dependent on systems of activities for understanding, planning, and improving performance. Open systems theory is useful for small businesses because it provides a framework for thinking about processes such as change and change in open systems is a way of adjusting to shifting circumstances in the environment. Therefore, understanding the open systems theory can be helpful to small business

owners for understanding the study's results (Turner & Endres, 2017). Applying an open systems view can help small business owners take a holistic approach to improving their business promotion strategies and business adaptability to industry or environmental changes. I therefore expected open systems theory to help me identify and understand the strategies small business owners developed and implemented to remain viable beyond five years of beginning operations.

Operational Definitions

The study contained several relevant terms and concepts that common definitions helped understand. Below, authors from peer-reviewed sources informed the definition of the term. The ideas referred to jargon or technical expressions.

Small business: The definition of a small business depends on which part of the world. By United States definition, a small business is one in which the owner employs fewer than 500 people and small business managers employ more than half of the nation's private workforce (SBA, 2018). In Ghana, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) considers a firm with fewer than 10 employees as a small business (Essel et al., 2019).

Business promotion: Business promotion is basically a means of communication between the seller and the buyer. It is a part of marketing that is known as the heart of a functioning organization and has an important role in achieving organizational (Rosyidah et al., 2020).

Sustainability: Sustainability is the ability of something to be maintained or to sustain itself (Peprah et al., 2016; Warren & Szostek, 2017). Sustainability in this study refers to establishing, improving, and maintaining the business successfully.

Business sustainability: It is the business owner's capacity to create and maintain social, economic, and environmental benefits (Edgeman, 2015). Bansal and DesJardine (2014) define business sustainability as 'the ability of firms to respond to their short-term financial needs without compromising their ability to meet their future needs' and argue that sustainability must be integrated into a firm's strategy.

Business failure: A business failure is a business which has not successfully made a net profit for the prior two years and may consist of business termination (Lussier & Halabi, 2010).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The doctoral study included assumptions, various limitations and delimitations as the credibility and reliability of the inquiry depended on the respondents' statements. In this subsection, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations issues were the focus.

Assumptions

Grant (2014) defines assumptions as realities that the researcher believes to be valid and might be gotten from the researcher's encounters and societal personality. According to Wolgemuth et al. (2017), researchers use assumptions to create theories, research methods, and designs to impact the findings. The assumptions in this study consisted of making respondents understand the interview questions clearly. When interview questions are clearly understood, participants are likely to answer honestly, exhibiting integrity and truthfulness. The assumption behind the use of case study design is that conducting face-to-face interviews with multiple small business owners would provide more validity to the results of the research. The motive is to draw from different

business owners' experiences and strategies. Since one strategy may not be a solution for some small businesses, with multiple strategies, most small business owners may try the other strategies when one does not help solve a business problem. Moreover, information about the business promotion strategies in this research were constant. This is because the resources and the information that were gathered in this study were basic common business sense. In addition, a literature review was enough to portray the objectives of the study accurately. The literature review was aligned with the conceptual framework of the study and was connected to the information that was gathered from the participants.

Limitations

Limitations are possible variables beyond the researcher's control and comprises of shortcomings of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The study was done in only one geographical area which was in the Western Region of Ghana. Another limitation was the time frame that was allotted to each participate. Since most of the participants were illiterates, getting ample information intended for the study was not feasible as some needed more time to recollect some of their effective promotion strategies, they used to improve revenue and increase business viability. Participants' ability to accurately recall past performance or experiences and willingly tell their past failures was problematic and this limited the accuracy of findings. Another limitation was that this study was not broad to include all types of small businesses in other regions of the country. Also, the definition of the terms was a limitation of this study. These terms may change over time, and interpretations of their meanings may vary.

Delimitations

Delimitation in a study is basically the boundaries or limitations a researcher sets to narrow the scope of study (Sung et al., 2015; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The use of small business categories based upon employee population for the geographical area of this study was a delimitation. Some business categories in other countries have more employees and annual sales. The lack of consideration for some business category was a delimitation. Some medium size or big business owners today started as small business owners and had their fair share of good and bad experiences of handling their businesses in the past to recount. These medium size or big business owners may have experiences from when they started their businesses that can add to what is intended for this study.

Significance of the Study

Strategies for improving management knowledge and decisions are important when exploring new markets or product lines (Martínez-Tur et al., 2020). According to Kaleka and Morgan (2019), greater insights are gained by exploring the capabilities identifies and used by small business owners to improve revenue and increase business viability in the face of market performance. A qualitative inquiry and a holistic perspective brought to the fore the progress and effective business promotion strategies used by some small business owners in Ghana who improved revenue and increased business viability. The findings can help small business owners who are struggling to enhance their business promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability.

Potential benefits for affecting general beneficial social change include both new and older small businesses' potential for job creation. Exploring the perspective of managers of successful small businesses brought out effective business promotion practices for small business owners, thus promotion practices that improved revenue, increase business viability, and create more jobs for increasing communities' tax revenues for benefitting needy citizens.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Literature review sources table

The table below shows the percentage of references newer than five years and percentage peer-reviewed references. The references in the table comprises authoritative sources, dissertations, journal articles, media, reference books.

Table 1
References Used in This Study

Reference source	References	Published during and since 2019	Peer reviewed	Percent five years or less	Percent peer-reviewed
Authoritative sources	80	33	80	41%	100%
Dissertations	1	1		100%	
Journal articles	89	59	87	66%	98%
Media	1	0		0%	
Reference books	5	4		80%	
Total	178	97	167	55%	95%

Conceptual Framework

Markets can be understood only through the study of marketing information. For instance, a business is composed of many functions, which are composed of sub

functions. Each function or sub-function is independent but interrelated and enables the other to achieve marketing objectives. (Schneider et al., 2017). To attain success, the system theory in connection to business promotion needs to be understood.

Systems Theory

A system is a bunch of connected parts encompassed by a limit that assimilates inputs from different systems and changes them into outputs that serve a function in different systems (Carroll & Tosi, 1977). Systems theory is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses on the behavior of complex systems (Bednarek & Tomczyk, 2018; Flood & Carson, 1993). It seeks to understand how different parts of a system interact and influence each other, and how the system as a whole behaves and functions (Checkland, 1981; Yang & He, 2017). It is applied in various fields including biology, sociology, economics, engineering and business (Barnes et al., 2020). In the broadest sense, the system implies a setup of parts interrelated and combined by a web of connections. Bertalanffy (1950) characterized frameworks as components in standing relationship.

A business organization should respond to changes in the environment from which it takes its inputs or assets, for instant, from suppliers of raw materials, and to changes in the environments in which it conveys outputs or products and services to clients or stakeholders (Carroll & Tosi, 1977; Jantsch, 1980). Systems theorists accept that all business segments are connected (Jung & Vakharia, 2019). In business, systems theory is a management approach that views a business organization as a complex system comprised of interrelated parts that work together to achieve a common goal. It

emphasizes the need to consider the impact of changes in one part of the system on other parts and on the system as a whole (Duineveld & Meijer, 2017). It also emphasizes the need for a holistic perspective in decision making, taking into account the interactions between various components of the organization, such as its processes, structures, and culture. The goal of systems theory in business is to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness by understanding and managing the interdependencies between different parts of the system. Changes in a single segment may influence any remaining parts. Carroll and Tosi (1977) perceived that organizations are complex social systems and decreasing the parts from the entire weakens the general effectiveness of organizations.

Systems theory can be applied as a business promotion strategy by understanding the interconnections and interdependence of various elements within a business system. This approach emphasizes the importance of considering the whole system, rather than just its individual components, in order to achieve desired outcomes. For instance, a business promotion strategy that takes a systems approach would consider the relationships between the business' products, customers, suppliers, employees, and other stakeholders, and how changes in one area of the system may impact other areas (Qi & Chen, 2017). This holistic perspective can lead to more effective and efficient promotion strategies, as well as a greater understanding of the long-term impacts of promotional decisions. By considering the business system as a whole, the promotion strategy can address challenges in a more integrated and sustainable way, rather than just addressing symptoms in isolation. This can help the business stay competitive, respond to market

changes, and improve overall performance (Kim & Ko, 2019). Systems theory sees businesses as open theory in a condition of dynamic harmony, which are constantly changing and adjusting to environment and situation.

Open Systems Theory

Open systems theory, which is a branch of system theory, is a perspective about unique systems, or systems that collaborate with their surroundings (Scott, 1987). All organizations are dynamic systems, developing and changing because of input. Per chance that an organization is a machine, every one of its parts should perform appropriately for the organization to thrive. Together the parts work as a system of inputs, changing processes and outputs. Inputs incorporate data, material, and finances. Outputs incorporate items, benefits, and conduct. Small business owners utilize the data to measure what choices will affect the system and its parts.

Open systems theory represents the external environment. Small business owners typically contend on their specialized ability and utilize the information to gain a competitive advantage since they are financially incapacitated to spend on work, land, innovation, and capital (Mohamad Radzi et al., 2017). Small business owners consider both internal information sources and external information sources like developing innovation/technology or clients/stakeholders to make business decisions (Miller & Friesen, 1982). Open systems theory is valuable for businesses or organizations since it gives a framework for contemplating processes, for example, change which is a standard piece of maintaining a business. Change in open systems is the way toward adjusting to changing environments. Open systems theory gives tools to contemplating change, like

depictions and clarifications of general patterns and deterrents. Effective unique change includes focusing on input and incorporating this data as opposed to continuing with an unbending thought of how change ought to happen.

Open systems theory can be applied to small businesses as well, viewing them as open systems that interact with and are influenced by their environment (Ju & Lee, 2018). A small business, like any open system, exchanges energy, matter, and information with its environment, such as customers, suppliers, competitors, and regulators, and must continuously adapt and transform in order to remain competitive and successful. In terms of small businesses, the theory emphasizes the importance of being open to new ideas and inputs from the environment, and the need for flexibility and responsiveness in order to survive and grow (Nejati & Sharifi, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). For example, small businesses that are able to quickly respond to changes in customer preferences or market conditions are more likely to succeed than those that are rigid and unresponsive.

Applying open systems theory to small businesses can also help owners and managers understand the complex relationships between their business, the environment, and their customers, employees, and suppliers, and design strategies that take these relationships into account. By adopting a holistic and integrative perspective, small businesses can better understand the impact of their actions on their environment and the interdependencies between various factors affecting their success (Miller & Friesen, 1982; Wang et al., 2020).

Definition of Small Business

Small businesses play a major role in the development of nations and in job creation for the rural and urban communities (Aladin et al., 2021; Prajogo & McDermott, 2013). They represent an important industry in the development of the national economy in this age of globalization (Moo & Eyiah, 2020). The United States' 2018 Small Business proves that small businesses tallied 1.9 million net new jobs during the latest year studied. According to SBA (2018), There are 30.2 million small businesses in the United States, which employ 47.5 percent of the state's private workforce. Small business owners employ more than half of the nation's private workforce. In Ghana, small businesses represent 92% of the nation's business establishment and employ more than 60% of the nation's workforce (Essel et al., 2019; GSS, 2015). Indeed, small businesses are the engines of growth and development of a nation.

Different parts of the world have different definition for a small business and size guidelines play an important role (Adeleke, 2020). In developed countries such as the United States and Europe, the size standard used to define a small business is larger than the one of the developing countries. This is because of the sizes of the countries. In the United States, a small business is a business that has fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2018). As indicated by the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA), size guidelines differ by industry and are generally centered on how many employees and the amount of the business' yearly revenues. This is done to help small businesses to acquire business loans from the public authority, win contracts with the public authority, and get to regular organizations that can offer them help against larger businesses (McIntyre, 2020). The European Commission (EC) also defines a small business as a company that employs 0 -

499 employees. The union's definition is mainly in term of the number of employees compared to other nations that have variety of guidelines (Abor & Quartey, 2010). South Africa is larger than most developing countries and has the same small business definition as the United Kingdom. It defines a small business as a company that employs fewer than 250 employees (Fatoki, 2018; Hlatywayo et al., 2017). In Ghana, both the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) and the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) define a small business as a company with 0 - 9 employees, has plant and machinery (land, buildings and vehicles not included), and not beyond GH¢10,000 in value (Amoah & Amoah, 2018). The official definition of small business in Ghana (a developing country) refers to a business valued at not more than GHC10,000.00 (US\$2,000.00) and employees fewer than 10 (Blankson et al., 2017). The official Ghanaian definition is espoused in this study.

A small business is a privately owned and operated company with a small number of employees and a limited amount of revenue (Adeleke, 2020; SBA, 2018). The exact definition of a small business can vary depending on the country and industry, but generally it refers to a company that is independently owned and operated, with a smaller number of employees and a lower volume of sales than larger businesses or corporations. This explanation is the same for small businesses in developing countries. In the US, for example, the Small Business Administration (SBA) defines a small business as one that is independently owned and operated, has fewer than 500 employees, and meets certain standards in terms of revenue and net worth (SBA, 2018). In developing countries, small

businesses can play a crucial role in driving economic growth, generating employment, and reducing poverty.

Importance of Small Businesses in Developing Countries

Small businesses play a crucial role in the development of many economies, particularly in developing countries (Aladin et al., 2021). The advantages of small businesses in developing countries includes job creation, economic growth, decentralization of economic activity, increased competition, innovation, community development, and flexibility. They create a significant number of jobs in developing countries, which can help to reduce poverty and support economic growth (Prajogo & McDermott, 2013). By providing employment opportunities for local residents, small businesses can help to create a more stable and prosperous local economy (Moo & Eyiah, 2020). In addition, small businesses can also provide training and skills development opportunities for their employees, helping them to grow their careers and improve their financial stability. Small businesses contribute to overall economic growth by creating new products and services, stimulating innovation, and increasing economic activity (Al-Haddad et al., 2019). By generating revenue and creating jobs, small businesses can have a positive impact on the economy and help to support economic development. Additionally, the growth of small businesses can also create new opportunities for investment and further economic growth, providing a positive feedback loop for the overall economy (Soegoto et al., 2022). They can help to distribute economic activity beyond major urban centers, reducing disparities in wealth and income between rural and urban areas. This can help to promote rural development and reduce poverty in rural

communities, while also helping to spur economic growth and create new opportunities in these areas.

They can increase competition in local markets, which can benefit consumers by driving down prices and improving the quality of goods and services. This can also help to create a more dynamic and competitive business environment, which can attract new investment and stimulate economic growth. Small businesses are often more innovative than larger organizations and are able to quickly respond to changes in their markets. By introducing new products and services, small businesses can help to drive economic growth and create new opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation (Soegoto et al., 2022). This can be particularly important in developing countries, where new and innovative products and services are often in high demand. They can have a positive impact on the local community by providing jobs, supporting local suppliers and services, and contributing to the overall well-being of the community (Williams et al., 2020; Zuofa et al., 2022). By supporting small businesses, local communities can help to create a sustainable, vibrant local economy, which can improve the quality of life for residents and help to promote economic growth.

Small businesses are often more flexible than larger organizations and can quickly respond to changes in their markets and take advantage of new opportunities as they arise. This can help small businesses to remain competitive and thrive in a fast-changing business environment and can also help them to take advantage of new market opportunities as they emerge. They play a vital role in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in developing countries (Al-Haddad et al., 2019). They create jobs and

contribute to overall economic growth by creating new products and services, stimulating innovation, and increasing economic activity. Small businesses also decentralize economic activity, which reduces disparities in wealth and income between rural and urban areas (Aladin et al., 2021; Oduntan, 2014). They increase competition in local markets, drive down prices and improve the quality of goods and services. Additionally, small businesses have a positive impact on the local community by providing jobs and supporting local suppliers and services. Finally, small businesses are flexible and can quickly respond to changes in their markets, making them well-equipped to thrive in fast-changing business environments.

Challenges of Small Businesses in Developing Countries

Small businesses in developing countries have some disadvantages, which can limit their growth and potential for success. These includes but not limited to lack of access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, corruption and political instability, lack of education and skills, competition from larger firms and limited access to markets. A necessary component of maintaining small business and SME owner survival is determining and evaluating why business owners fail (Dung & Giang, 2022). Small business owners often struggle to access the financing they need to grow and expand. This is due to a variety of factors, including limited access to traditional banking services, a lack of collateral to secure loans, and a perceived high level of risk by financial institutions. As a result, small business owners in developing countries often have to rely on personal savings or informal sources of financing, which can limit the amount of capital they have available to grow their businesses.

Developing countries often suffer from poor infrastructure, including inadequate transport and communication networks, which can make it difficult for small businesses to operate and compete effectively. For example, poor road networks can make it difficult for small businesses to transport goods to market, while limited internet connectivity can limit their ability to access online markets and reach customers. Corruption and political instability can limit the growth and success of small businesses in developing countries. This can take the form of arbitrary regulations, unpredictable policy changes, and unfair treatment of small businesses by government officials and larger companies. For example, small businesses may be required to pay bribes to government officials to obtain licenses or permits or may be subject to discriminatory regulations that limit their ability to compete.

Owners of small business in developing countries may lack the education and skills necessary to run a successful business. This can limit their ability to manage their finances, market their products and services, and navigate the business environment effectively. This is due to a lack of access to business training and education, as well as limited exposure to successful business models and best practices. They often face significant competition from larger, more established firms. This can limit their market share and ability to grow and succeed. For example, larger firms may have access to more resources, including financing, marketing and distribution networks, which give them a significant advantage over small businesses. They can also face limited access to markets, which can limit their ability to reach customers and grow their businesses. This can be due to factors such as limited distribution networks, a lack of online connectivity,

or barriers to entry created by larger, established firms. For example, small businesses may be excluded from participating in tenders for government contracts or may face difficulty in accessing suppliers and distribution channels.

It is important to note that while these disadvantages can limit the growth and success of small businesses in developing countries, there are also many successful small businesses that have overcome these challenges and achieved great success. With the right support and resources, small businesses in developing countries can overcome these disadvantages and contribute to economic growth and development.

Other Challenges

Small businesses often face a variety of other challenges. This includes competition, limited resources, cash flow, access to financing, regulation and compliance, marketing and visibility, finding and retaining talent and technological advancements (Serwaa Adjei-Boateng, 2022). They must compete with larger, established companies for customers and market share. This can be especially challenging in industries with a high degree of competition, where customers have a wide range of options to choose from (Gunasekaran et al., 2011). Small businesses have limited resources, such as capital, staff, and time, which can make it difficult to achieve their goals. For example, they may not have the funds to invest in the latest technology or the manpower to expand into new markets.

Maintaining positive cash flow can be a challenge for small businesses, especially during slow periods or when facing unexpected expenses. This is because they may not have a steady stream of income, which can make it difficult to manage their finances

effectively (Manzoor et al., 2021). They often face difficulty in obtaining financing, such as loans or investment, to fund their operations and growth. This can be due to a lack of collateral, poor credit history, or a lack of established business history (Adeyemi, 2014; Manzoor et al., 2021). Small businesses must navigate a complex landscape of regulations and compliance requirements, which can be time-consuming and expensive. For example, they may need to comply with various regulations related to taxes, employment, and environmental protection. They may also struggle to build brand recognition and reach their target audience, especially in crowded marketplaces (Berkes, 2016). They may lack the resources to invest in expensive marketing campaigns or the expertise to develop effective marketing strategies.

Hiring and retaining talented employees can be a challenge for small businesses, especially given the limited resources and compensation options available. They may struggle to attract and retain top talent in a competitive job market. Small businesses must keep pace with rapidly evolving technology and adapt to changing market demands. They may struggle to invest in the latest technology or may not have the expertise to effectively use it, which can put them at a disadvantage compared to larger businesses (Adisa et al., 2014; Opara, 2011).

Business Promotion Strategy

Small business owners are confronted with business promotion strategy challenges. Kubberod et al. (2019) mentioned that marketing is one of the most significant for small business survival, reestablishment, and development. Some of these challenges faced by small business owners in terms of promotion strategies are limited

budget, lack of expertise, difficulty standing out, reaching target audience, keeping up with technology, measuring success and balancing cost and impact. Many small businesses have limited budgets for marketing and advertising, which can make it difficult to compete with larger businesses. This can limit the options available for promoting the business and reaching customers (Gbandi & Amissah, 2014). Since some small business owners may lack the knowledge and experience needed to develop and implement effective promotion strategies, they may need to invest in education or hire experts to help with marketing and advertising efforts (Thrassou et al., 2020).

They may struggle to differentiate themselves from their competition, especially in crowded marketplaces (Berkes, 2016). They need to find ways to make their brand, products, and services stand out and appeal to their target audience. Finding and reaching the target audience can be a challenge for small businesses, especially if they have limited resources for market research and customer outreach. They need to understand who their customers are and how to reach them effectively (Gumel, 2017).

Small businesses must keep up with the latest technology and trends in marketing and advertising, which can be challenging given limited resources and expertise. They need to stay current on new platforms and technologies and understand how to use them to reach their target audience (Gumel, 2017; Thrassou et al., 2020). Small business owners may struggle to accurately measure the success of their promotion efforts, especially if they have limited data and analytics tools at their disposal (Berkes, 2016). They need to track key metrics and adjust their strategies based on what works and what doesn't.

Finding the right balance between cost and impact when it comes to promotion strategies can be a challenge for small businesses. They need to find cost-effective strategies that also deliver results and reach their target audience effectively (Kotler, 2000). They need to be strategic and prioritize their efforts to maximize impact while minimizing cost (Adisa et al., 2014; Gbandi & Amissah, 2014). The common view in marketing research is that small business owners should begin with a recognized market need, direct statistical surveying, and arrange resources to arrive at a quantifiable marketing objective (Kubberod et al., 2019). For small businesses to survive, a competitive advantage is critical to competing against both small and larger firms (Verma & Bashir, 2017). Competitive advantage can be achieved through good business promotion strategy.

The owner of the small business is the person at the core, driving the networking process, where existing means are put into play to develop a guiding purpose which can be promoted to attract new stakeholders outside of traditional markets (Berkes, 2016). Here, the owner-manager tend to focus on the product first, and on the market second. This focus is rather on transforming initial inspirations into a purpose, promoting it convincingly through storytelling and then taking this to the market for further co-creation. Laaksonen et al. (2011) highlighted that entrepreneurial aspirations create a purpose that can be leveraged. This purpose, together with the owner-manager's expertise and know-how, should be used to align the actors in the value chain to commit themselves to the process of discovering new market opportunities (Kotler, 2000).

Small businesses in developing countries face unique challenges and failures that can result in their downfall (Ratten, 2020). Some of the common reasons for small business failures and challenges in developing countries are lack of access to finance, poor infrastructure, corruption and red tape, competition with informal sector, lack of skilled workers, political instability, limited market opportunities and currency fluctuations.

In developing countries, small businesses often have limited access to traditional sources of finance, such as banks, due to limited financial infrastructure and a lack of credit history (Manzoor et al., 2021). This can result in a shortage of working capital, making it difficult for small businesses to cover their expenses, purchase inventory, and invest in growth. To overcome this, small businesses in developing countries can explore alternative sources of financing, such as microfinance institutions, peer-to-peer lending platforms, and crowdfunding. Inadequate infrastructure, such as limited access to electricity, water, and transportation, can create barriers to growth and competitiveness. This can increase the cost of production, reduce the quality of products and services, and make it difficult for small businesses to meet customer demands. Small businesses in developing countries can try to overcome these challenges by investing in renewable energy sources, such as solar power, and seeking support from government or international organizations to upgrade their infrastructure.

Corruption and bureaucratic red tape can pose significant challenges to small business success in developing countries. This can include unpredictable regulations, bribery, and a lack of transparency, which can increase the cost of doing business and

make it difficult for small businesses to compete and succeed. To overcome this, small businesses can seek support from anti-corruption organizations, participate in advocacy efforts to reduce corruption, and seek out business partnerships with organizations that prioritize transparency and ethical business practices. The informal sector, such as street vendors and informal markets, can be a major source of competition for small businesses. This can result in lower prices, making it difficult for small businesses to compete and attract customers. To overcome this, small businesses in developing countries can focus on developing niche products and services that cannot be easily replicated by the informal sector and can seek support from business organizations and government programs that provide training and resources to help small businesses compete.

In many developing countries, a lack of access to education and training opportunities can result in a shortage of skilled workers, making it difficult for small businesses to find employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to run a successful business. To overcome this, small businesses in developing countries can invest in employee training and development, partner with educational institutions and training programs, and seek out business partnerships with organizations that provide access to skilled workers. Political instability and conflict can create an uncertain business environment in developing countries, making it difficult for small businesses to plan and grow. To overcome this, small businesses in developing countries can seek support from business organizations and advocacy groups that promote stability and security, and can consider diversifying their operations to reduce their dependence on a single location or market. Small businesses can face limited market opportunities, due to a lack of access to

markets and customers in developing countries. This can result in a lack of sales and revenue, making it difficult for small businesses to survive and thrive. To overcome this, small businesses in developing countries can explore new markets through exports and online sales and can seek support from business organizations and government programs that provide access to new customers and markets.

Currency fluctuations can also have a significant impact on small businesses in developing countries, as changes in currency values can affect the cost of goods and services, making it difficult for small businesses to predict and manage their expenses. To overcome this, small businesses in developing countries can seek support from financial institutions and organizations that specialize in currency hedging and risk management and can diversify their revenue streams to reduce their dependence on a single currency.

To overcome these challenges and mitigate the risk of failure, small business owners in developing countries should seek the support of business organizations and training programs that can provide guidance and resources. They should also build partnerships with other businesses and organizations, both locally and internationally, to gain access to new markets, customers, and capital. Additionally, small business owners should be proactive in adapting to changes in the market and seek out new opportunities for growth and expansion.

Strategic Planning for Small Businesses Success

For small businesses to be successful, owners need to begin by defining their mission, who they are, and why they exist (Jayaratne et al., 2019). Strategic planning is a crucial aspect of running a small business, as it helps the company to define its direction

and make informed decisions on how to allocate its resources. The process of strategic planning involves several key steps that enable a small business to evaluate its current position, set goals and objectives, and develop strategies to achieve these goals. Business owners would then create a vision which is a narrower and focused purpose. Once the mission and vision statements are known, the strategic, tactical, and operational plans are created (Kinicki & Williams, 2016).

The first step in the process is to define the business mission, vision, and values. This helps to establish the purpose of the business and what it stands for and provides a clear direction for the company to follow. A well-defined mission, vision, and values can also serve as a motivator for employees and provide a sense of purpose for the company. The next step is to conduct a SWOT analysis to understand the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This helps to identify the internal and external factors that may impact the business and allows the company to make informed decisions on how to address these factors. Once the SWOT analysis has been completed, the small business can set both short- and long-term goals and objectives. These goals and objectives should be aligned with the company's mission, vision, and values, and should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). To achieve the goals and objectives, the small business must then develop strategies (Pahurkar, 2016). These strategies should take into account the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as identified in the SWOT analysis. It is important for the small business to allocate resources, such as finances, manpower, and technology, to implement the strategies effectively. Finally, the small business must monitor its progress

and regularly review and update its strategic plan. This helps to ensure that the company remains on track and can adapt to changing market conditions.

Strategic planning is described by Ali (2018) as a procedure for identifying the company's long-term goals, developing and assessing various strategies, as well as a method for tracking the results of the plan when it is put into action. It is seen as a process in which a small business identifies its mission or objective and decides how to allocate resources in order to achieve that mission or goal, according to Hu et al. (2018). Any small business should engage in strategic planning as a smart business practice. It makes the small business' vision, purpose, and priorities clear (Brosan & Levin, 2017). Dyer et al. (2016) claim that choosing the company's course of action will help it develop and maintain a competitive edge. For the small business to remain healthy and prosperous, strategic planning is crucial. Financial gains are produced, organizational operations are guided, a competitive advantage is created, risks are reduced, etc. Understanding the environment, defining organizational goals, identifying possibilities, making and implementing decisions, reviewing actual performance, modifying the plan, and repeating the cycle are the main duties of developing a strategic plan (Milanya, 2014).

Strategic planning is essential for the success of small businesses. By defining its mission, vision, and values, conducting a SWOT analysis, setting goals and objectives, developing strategies, and monitoring progress, a small business can grow and remain competitive in the market. A well-planned and executed strategic plan can help a small

business to achieve its long-term goals and succeed in a constantly changing business environment (Chaudhry et al., 2014).

Benefits of Strategic Planning

There are numerous benefits of strategic planning if it is done right. Some of the benefits are as follows:

- Offers a roadmap outlining the small business' direction and a path to get there.
- Encourages stakeholders to engage in discourse that fosters strategic thinking, action, and learning.
- Encourages participation from stakeholders at all levels of the agency, which enhances decision-making and the capacity to meet difficulties as they arise.
- Increases understanding of the small business' potentials in light of its assets and liabilities and makes it easier to manage any operational issues.
- Encourages employees to feel more secure since they have a better understanding of how the business can adjust to changing conditions.
- Promotes improved internal activity coordination.
- Is advantageous to all parties concerned and may increase the efficiency of larger societal systems (Boyden & Waldman, 2012, p.3).

Hurdles of Strategic Planning and Implementation/Recommendations

Strategic planning is to leverage cutting-edge and varied future prospects, claims Milanya (2014). Other studies paint a somber picture of strategy implementation success and suggest that strategic plans are more likely to fail than to succeed, despite studies showing that the small business that form strategic planning and follow through with the

strategic implementation outperform the small business that do not (George et al., 2018). Small businesses need to implement strategic management if they want to succeed. Long-term goals and plans are part of strategic management, which enables businesses to make the most of their resources, seize opportunities, and gain a competitive edge (Katsanos, 2019). Strategic management has several benefits, like encouraging collaboration and lowering resistance to change, but it also has drawbacks. The strategic management process is intricate, labor-intensive, and challenging to implement; careful planning is necessary to prevent downsides (Katsanos, 2019).

Small businesses that lack the prerequisites for developing an effective strategic plan would benefit from not using it, as the high failure rate of strategic efforts cannot only be attributed to the inherent complexity of strategic processes but also to a dearth of practice-oriented research on the topic (Desmidt & Meyfrootd, 2018). An example of a small business that might benefit from not using strategic planning is one that is not financially secure, lacks strategic planning expertise, lacks unified business units, etc. Strategic planning and implementation take a lot of time, money, and effort (Jayaratne et al., 2019). Small businesses should have clear metrics for determining whether the plan is being carried out in order to guarantee its successful implementation (Dyer et al., 2016). An action plan is required by organizations in order for the strategic plan to be easily implemented. A strategic map is needed to help with implementation and keep track of an action plan. An action plan, according to Lachman (2018), would assist the small business, which divides its work into quarters over a number of years, in reaching that objective and in establishing key performance indicators (KPI) for each quarter. That

would keep the company moving toward each annual goal and demonstrate to the team where they stand in relation to achieving your goals. Strategic planning, according to Boyden and Waldman (2012), enables businesses to position themselves to adapt, overcome obstacles, and realize their growth and success opportunities. To achieve and maintain business success, owners of small businesses must implement strategic decisions, monitor, revise, and continue the cycle (Byun et al., 2020). There are challenges that could bring the small business to its knees as well as advantages like increased revenue.

Small businesses need the appropriate skill sets to plan the strategy and reduce risk factors in order to avoid future difficulties, which include varying degrees of change and risks (Katsanos, 2019). To address potential future changes in the external environment, such as market conditions, competitive forces, and economic factors that may have a negative effect on the business, the small business would need managers who could monitor and develop business contingency plans. During the process of putting strategic decisions into action, a strategy map is an essential tool. According to Socoliuc et al. (2015), a strategy map is an important tool for communicating the strategy, directing efforts within the small business, and putting the strategy developed by the entity's management into action.

Promotion Strategies to Improve Revenue

Small businesses play a crucial role in the economic growth and development of developing countries (Aladin et al., 2021). However, promoting and growing a small business in a developing country can be challenging due to various factors such as limited

resources, infrastructure, lack of access to capital, but to mention a few. To improve revenue, small businesses in developing countries need to have effective promotion strategies in place. Small businesses need effective promotion strategies to improve their revenue. Creating a strong online presence (social media), improve communication, building strong relationships with customers (public health, community engagement, relationship marketing), update knowledge on current market trends (emergent strategies and bottom of the pyramid), etc. These are some effective strategies that small businesses can use to improve their revenue. By implementing these strategies, small businesses can increase their visibility, attract new customers, and retain existing ones, which can translate into higher revenue and long-term success.

Social Media as a System for Promotion Strategy

Social media has become an essential tool for small businesses looking to promote their products and services in today's highly competitive marketplace (Adegbuyi et al., 2015). Social media for small businesses is its affordability. Unlike traditional forms of advertising such as television, radio or print, social media platforms can be used for free or at a low cost. This allows small businesses to reach a large audience and promote their products and services effectively, even on a tight budget (Kanth & Prasad, 2023). Social media for small businesses is its ability to build and strengthen relationships with customers. Small businesses use social media marketing to build a relationship directly with the customer (Venciute, 2018). This makes social media a desirable medium for small business advertising. Social media platforms provide businesses with the opportunity to interact directly with their customers, creating a more

personal and engaging experience. This can help to build brand loyalty and increase customer satisfaction, leading to increased sales and revenue for small businesses (Kanth & Prasad, 2023).

It can also be a powerful tool for small businesses to promote their social business initiatives and reach a larger audience (Vardhini et al., 2019). For example, a small business can use social media to share updates on its initiatives, post photos and videos of its impact, and engage with customers who are interested in its social and environmental mission. Additionally, by partnering with like-minded organizations and influencers, small businesses can further amplify their message and reach new audiences.

Additionally, social media provides small businesses with the opportunity to target their promotions based on specific demographics, interests, and behaviors, making it possible to reach a highly engaged and relevant audience (Kanth & Prasad, 2023). Small businesses tend to lack financial resources to begin a sustainable marketing campaign, but a properly executed social media campaign can target consumers and increase sales at a lower cost. Small businesses can fail due to a lack in exposure, but social media use can increase exposure and help small businesses compete with larger firms for market share (Hidayanti et al., 2018; Vardhini et al., 2019). This is particularly useful for small businesses that may not have the resources to reach a large audience through traditional forms of advertising.

However, social media also has its limitations as a promotion tool for small businesses. One of the biggest challenges is standing out in a crowded and noisy environment (Kanth & Prasad, 2023). With so many businesses and individuals

competing for attention on social media, it can be difficult for small businesses to get noticed. Small businesses are therefore faced with the challenge of facilitating more interactions with customers by deploying new technologies and capabilities (Andzulis et al., 2012). This can make it difficult to effectively promote products and services, and can lead to poor results and decreased return on investment. Another limitation of social media for small businesses is the potential for negative reactions and comments from customers. Social media platforms are inherently public, meaning that negative comments or complaints from customers can quickly spread and damage a brand's reputation. This can make it difficult for small businesses to effectively manage their online presence and can lead to long-term damage to their brand.

Social media is a valuable tool for small businesses looking to promote their products and services. It offers a cost-effective way to reach a large audience, build relationships with customers, and target promotions effectively. Social media may generate better access to customer information given the customer-to-customer or firm-to-customer interactions (Agnihotri et al., 2012). However, it also has its limitations, including the challenge of standing out in a crowded environment and the potential for negative reactions from customers. As with any promotion strategy, it is important for small businesses to carefully consider their goals and objectives, and to carefully weigh the strengths and limitations of social media before making a decision on how to best use it as part of their overall promotion strategy.

Communication

Communication is a crucial promotion strategy for small businesses in developing countries, as it helps to reach out to potential customers, partners, and stakeholders. Some ways in which communication can be used to promote small businesses are word of mouth, social media, networking, community engagement and direct marketing.

Word of mouth marketing is a highly effective and cost-efficient way for small businesses in developing countries to reach new customers. By providing excellent customer service, high-quality products, and a positive overall customer experience, small businesses can encourage their satisfied customers to spread the word about the business to others (Zolkiewski et al., 2017). Word of mouth recommendations are particularly powerful in communities where personal connections and trust play a significant role in decision-making (Faramondi et al., 2023). Social media provides small businesses in developing countries with the opportunity to reach a large audience at a low cost (Vardhini et al., 2019). By creating a strong online presence on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, small businesses can showcase their products, engage with their customers, and build brand awareness. Regularly posting high-quality content that is relevant to their target audience can help small businesses establish their brand as a thought leader in their industry and attract new customers. Networking events, such as local business fairs, trade shows, and conferences, provide small businesses in developing countries with the opportunity to meet other entrepreneurs, showcase their products, and make valuable connections. These events can help small businesses build relationships with potential customers, partners, and suppliers, and increase their visibility in the local business community. By participating in community events and projects, small

businesses in developing countries can demonstrate their commitment to the local community and build positive relationships with potential customers (Williams et al., 2020). Community engagement can take many forms, such as sponsoring local sports teams, donating to local charities, or volunteering at community events. This type of engagement can help small businesses build a strong reputation, foster a sense of loyalty among their customers, and attract new business (Zuofa et al., 2022). Direct marketing involves targeting specific segments of the target audience with tailored messages. For small businesses in developing countries, direct marketing can take the form of email marketing, direct mail, or telemarketing. By segmenting their target audience and tailoring their messaging to specific groups, small businesses can reach their most promising potential customers with targeted, relevant messages. Direct marketing can also provide small businesses with valuable insights into the behavior and preferences of their target audience, which can be used to inform future marketing efforts.

Communication is a crucial promotion strategy for small businesses in developing countries, as it helps reach out to potential customers, partners, and stakeholders. Small businesses can use a combination of strategies such as word of mouth, social media, networking, community engagement, and direct marketing to effectively promote their brand, reach new customers, and grow their business (Vardhini et al., 2019). Word of mouth marketing is a cost-effective way to reach new customers through personal recommendations, while social media provides a platform to reach a large audience at a low cost. Networking events, community engagement, and direct marketing help small

businesses build relationships, demonstrate their commitment to the local community, and target specific segments of their audience with tailored messages.

Other Ways to Improve Revenue

Some other ways to improve small business revenue are customer service, referrals, corporate responsibility, thank customers and motivate employees.

Improving customer service can have a significant impact on the revenue of small businesses. By personalizing the customer experience, responding promptly to inquiries, training employees, using technology, encouraging feedback, offering excellent post-sales support, and providing incentives, small businesses can enhance customer satisfaction retain customers and drive revenue growth (Zolkiewski et al., 2017). Customer referral is critical to increasing revenue for small businesses. Referrals encourage existing customers to promote the company's brand in exchange for free or discounted products. This method has the bonus of creating new customers as well as increasing the value of existing customers. By providing excellent customer service, encouraging customer feedback, creating a referral program, providing a memorable experience, making it easy for customers to refer others, offering rewards for successful referrals, and following up with customers who have made referrals, small businesses can increase customer referral and drive revenue growth. Customers often choose companies and products that align with their values, so showing corporate responsibility can encourage customers to continue giving their business to the company. This practice can include donating to charities, volunteering or advocating for certain causes. Small businesses should consider which of their values their customers appreciate most and get

involved with an initiative that demonstrates a positive contribution to society. Enhancing customer convenience is an important aspect of improving revenue for small businesses. Take steps to make purchasing their product as convenient as possible. By offering multiple channels for customer service, streamlining the checkout process, providing mobile-friendly experiences, offering flexible delivery options, providing helpful product information, and offering personalized experiences, small businesses can improve customer convenience and increase revenue. Small businesses should regularly give thanks to the customers who patronize their business. Sales employees showing humility can encourage customers to continue working with them and positively reinforce their decision to make a purchase. Thanking customers can occur through simple note, text messages or personalized gifts. Small businesses can also show their appreciation for customers by sending thank you notes, text messages or emails. This can include sending a personal message to customers who have made a purchase or sending email to all customers to thank them for their support. By sending these types of messages, businesses can foster a strong connection with their customers and increase customer engagement. Motivating employees is a key part of improving revenue for small businesses. Find ways to encourage the lead employees to work more efficiently. By offering praise, competitive compensation and benefits, providing opportunities for growth and development, encouraging open communication, recognizing and rewarding employee achievements, and encouraging a work-life balance, a good work environment, small businesses can attract and retain top talent, increase employee engagement, and

drive performance. Motivated staff members who are positive and productive can help generate more revenue.

Relationship Marketing

In order to earn and retain customers' long-term preferences and business, relationship marketing aims to build long-term, mutually satisfying relationships with key parties such as distributors, suppliers, and customers (Hidayanti et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2020). The creation of a one-of-a-kind company asset known as a marketing network is the ultimate result of relationship marketing (Zhang et al., 2019). The company and its supporting stakeholders, such as customers, employees, suppliers, distributors, and university scientists, are the members of a marketing network. These stakeholders have established mutually beneficial business relationships with the company. With profits going to the company with the best marketing network, competition is increasingly becoming between marketing networks rather than between businesses. Beyond the scope of one-time transactions, small business owners can make use of this relationship to promote their businesses, strengthen customer loyalty, and increase customer retention. According to Zhang et al. (2019), understanding and managing customer relationships are essential to business marketing. A company's long-term survival is greatly influenced by the loyalty of its customers (Utami et al., 2018). Furthermore, Marek (2014) argued that small- to medium-sized businesses limited geographic market coverage allowed them to concentrate more effectively on brand promotion and customer loyalty than larger rivals.

Public health and community engagement

Public health and community engagement can also be seen as a business promotion strategy for small businesses in developing countries (Jiang et al., 2023). By prioritizing public health and engaging with the community, small businesses can not only improve their operations, but also promote their businesses in several ways like building brand reputation, differentiating from competition, creating positive word-of-mouth and leveraging local networks.

By prioritizing public health, small businesses can demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of their customers and the community. This can help to build a positive image and reputation for the business, which is essential in attracting and retaining customers (Shahid, 2019). A good reputation can also help businesses to attract new customers who are looking for businesses that prioritize health and safety. Small businesses that prioritize public health and engage with the community can differentiate themselves from their competition by offering unique and valuable products and services. For example, a small restaurant that focuses on offering healthy menu options and uses locally-sourced ingredients can appeal to customers who are health-conscious and environmentally-aware. When customers have a positive experience with a small business, they are more likely to share their experience with others, which can help the business to grow through positive word-of-mouth (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). For example, a customer who has a great experience at a small business that prioritizes public health and community engagement is more likely to recommend the business to friends and family. By participating in local events and supporting local causes, small businesses can tap into local networks and reach new customers through referrals and

recommendations (Jiang et al., 2023). This can help businesses to grow their customer base and increase their sales. For example, a small business that participates in a local charity event can reach new customers who are interested in supporting the cause and may become repeat customers in the future.

Public health and community engagement can be powerful tools for small businesses in developing countries to promote their businesses (Williams et al., 2020). By prioritizing public health, small businesses can demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of their local communities and attract customers who are health-conscious. Community engagement helps small businesses build relationships with local residents, which can lead to increased customer loyalty and community support for the business (Shahid, 2019). Small businesses can engage with the community by participating in local events, supporting local causes, and fostering open communication with customers and other members of the community (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). This kind of networking can also provide valuable feedback and insights that can help businesses better serve their communities and grow their businesses over time. By prioritizing public health, engaging with the community, and differentiating themselves from their competition, small businesses can build a positive reputation, reach new customers, and grow their businesses (Panwar et al., 2016).

Emergent Strategies

Henry Mintzberg came up with the term "emergent strategy," which is an action model that describes a business strategy that evolves over time as a company tries to balance its goals with changing circumstances (Luederitz et al., 2021). After a company

repeats a set of actions to establish a pattern in its habits, these strategies emerge. In business, emergent strategy is distinct from deliberate strategy because its pattern is, by definition, unintended (Govindan et al., 2020).

Emergent strategy refers to the process of creating and adjusting a company's strategy as it responds to changes in its internal and external environment. It is a flexible and adaptive approach to strategy development that allows organizations to be responsive to new opportunities and challenges as they arise (Luederitz et al., 2021). Emergent strategies are not pre-determined or predetermined like deliberate strategies, but they are shaped and shaped by the actions and decisions of the organization. The process of developing an emergent strategy is often characterized by trial and error, experimentation, and learning. Emergent strategies are often used by organizations that operate in fast-paced and dynamic environments, such as start-ups or companies in rapidly changing industries. These organizations often have limited resources and must be agile in their approach to strategy development.

Some examples of emergent strategies include:

- A company that enters a new market and adapts its products and services to meet the unique needs of that market.
- A company that shifts its focus from a specific product line to a more diversified product portfolio in response to changing consumer preferences.
- A company that adjusts its organizational structure and processes in response to changes in its competitive landscape.

Overall, emergent strategy is a flexible and adaptive approach to strategy development that allows organizations to be responsive to new opportunities and challenges as they arise (Kolk & Pinkse, 2005).

Unforeseen circumstances that can prompt emergent strategies

Unforeseen circumstances that can prompt emergent strategies for small businesses in developing nations include natural disasters or pandemics, economic downturns, political instability, sudden changes in government regulations, unexpected competition, changes in consumer demand, disruptions to supply chain, technological advancements, loss of key personnel, global health crises and international affairs.

Small businesses located in an area prone to natural disasters, such as floods or hurricanes, may need to develop emergency plans to protect their assets and employees, and to quickly resume operations after the disaster (Adekola & Clelland, 2019; Wiatt et al., 2021). This may include investing in disaster-proof infrastructure, creating backup plans for key operations, and training employees on emergency procedures (Tomé & Gromova, 2021). Natural disasters and pandemics can disrupt normal business operations, requiring small businesses to develop new strategies for continuity and recovery (Kolk & Pinkse, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A small business may need to quickly adapt to a changing economic environment, such as a recession (Jacobe, 2010). This may include reducing costs, diversifying products or services, or expanding into new markets. Business owners may also need to be more cautious in their financial decision making, such as reducing debt, and being more selective about taking on new projects (Al Issa, 2021). Political instability can disrupt a small business' operations and create

uncertainty in the marketplace. Business owners may need to develop strategies to mitigate the risks of civil unrest or changes in government policies (Laker & Roulet, 2019). This may include diversifying the business' operations to reduce dependence on a single market, building relationships with key government officials, and investing in security measures to protect the business and employees. Small businesses may need to adapt quickly to changes in government regulations, such as new taxes or labor laws. This may include seeking expert advice, lobbying for more favorable policies, or finding ways to comply with the new regulations in a cost-effective manner (Laker & Roulet, 2019). They may need to respond to unexpected competition from large and new entrants to the market, whether they are domestic or foreign companies (Tendai, 2022). This may include investing in marketing and branding to differentiate the business, developing new products or services, or finding ways to lower costs to remain competitive (Stringer & Nwabueze, 2013). Shift in consumer behavior, such as changes in buying habits or preferences, can prompt small businesses to develop new strategies to meet consumer demand (Duarte Alonso & Bressan, 2016). Small businesses may need to adapt to changing consumer preferences or trends. This may include updating products or services to meet new demand, investing in new technologies, or changing the way the business operates. Small businesses may need to develop strategies to deal with disruptions to their supply chain (Slocum, 2017). This could include diversifying suppliers, building inventory, or implementing a flexible logistics strategy (Ramanathan et al., 2022). They may need to adapt to new technologies in their industry. This may include investing in new equipment, training employees on new processes or software, or developing new

products or services that incorporate new technologies (Duarte Alonso & Bressan, 2016). They may need to develop strategies to deal with the loss of key personnel, such as key employees leaving or retiring (Razanarivonjy, 2015). This may include developing a strong talent pipeline, investing in employee retention programs, or creating succession plans for key positions. Also, they may need to adapt to the challenges posed by global health crises, such as pandemics (example Covid-19): This may include developing contingency plans to protect customers, employees, implementing remote work policies, and finding ways to continue operations while maintaining social distancing measures (Gutterman, 2020; Tomé & Gromova, 2021). Political, economic, or social changes in other countries, such as the war in Ukraine can affect global trade (energy crisis), foreign investment, and consumer demand, which can prompt small businesses to develop new strategies to mitigate the risks and capitalize on the opportunities (Ramanathan et al., 2022).

Principles of Emergent Strategy

Emergent strategy is a flexible and adaptive approach to strategy development and implementation that is particularly well-suited for small businesses. Small businesses face a number of unique challenges, including limited resources, rapid change, and intense competition, that can make it difficult to develop and implement traditional, long-term strategic plans. The principles of emergent strategy for small businesses include agility, responsiveness, collaboration, experimentation, continuous improvement and focus.

Small businesses often operate in rapidly changing markets and must be able to pivot quickly in response to new information and circumstances. This requires a flexible and adaptive approach to strategy development and implementation, allowing small businesses to quickly respond to changing conditions and capitalize on new opportunities. They must be able to respond quickly to changing customer needs and market conditions in order to stay ahead of their competitors. This requires a focus on continuous improvement and a willingness to experiment with new ideas and approaches, in order to stay ahead of the curve and stay relevant to customers. They often operate with limited resources, and must rely on strong relationships with their stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and partners, in order to succeed. Collaboration helps small businesses leverage the strengths and resources of their stakeholders, in order to develop and implement effective strategies (Tomé & Gromova, 2021). Small businesses must be willing to experiment with new ideas and approaches in order to continuously improve their strategies. This requires a willingness to take calculated risks and try new things, in order to learn what works and what doesn't, and to continuously refine and improve their strategies. They must continually evaluate and refine their strategies in order to stay ahead of their competitors and respond to changing circumstances. This requires a focus on continuous learning and improvement, as well as a willingness to adapt and evolve their strategies as needed. Since small businesses often have limited resources, they must focus their efforts and resources on their core strengths and competencies in order to achieve their goals and succeed in a competitive environment.

By prioritizing their efforts and resources, small businesses can maximize their impact and achieve their goals.

The principles of emergent strategy for small businesses are designed to help small businesses respond quickly and effectively to changing circumstances, capitalize on new opportunities, and succeed in a rapidly changing environment. By prioritizing agility, responsiveness, collaboration, experimentation, continuous improvement, and focus, small businesses can develop and implement strategies that are effective and responsive to their unique challenges and opportunities.

Why Should Small Businesses Use Emergent Strategy?

A company's adoption of processes to deal with shifting circumstances may result in an emergent strategy. Instead of following a specific business strategy, organizations that adopt emergent strategy can use the power of change to guide their plans, visions, and decisions (Luederitz et al., 2021). Small businesses should use emergent strategy because it is flexible and adaptive, it leverages stakeholder strengths, it encourages experimentation, it promotes continuous improvement, it focuses resources and it fosters innovation.

Small businesses operate in rapidly changing environments and must be able to respond quickly to new opportunities and challenges in order to succeed. Emergent strategy allows small businesses to be more flexible and adaptive in their approach to strategy development and implementation, allowing them to pivot and adjust their strategies as new information and circumstances arise. They often have limited resources, and must rely on strong relationships with their stakeholders, including employees,

customers, suppliers, and partners, in order to succeed. Emergent strategy prioritizes collaboration and partnerships, helping small businesses leverage the strengths and resources of their stakeholders in order to develop and implement effective strategies. They must be able to experiment with new ideas and approaches in order to continuously improve their strategies and stay ahead of their competitors. Emergent strategy encourages experimentation, allowing small businesses to try new things and learn from their experiences, helping them to continuously refine and improve their strategies. They must continually evaluate and refine their strategies in response to changing circumstances. Emergent strategy prioritizes continuous learning and improvement, allowing small businesses to stay ahead of the curve and stay relevant to customers. Small businesses have limited resources and must focus their efforts and resources on their core strengths and competencies in order to achieve their goals and succeed in a competitive environment. Emergent strategy helps small businesses focus their efforts and resources on what they do best, maximizing their impact and increasing their chances of success.

Emergent strategy encourages small businesses to think creatively and come up with innovative solutions to their challenges and opportunities. By encouraging experimentation and continuous improvement, emergent strategy fosters a culture of innovation, allowing small businesses to stay ahead of their competitors and continuously improve their offerings. It is a valuable approach to strategy development and implementation for small businesses, allowing them to respond quickly to changes, leverage stakeholder strengths, encourage experimentation, promote continuous

improvement, focus resources, and foster innovation. By using emergent strategy, small businesses can increase their chances of success in a rapidly changing environment. It is important for small business owners to keep an eye on the current and emerging market trends, be responsive to change and proactively seek out new opportunities to adapt their strategies accordingly (Govindan et al., 2020).

Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP)

Prahalad and Hammond (2002) mention that the real source of market promise is not the wealthy few in the developing world or even the emerging middle-income consumers; it is the aspiring poor who are joining the market economy for the first time.

Businesses at the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) provide an extreme environment that highlights attempt to conceive and implement organizational structures that connect with markets (Dolan & Johnstone-Louis, 2011; Lindeman, 2012; Viswanathan & Rosa, 2010). Prahalad and Hammond (2002) invented the phrase "bottom of the pyramid" to represent the vast majority of people who live in subsistence-level circumstances, often make less than couple of dollars per day, and have limited access to food, education, transportation, and consumer options. BOP actors' proximity is likely to have a substantial impact on how business operations are envisaged and organized because they have limited resources at their disposal. Prahalad introduced the idea of "The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP)" in 2002. It immediately inspired numerous businesses to consider the possibility of making money off of the lowest-paid workers (Seelos & Mair, 2007). Companies began figuring out how to get in touch with them, raise product awareness, and improve their supply chain so they could supply them with goods (Mason

& Chakrabarti, 2017). However, due to a lack of infrastructure, reaching out to them was challenging, and any meaningful business potential from them would only make sense if a sizable number of individuals were persuaded (Seelos & Mair, 2007). This is to pay for the costs of marketing and providing the product to them. Nevertheless, current changes in the developing nation, society, etc. have opened up a lot more opportunities for marketing and product development (Mason & Chakrabarti, 2017). Some of the opportunities are digital marketing and social media. Reaching BOP patron via mobile now has a whole new avenue thanks to digital marketing. Reaching out to them may be made easier by low smartphone costs and growing internet and social media savvy (Hidayanti et al., 2018; Mason & Chakrabarti, 2017). For the same, marketers should employ powerful digital platforms like Google AdWords & Display Network and internet advertising. Email marketing and prominent social media platforms like Facebook are two of the most effective ways to market to BOPs. In summary, marketing to BOPs is more relevant today due to new marketing tools and more efficient marketing channels due to changing consumer behavior and evolving communication and distribution channels (Zhang et al., 2019).

As several multinational organizations and small and medium-sized businesses have learned over the past few decades, selling goods to the "bottom of the pyramid" is tremendously lucrative (Seelos & Mair, 2007). To effectively reach customers and improve revenue, small business owners must come up with innovative promotion methods because these consumers only make less than a dollar and a quarter each day (Dolan & Johnstone-Louis, 2011; Isaac, 2012, July). In order to build relationships with

the BOP, promotion initiatives must be created to address their demands (Pizzagalli et al., 2018). Small company owners can build trustworthy relationships with customers by offering reasonably priced items, educating customers about those products, and promoting neighborhood economic development, hygiene and consumer wellbeing in general (Karnani, 2007). It is critical for businesses to be cognizant of the BOP's financial, resource, communication, and payment constraints. In addition to a well-thought-out business plan, increasing sales and market share at the bottom of the pyramid necessitates social marketing and company leadership in order to foster customer engagement and develop trust (Dolan & Johnstone-Louis, 2011).

Marketing Challenges at the Bottom of the Pyramid

In developing nations, many of the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) live in rural areas, making it difficult to reach them due to the poor road infrastructure. As a result, operating costs rise, sometimes even exceeding those in urban markets. It is becoming increasingly challenging for businesses to safeguard their margins in the BOP market. Small business owners need to look at the cost effectiveness, satisfactoriness and awareness of their product and services.

Pricing is crucial to increasing product penetration among rural consumers due to the low disposable income of BOP consumers. In addition, people living in rural areas can be price and quality conscious. As a result, businesses trying to protect their margins in the face of enormous cost pressure have found it difficult to produce high-quality goods at lower prices. Product functionality is a crucial success factor in the BOP market. As a result, consumers in BOP may not be satisfied with a product form that has been

successful in traditional markets if the product's functionality does not meet their unmet needs. People in rural developing nations, such as in Ghana, speak a variety of languages and dialects. The diverse cultural backgrounds can make it challenging for marketers to raise awareness among BOP customers. Additionally, promotional efforts are likely to be hindered by low literacy rates and limited electronic media reach. Local promotional campaigns that take place during local festivals, have been found to be the most effective venues for advertising goods or services. However, due to the high costs involved, organizing such events is difficult.

Any economy has untapped potential in rural markets. The endeavor to fully investigate rural markets faces several challenges. In developing nations, the concept of rural markets is still in its early stages, and the sector presents a number of difficulties, such as comprehending the dynamics of rural markets and devising strategies to supply and satisfy rural consumers (Isaac, 2012, July). Following C. K. Prahalad's concept of Fortune at the bottom of the pyramid, businesses have begun designing and developing innovative goods and services that will assist the poor in prospering by collaborating with them. It would be advantageous for both the business and its clientele if they were capable of fully exploiting this enormous potential in the rural market (MitraMustaphi, 2019).

Transition

In Section 1, I included both the problem statement and purpose statement, along with the nature of study used to rationalize my usage of a qualitative method and case

study. Section 1 also comprised of the conceptual framework, limitations, interview questions, limitations and delimitations for the study. The literature review includes literature concerning small business and its viability, including sections of small business owners' revenue, and successful promotion strategies. In Section 2, I expanded on the purpose of the study, data analysis, research method and design, the population and sampling, data collection instruments and technique, the role of the researcher, ethical research, reliability and validity participants, and data organization technique. In Section 3, I expanded on the introduction, implications for social change, recommendations for action, presentation of findings, and future research.

Section 2: The Project

Small business owners play a vital role in promoting economic growth and reducing poverty in developing countries (Al-Haddad et al., 2019). When small business owners fail, it threatens to destabilize the economy while impacting communities, local economies, and families (Doumpos, Andriosopoulos, Galariotis, Makridou & Zopounidis, 2017). Some small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi lack effective business promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability. Effective business promotion strategies could add to small business owners' ability to improve revenue and sustain their businesses. This section includes the purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, the participants, the research method and design, the population and sampling process, the ethical procedures, the instruments and techniques for data collection, the data organization technique, and the method of data analysis, including the process to establish study validity and reliability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore the business promotion strategies that some small retail owners in West Ghana use to improve revenue and increase business viability. The participants were six small retail owners in Sekondi-Takoradi municipality who were able to improve revenue and sustain their businesses past at least five years. Being equipped with effective business promotion strategies can help some small business owners improve revenue and thrive beyond five years while simultaneously addressing some of the world's biggest challenges like poverty (Palumbo & Manna, 2018). The findings can support social change by

contributing to other small businesses' business viability, which can improve the standard of living of citizens thus citizens can acquire new jobs or stay employed to meet basic needs. Also, the taxes these businesses may pay to the government may go into infrastructure that can lay the groundwork for enhanced community facilities and structures.

Role of the Researcher

Doing qualitative research is a bit challenging and may require a complete consideration of how research is conducted (Li & Cornelis, 2021). My role as a researcher is to attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of my study participants.

I made the articulation of the interview to the educational level of each participant. I observed the participant, do an in-depth interview to allow engagement that will lead to clarity of any potential misunderstanding, and collect available data when possible (Indu & Vidhukumar, 2020). My primary responsibility was to safeguard participants and their data. Mechanisms for safeguarding participants and their data were clearly articulated to my participants after these mechanisms for safeguarding have been approved by a relevant research ethics review board before my research commences.

I held face-to-face interviews with small business owners located in Sekondi-Takoradi municipality. I had no personal relationship with any of the small business owner participants. To minimize the potential effects of familiarity on the results of the interview, the participants were not members of my immediate social or professional network. Even though, my current study is in entrepreneurship, my classroom knowledge did not affect my research findings. To mitigate bias in my research, I clearly

acknowledged my classroom knowledge, ensure they remained separate from my research, and consistently was mindful of them when conducting my research study.

I followed the ethical principles and guidelines for researching human subjects as provided in the Citi Program and the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report requires (a) interviewees to sign a consent form to participate in the interview; (b) researchers to respect participants' freedom of voice and judgment; and (c) researchers to protect individuals and society from harm by minimizing harmful practices, maximizing their benefits, and treating individuals equally (Yin, 2019). I created an environment where participants were able to answer the interview questions as freely as possible, without the fear of having their responses rejected.

The informed consent form that the participants signed to express their willingness to participate detailed everything they can expect from the interview. I did not withhold any information from them. They were aware that no risk will occur from answering the interview questions. The interview questions were be clear, so participants did not find it difficult to understand them, and I adjusted my questioning based on the participants' language, rationality, and maturity. An interview protocol can serve as a guide to gathering data from participants (Yin, 2019).

Hu et al. (2021) recommended implementing a semistructured interview protocol to allow in-depth engagements and to clarify potential miscommunications through dialogue. For this study, I created an interview protocol that included interview questions pertaining to the main research question. The focus of the interview questions explored the business promotion strategies used by some small business to improve revenue and

increase business viability. The questions I developed was consistent across participants that ensured no researcher bias. Researchers use interview protocols to ensure that even though there are different participants with different styles of responding, researchers will still be able to ask the same questions in the same way (Yin, 2019).

I also gave informed consent letters created by my institution to the potential participants to sign if they express a willingness to participate in the study. I then conducted the interviews with the participants individually and transcribed each interview. After collecting the necessary data through the interviews, analyzing the data, and presenting the findings that followed, I ensured that the findings were free of research biases. According to Yin (2019), research bias may affect various phases of the research process, including data collection and the analysis. To minimize personal bias prior to interviewing participants, I triangulated the data to review the findings for any researcher bias by using multiple resources to establish and check for accuracy. I also enhanced the validity of the results by incorporating member checking, which involved sending the interview records to the participants via e-mail to ensure my interpretation did not leave any gaps within the responses.

Participants

The study included a purposive sampling of six participants who are small business owners. The owner of the businesses were the original owners who started the businesses and who had worked in the same capacity since the initiation. Additionally, the businesses had been in operation for at least five years. The businesses had not more

than ten employees. Finally, the businesses were operated from a brick-and-mortar space and not a residential home office.

Research Method and Design

The research method for this study was qualitative using a multiple case study design to gain an understanding of business promotion strategies used by six small business owners to improve revenue and increase business viability. The use of open-ended, semistructured questions provided in-depth answers for exploration of the phenomenon. Documents, such as, cashflow statements, profit and loss statements, and/or business metrics was collected to triangulate the data with the owners' experiences.

Research Method

Researchers use quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods for conducting studies (Cai & Choi, 2021). Researchers using quantitative methods examine variables' characteristics or relationships among variables, which are measured numerically and analyzed using a range of statistical and graphical techniques (Indu & Vidhukumar, 2020). Zyphur and Pierides (2017) maintained that it is for examining the association with group variances among study variables which includes an assessment of numbers and statistics. The qualitative research methods are appropriate when the problem requires more than a yes or no hypothesis (Turner & Endres, 2017). Mixed methods research combines the use of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analytical procedures to investigate complex phenomenon (Bazeley, 2019; Hughes et al., 2020). A potential drawback of the quantitative method is a lack of depth which makes it inappropriate for this study. A drawback of qualitative research method is that the

analysis is time-consuming and it explores a particular industry. It was suitable for this study since this study explored a particular industry. According to Newman et al. (2021), some drawbacks of mixed-methods research are that it can be time-consuming, too costly, and challenging to connect findings. This made it unsuitable for this study as not being able to easily connect findings will not allow enough time for richer explanation of the phenomenon under examination. Researchers use qualitative method to gather information via documents, observations, and interviews to conduct inductive data analysis (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). I used the qualitative method because it explores a particular industry and did not examine variables. According to Yin (2019), the qualitative method is expected to enable a richer understanding of a complex phenomenon, hence, the qualitative method was better for this study than the quantitative method and the mixed-methods.

Research Design

Three principal qualitative research designs are phenomenology, ethnography, and case study. Phenomenology is a way of describing something that exists as an integral part of the world in which we are living (Bazeley, 2019; Newman et al., 2021). It does not necessarily provide definitive explanations, but it does raise awareness and increases insight about the phenomena. The phenomenology design was not suitable for this study as it studies an individual's personal experience only and cannot compare business promotion strategies used by some small business owners to increase business viability. Ethnography is a branch of anthropology that provides a scientific description of individual human societies (Newman et al., 2021). Ethnography design can be a

disadvantage when researchers are not sufficiently familiar with the social mores of the people being studied or with their language. Ethnography design was inappropriate for this study, as there was no scientific description of individual human societies. A case study design is an in-depth adaptable approach for analyzing specific societal and developmental disciplines issues (Yin, 2019). Researchers use the case study design for identifying patterns in data collected (Paulsen, 2017). The multiple-case study design was more suitable for this study as it is superior to single-case designs. Yin (2019) mentioned that the multiple-case study design will enable obtaining information from more diverse organizations in a complex environment. This better described and compared business promotion strategies that some small business owners use to improve revenue and increase business viability.

Population and Sampling

The study included a purposive sampling of six participants who are small business owners. The owner of the businesses were the original owners who started the businesses and who had worked in the same capacity since the initiation. Additionally, the businesses had been in operation for at least five years. The businesses did not have more than ten employees. Finally, the businesses operated from a brick-and-mortar space and not a residential home office. I selected ten small business owners to participate, although the study included only six; the additional four participants served as alternative participants for if any participants changed their mind and withdrew from the study. Interviews took place with six small business owners who volunteered to participate in the study. Member checking took place with each participant until data saturation

occurred. According to Yin (2019), using multiple data sources can provide substantial and reliable data. The aim for participant selection in a particular study is to involve the individuals who can provide the most significant and ample data concerning the topic; therefore, people who are most likely to be conversant in the topic of interest must be the ones selected for the study (Yin, 2019).

Ethical Research

An academic researcher has an obligation to develop a credible and valid research method by gaining participants trust through transparency about the boundaries of a proposed study. The ethical research commenced with IRD approval number 06-17-24-1001358. All individuals who participated for the proposed study volunteered and replied their emails with a simple “I consent” with no pressure when they were emailed their consent forms per the institution’s direction. According to Kroll and Stieglitz (2021), researchers must see to it that questions are ethical, and participant solicitation is in-depth and courteous. Each participant was required to respond to an emailed consent form for the proposed study. Before responding to the consent form, each participant was cross-examined to make sure they understand the proposed study, its limitation, and their role. They were made aware in the consent form that the consent form is not an agreement to participate in the study till the end and there was a thank you gift for participation. Accordingly, participants had the right to withdraw from the proposed study at any time by contacting me by email, text message, or a phone call. Participants were coded as SBO (small business owner)1 or SBO2 to maintain confidentiality or ensure ethical protection. This coding system for data through a numbering system identified each participant in the

data analysis without referring to their names and businesses. All participants' data are stored both electronically and on a hard drive. All participants stored hard copy data such as notes made from the interviews, transcriptions, audio recordings, financial documents are locked up in a cabinet or a safe to safeguard the rights and identities of all participants. All the stored data will be destroyed after five years to ensure participants' confidentiality.

Data Collection Instruments

Meyer et al. (2023) mentioned that in qualitative research, the primary instrument in the data collection process is the researcher. As the primary data collection instrument of this multiple case study, I gathered data by conducting face-to-face semistructured interviews with six small business owners who have improved revenue and increased business viability beyond five years. The semistructured interviews had six open-ended questions that explored and gained in-depth understanding of how each participant improved revenue and increased business viability. A phone interview was a backup plan just in case any participant was unavailable for face-t-face interview due to an emergency beyond their control. A voice recorder was used to capture the interview responses for transcription into Microsoft Word document. I used a pen and a paper to jot down follow-up questions as well as salient points in the participants responses just in case anything happened to the electronics I used. Business documents such as financial statements and business performance matrix was collected from the participants to support their responses about their businesses.

Data Collection Technique

The objective of this data collection technique was to collect sufficient data, ensure the quality of the evidence, and achieve data saturation. Saturation occurs when results repeat and create a pattern, which signals the quality and completeness of a study (Marais & Wyk, 2014). Without data saturation, research during the process analysis stage incomplete. Data collection involved interviewing six participants until reaching the data saturation point. Recorded interviews with participants took place in a professional setting at a time convenient for the small business owners. A careful review of each participant's business promotion activities prior to interviews disclosed questions regarding these promotion avenues to include in individual participants' interview questions. The interviews took roughly 30 minutes to ensure enough time for the participants to answer each question carefully. If data saturation did not occur with six participants, I would have invited more participants using the snowballing method by asking the six participants to provide the names of small business owners they knew who were familiar with the topic.

After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted me permission to carry out this study, I got in touch with small business owners via telephone and email to begin the process of recruiting them. I explained the goal of the study as well as its advantages. Before interviews began, participants in this study were provided with a consent form by email and the consent form was returned signed as directed. Participants chose a time and place for the interview that worked best for them. In order to accommodate any questions regarding the study, each interview began with an explanation of the study's purpose and

a review of the consent form. It was communicated to participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and that their identification and information will remain private. A review of the company's promotional materials, such as advertisements on the Internet, prior to each interview transpired. In addition, participants were provided with an invitation to provide any tangible promotional materials. Brochures, signage, and old and new business posters are examples of physical materials. Each object was up for discussion, and participants were able to share details about the businesses' respective business promotion strategies.

The primary method for gathering data were interviews. For qualitative research, the most efficient and appropriate method of data collection is seeing each other's face during semistructured interviews. Flexibility and the ability to retrieve rich, detailed, and in-depth personal experiences, views, and opinions in the interview responses are two of the advantages of using a semi structured interview. Researchers alter the pace and manner in which they ask and answer questions in semi structured interviews in order to investigate experiences (Ajgaonkar et al., 2022). Another advantage is that semi structured interviews permit researchers to use open-ended questions, giving them more chances to get a personal response out of their interviewees (Mwita, 2022). Respondents can freely express themselves, share insights and experiences, and provide detailed responses when open-ended interview questions are included in a study (Ajgaonkar et al., 2022). Open-ended interview questions are also used by researchers to ask follow-up or other useful questions that can help the findings (Jones et al., 2014). According to Yin (2019), one drawback of semi structured interviews is that they frequently include

observations, which can lead to biased opinions. For review and analysis, some participants provided documentation, which included online marketing materials. According to Williams and Gemperle (2015), using documentation as data saves time during interviews and is useful for tracing a company's history. An impediment of utilizing documentation as an information assortment technique is that members may purposefully hold back data that they would rather not uncover (Yin, 2019).

Member checking was to make sure that the data gathered and interpreted in the transcribed interviews are reliable and valid. A study can also be improved and strengthened through member checking (Alabood et al., 2023). The interpretation of the interview session was sent to each participant via email, and they were able to make corrections or comments during a phone call or email that followed. Each proprietor of a business was assigned a code, such as SBO1, SBO2, SBO3 and SBO4, in which SBO stands for small business owner. Every information code addressed the little business and the member. Member checking, methodological triangulation, and an audit trial will improve data credibility and the trustworthiness of findings (Winter & Collins, 2015). Member checking is used by researchers to check the accuracy of themes and findings based on the experiences and correspondence of participants during the interview (Higman & Pinfield, 2015). For answering the research question in this study, an analysis of multiple cases using semi structured interview responses and other collected data were suitable.

Data Organization Technique

Microsoft (MS) Teams and MS Word were the tools used to organize the data. The transcribed correspondence between all participants were stored in encrypted, password-protected electronic files on a USB drive for five years. According to Gao and McDonald (2022), a study's efficiency and credibility are enhanced by properly organizing its data. The transcription of each audio recording aimed to include the entirety of each participant's interview.

Members checked the transcripts, and participants responded to probing questions to provide additional information until there was no more information. The transcript and my interpretations were available to participants, allowing them to generate additional ideas. I used Microsoft Excel to assign codes to each participant and record their responses to the open-ended questions after member checking was finished. According to Farquhar et al. (2020), participant identities ought to remain private and anonymous. SBO1, SBO2, SBO3, SOB4, SOB5 and SBO6 were the participants' identification numbers. According to Amit and Hogarth (2013), codes safeguard participants' identities and confidentiality. Journals, information, and references will incorporate individual categories and topics. According to McCormick et al. (2015), a crucial aspect of successful research is the organization of the collected data. According to Amit and Hogarth (2013), researchers can use Zotero-licensed software to organize and retrieve detailed information from the web-based storage management platform through password-protected access. The signed consent forms were also included in the research file. Passwords that no one else knows was the only way to access all files. The files were

not accessible to anyone else. All of the raw data were kept in a locked cabinet, and the interview answers and other business documents were kept electronically for five years on a hard drive protected by a password.

Data Analysis

Three different analysis methods were suggested by Yin (2019) for analyzing case study data. Using propositions to guide data collection, creating a case framework to organize the case study, and considering alternative explanations for qualitative and quantitative data are all examples of these analysis methods. In order to answer the research questions, it is essential to select an appropriate analysis strategy (Yin, 2019). I used a case description or framework and data analysis to find competing explanations for this study. According to Stacey et al. (2015), a researcher's findings will be more reliable if they consider a greater number of competing explanations. The literature and personal experiences serve as the foundation for the creation of a case framework, which serves as an anchor for a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As themes emerge from data analysis, a framework continues to develop. Returning to the conceptual framework ensures that the analysis has a reasonable scope and provides structure for the final report (Yin, 2019).

According to Harrison and Rouse (2015), qualitative researchers employ inductive data as a tool set to investigate a study's trends, patterns, themes, and categories. The primary source of data were the interviews. Words, numbers, and phrases were used to classify participant responses into descriptive categories. During the research, the analysis of the interview transcripts was supported by the software NVivo

12. NVivo 12 is a program used by qualitative researchers to collect open-ended interview questions and responses. In turn, the questions can be transformed into documents and themes and trends by researchers (Yin, 2019). Moving meeting records into NVivo 12 populates and recognizes the shared traits of information given by members (Woods et al., 2015). The focus of the data analysis was on addressing the research question. Each participant's responses were used to generate themes that are related to the research question and was focused on small businesses and the business promotion strategies that are used to run a successful small business. According to Curtis and Davis (2014), themes of similarities and differences require special attention. Artifacts collected from participants and participant observations necessitate similar methods of analysis (Curtis & Davis, 2014). Signage, brochure advertisements, as well as online marketing materials like websites and social media platforms, were analyzed in order to identify themes, trends, similarities, and differences among the participating small businesses.

An inductive method was also used in the qualitative data analysis. Using coding systems to classify data can be part of this strategy to get a more precise description and improve the quality of the data analysis (Elo et al., 2014). The results of the analysis of each participant's data were then compared to those of other participants' data to identify similarities and differences and created a cross-case synthesis. The review incorporated systemic triangulation, member checking, and a review trail that reinforce the examination configuration by incorporating various wellsprings of information that laid out dependable outcomes. It is possible that there won't be enough evidence to draw a

conclusion if data are gathered solely from one source (Alabood et al., 2023). As a result, I combined the information gleaned from the open-ended interviews with a variety of qualitative data sources related to the participants' small business marketing.

Triangulation is a method used by researchers to verify their findings because it reflects an effort to fully comprehend a phenomenon (Yin, 2019). The analysis of the interview responses to identify differences and similarities was supported by the collection of data from multiple sources. Interpretations and conclusions are more likely to be trustworthy and credible if they are supported by multiple data sets (Mathooko & Ogutu, 2015; Yin, 2019). I transcribed all audio-recorded interview files and stored them safely in a MS Word document. In order to improve the study's validity and reliability, I conducted a follow-up member checking interview and sent a copy of my interpretations of their correspondence to each participant via email. Experts use member checking to decide the exactness of interview information, and members can endorse the information gathered by the researcher and in this manner exhibit the believability of the interview information (Houghton et al., 2013). I gave a rundown of results in something like 1 month after the culmination of my review. By employing an audit trail, the precise interpretation of the detailed data was confirmed and improved, and all participants' opinions were found. Researchers benefit from using audit trails because they can verify and analyze raw data and notes (Woods et al., 2015). An audit trail was used to provide a comprehensive description of my research study's data collection and analysis procedures.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Achieving reliability in qualitative research is equivalent to being able to replicate the study's elements, consistent data collection methods, and accurate data recording procedures. Given this, semi structured questions were used in a consistent manner. For accuracy, appropriate coding, and validated interpretations, transcript reviews and member checking with participants was undertaken. The researcher must avoid personal bias in qualitative research to maintain trustworthiness (Harrison et al., 2020). In qualitative research, a researcher can employ reliable techniques to raise the probability of consistent results in subsequent investigations. Harrison et al. (2020) further argued that an independent researcher should produce findings that are similar to or equal to those of the researcher. According to Leung (2015), the ability of the researcher to duplicate both the research procedure and the research findings is referred to as dependability. Getting input on the interview methodology is one of the processes in guaranteeing the reliability of the interview as a research tool (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The capacity to acquire the same results in a subsequent study is the researcher's aim (Omanović & Langley, 2023). In order to ensure the reliability of the interview methodology I utilized for the study; I made sure to follow the protocols outlined by Castillo-Montoya (2016). The interview protocol consists of six steps: setting up an audit trail, explaining the study's objectives, choosing participants, collecting and analyzing data, research findings and coming to a conclusion. I used member checking to verify the accuracy of the interview responses in order to further ensure the study's reliability. I

made sure the study's objective and its main research topic were in sync. I made sure to preserve the information I elicited in safe, password-protected electronic files on a USB stick that was kept in a secured file cabinet at my house. The consent forms were kept electronically, together with other documents, on my password-protected computer, with a backup on a password-protected external hard drive. I destroyed the paper papers when five years have passed and remove the data from the external hard disk. For the purpose of achieving validity in qualitative research that is in accordance with a case study research method (Yin, 2019).

Validity

A thorough description and explanation of the personal experiences gleaned through in-depth interviews with study participants are essential to establishing credibility in qualitative studies (Tracy, 2010; Warren & Szostek, 2017). In order to prove authenticity and guarantee an accurate account of the participants' experiences, I employed verbatim transcription of participant interviews and member checking. In order to ensure the validity of the study findings, I identified themes by triangulating information from participant interviews and documentary evidence. Additionally, to ensure that no fresh or pertinent information emerges, the participant interviews continued to show data saturation. When conducting qualitative research, researchers aim to provide results that are reliable, replicable, and capable of being confirmed (Omanović & Langley, 2023). According to the case study design, data collection, data saturation, and analysis techniques, transferability refers to the findings' applicability in other contexts, and confirmability refers to the degree to which the study's participants shape

the findings. Credibility is the assurance that the research findings' conclusions address the findings from the participants' point of view (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In a qualitative study, confirmability verifies that the data were participant narratives free of the researcher's personal bias (Hussein, 2015). In qualitative research, validity relates to the suitability of the data used, the use of the research methodologies, and the specificity of the research findings (Abbaszadeh & Abbaszadeh, 2016). Additionally, the researcher must ensure that the research question, the research method, and the research design all align with the desired outcome in order to increase a study's credibility (Campos Oliveira et al., 2020).

According to Cypress (2017), the researcher's diligence in data collection during the research process is critical to the validity of the study's findings in qualitative research. Peer review or debriefing, revealing the researcher's bias, member checking, external audits, and triangulation were also mentioned by the researchers as additional methods for ensuring the study's validity (Omanović & Langley, 2023). Therefore, in order to ensure validity, I employed methodological triangulation in the study by incorporating data from interviews and publicly available information on the small business' website and social media networks. The researcher must interview multiple study participants with the same set of questions to achieve data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). As a result, I asked the same questions to each of the 6 owners of small businesses. Additionally, I collected data from SBO social media platforms and websites. I gathered information from 6 SBOs utilizing semi-organized interviews until I arrived at the place of immersion. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), a researcher has reached

data saturation when there are no new data, codes, or themes. In addition, I asked the study participants to verify their responses during the interview and member-checking phases, and I documented the data collection instructions to ensure an appropriate audit trail.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a discussion of the approach I used to conduct the qualitative research study on the promotion strategies used by a selection of four successful retail small business owners located in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana. In this study, I used a qualitative multiple case study design to collect data from multiple sources, including semi structured interviews and observations, to answer the research question. Other topics I discussed in this section are the methods selected to organize, manage, and analyze the data collected and the steps I took to establish the reliability and validity of the study findings.

Section 3 includes the findings of the study, including a detailed description of the analysis of the semistructured interview responses of small business owners, key findings, recommendations for further study, and implications for social change. Section 3 also includes a discussion of the application to professional practice, a comprehensive review of the data I collected, and the findings related to the research question. I concluded Section 3 with reflections on my doctoral study experience and a summary of the study's conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

My purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study, was to explore the effective business promotion strategies that small owners in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana used to improve revenue and increase business viability. After interviewing six qualified small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi, located in the Western Region of Ghana, West Africa, I gained deeper acuity into the effective business promotion strategies small business owners use to improve revenue and increase business viability. Adhering to the DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) Case Study Manual enabled my selection of six qualified small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis to participate in this study. I used Appendix B from the DBA Case Study Manual to invite participants through focused groups and I also did direct contact with business owner on their work premises. I used Ghana Post GPS (Global Positioning System) and Google to search and locate some of these small businesses. I also got some qualified participants referred by some individuals in my personal network whom I had spoken to about this scholarly study.

Guest et al. (2020) advised that researchers identify study participants in a manner that does not reveal their true identities. Participants remained anonymous with codes to their identity through this entire study after receiving approval from the IRB (Institution Review Board) to collect data for the final stage of this study. The six qualified participants are coded SBO1, SBO2, SBO3, SBO4, SBO5, and SBO6. I examined the data in NVivo 12 using QSR qualitative analysis software to identify effective business

promotion strategies to answer the research question after reaching data saturation. Five thematic categories surfaced from the data analysis regarding how small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi have improved revenue and increased business viability through effective business promotion strategies: (a) ensuring good customer relationship, (b) training personnel (c) giving freebies/discounts, (d) exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and (e) reducing operational costs.

Analysis of the interview data specified the effective business promotion strategies that small business owners use to improve revenue and increase business viability. The analysis proposed that (a) ensuring good customer relationship, (b) training personnel (c) giving freebies/discounts, (d) exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and (e) reducing operational costs are vital tools that may help small business owners realize improved revenue and increased business viability. The open systems theory deals with economic, political and social factors that impact change or survival of small businesses (Barnes et al., 2020).

Presentation of the Findings

This subsection comprises the five thematic categories that emerged from the qualitative data analysis that answer the central research question: What business promotion strategies do some small business owners in Sekondi - Takoradi, Ghana use to improve revenue and increase business viability? The five themes were (a) ensuring good customer relationship, (b) training personnel, (c) giving freebies/discounts, (d) exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and (e) reducing operational costs. After I verbatim transcribed participants' interview responses, input the interview data into

NVivo 12 analytical software, completed member checking, and conducted methodological triangulation, data saturation eventuated because no other significance themes or patterns emerged.

Theme 1: Ensuring Good Customer Relationship

According to Ayachi et al. (2022), small business owners who developed customer relationships positively impacted the sustainability of their businesses. All six participants brought up good customer relationship. Good customer relationship augur customer satisfaction. Participant SOB5 said; “What has really kept us going is good customer care.” How do we get customers satisfied? “Know your customer in and out (SOB1).” SOB6 mentioned, “Understand your audience,” SOB5 said, “We do a lots of customer interactions,” SOB1 and SOB3’s utterances were similar on ensuring good customer relationship and I quote SOB3, “We look at the needs of the client and tailor our activities to meet these needs.” SOB2 upheld that education is key. To get customers satisfied, you get them to make informed choices on what you are selling or offering. This is by knowing what the customer wants, educating them on your products so that the customer makes a purchase that suits their needs. SOB4 said, “We strive to make our customers over satisfied.” SOB3 added, “Customer care is the core of our sustainability.” This is so because when the customer is happy, there will be a repeat business and positive word-of-mouth of their shopping experience will bring in new customers. New customers improve business revenue and the business keeps thriving. “Have a relationship with the customer (SOB1).” In order to earn and retain customers’ long-term preferences and business, relationship marketing aims to build long-term, mutually

satisfying relationships with key parties such as distributors, suppliers, and customers (Hidayanti et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2020). According to Zhang et al. (2019), understanding and managing customer relationships are essential to business promotion. “For you to always be the first business to come in their minds, then you need to be consistent with your quality (SOB6).” Customer priority consistency improve internal customer satisfaction, employee motivation, and job satisfaction (Madhani, 2022). Applying open systems theory to small businesses can also help owners and managers understand the complex relationships between their business, the environment, and their customers, etc., and design strategies that take these relationships into account.

Theme 2: Training Personnel

Customer focus and inclusion enhance small businesses’ stability, profitability, and survivability (Parast & Safari, 2022). Participants deemed training employees to be vital since they represent the brand and ethics of the company. According to Moo and Eyiah (2020), small businesses can also provide training and skills development opportunities for their employees, helping them to grow their careers and improve their financial stability. When employees are giving at least basic training on the right questions to ask customers and how to behave or treat customers with respect or make customers feel unique revenue may improve and business will succeed. Customers will do word-of-mouth advertisement on their positive shopping experience and this will bring in new customers and repeat business. Sashi and Brynildsen (2022) claimed that small business owners offer good service to stimulate customer-to-customer interaction

and word-of-mouth communication to retain loyal customers. SOB2 mentioned that they train their personnel on the products they are promoting on the street so the employees can better inform the business community on their products. “We give staff basic training on customer care (SOB3).” “We have small, small trainings that we do (SOB1).” SOB5 said, “You really have to train people to be able to sell the right product to the customer.” “The team represents the brand so you have to show them how to even dress to work (SOB6).” “If you don’t train the human resource that you are using, and they are not that sharp and they don’t know what to say and what not to say at a particular time you may irk off some people and it may affect the product that you are selling (SOB2).” Applying open systems theory to small businesses can also help owners and managers understand the complex relationships between their business, the environment, and their customers, employees, and suppliers, and design strategies that take these relationships into account.

Theme 3: Giving Freebies/Discounts

When customers have a positive experience with a small business, they are more likely to share their experience with others, which can help the business to grow through positive word-of-mouth (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). For customers to sample new product or service you have introduced to your business, giving free samples or discounts may encourage customers to try the new product out. Most individuals do not patronize products they are not familiar. Giving them that chance will encourage them to try the new product out. Experiencing the new product is good for the sale of the product. “We give them a discount. And then we give them giveaways (SOB1).” “Sell lower than the retail price (SOB2).” SOB1 and SOB3 mentioned they do free consultation services.

SOB4 said, “First time delivery is free. We do free after-sale service” “We do packages, we give them discount. Some customers we do it for free (SOB5).” SOB6 added they teach the kids in the community for free. Through this, they get the chance to teach the children about how useful some waste or discarded materials in the environment can be someone else’s treasure through the new products they create (upcycling). The children will then communicate that to their parents and parents who share in their cause may patronize their product thereby improving revenue.

Theme 4: Exercising Community Engagement/Corporate Responsibility

By participating in local events and supporting local causes, small businesses can tap into local networks and reach new customers through referrals and recommendations (Jiang et al., 2023). According to Woo et al. (2021), small business growth and success depend on new customers. “We also involve ourselves in community cleanups (SOB6).” SOB2 said, “...consumer interaction was the first promotion strategy.” “One of the things we do is we try to interact more with our customers. We do at least three, four major events in a year. That draws us closer to our customers (SOB5).” “We also help up and coming youth and businesses to also ride on our backs to make an impact on the community (SOB1).” By participating in community events and projects, small businesses in developing countries can demonstrate their commitment to the local community and build positive relationships with potential customers (Williams et al., 2020). “Periodically, we organize health screening within the community (SOB3).” By prioritizing public health, small businesses can demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of their customers and the community. This can help to build a positive image

and reputation for the business, which is essential in attracting and retaining customers (Shahid, 2019). According to open systems theory, by adopting a holistic and integrative perspective, small businesses can better understand the impact of their actions on their environment and the interdependencies between various factors affecting their success (Miller & Friesen, 1982; Wang et al., 2020).

Theme 5: Reducing operational costs

Finding the right balance between cost and impact when it comes to promotion strategies can be a challenge for small businesses. Small business owners need to find cost-effective strategies that also deliver results and reach their target audience effectively (Kotler, 2000). They need to be strategic and prioritize their efforts to maximize impact while minimizing cost (Adisa et al., 2014; Gbandi & Amissah, 2014). “Employ basic education individuals (SOB2).” “So as a small business, I don't need to buy a whole lot of paints and the rest because I can't afford them. So, I started collecting discarded material. We saved my business income (SOB6).” Business owners may also need to be more cautious in their financial decision making, such as reducing debt, and being more selective about taking on new projects (Al Issa, 2021). “So, you look at the class of the people you are dealing with to be able to tailor their needs. And this also helps you to know which category of commodities you are going to have to bring (SOB3).” This will help reduce expiries. “Keep it lean until they’ve grown up to a level before they spend on fancy things (SOB5).” (SOB4) added, “Start lean and don’t do too many loads and burden yourself.” According to Jacobe (2010), a small business may

need to quickly adapt to a changing economic environment, such as a recession. This may include cutting costs, diversifying products or services, or expanding into new markets.

According to Carroll and Tosi (1977), using open systems theory enables researchers to identify both distinct parts and their interrelationships within the system instead of addressing only individual patterns. Understanding and applying open systems theory to the five thematic categories developed in this study can benefit participants including stakeholders and policymakers in Sekondi-Takoradi business community to gain a comprehensive view of the key processes involved in a small business environment, and in particular, the business of a small business. Small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi can realize greater success in improved revenue and increased business viability if they apply the effective business promotion strategies revealed by the study data.

Table 1

Theme frequency with Study Participants

Themes	SBO1	SBO2	SBO3	SBO4	SBO5	SBO6
Ensuring good customer relationship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training personnel	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Giving freebies/discounts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reducing operational costs	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	✓

Applications to Professional Practice

Six small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi located in the Western Region of Ghana, West Africa who have been successful in improving revenue and increasing business viability came up with five major thematic categories for existing and emergent small business owners who lack business promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability. These themes could improve revenue and increase business viability if the findings from this study is employed. Potential researchers could use the study's findings to shape the foundation of future recommendations for strategic business actions as well as further potential studies. Upcoming small business owners could develop reliable tenacities that address business needs by implementing the business promotion strategies identified through the study's findings. Through the findings of this study, small business owners could apply these effective business promotion strategies that could assist them thrive, thus adding revenues to the local economies. Probable small business owners and current ones could benefit from the data included in this discussion by applying such notions to their professional practice.

Implications for Social Change

The strategies reported in the current research study, shared by the interviewed small business owners, could invoke positive social change. Budding and present small business owners could have direction regarding effective business promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability by employing strategies revealed through this scholarly study. An implication for positive social change that could occur because of this study is a reduction of small business failures, which could result in skilled employee retention. By presenting prospective small business owners with effective business promotion strategies, they could gain a deeper understanding of the importance of effective business promotion strategies when trying to sustain a successful business in the long-term. Positive social change deriving from the study could lead to additional financial security for small business owners and their employees, create employment opportunities for local community members, and improve revenue in the local economy. Small business owner success is more likely to ensue when small business owners receive suitable direction concerning improving revenue and improving business viability. Small business owners could use the study findings to apply the appropriate business promotion strategy necessary to succeed in their business in the run.

Recommendations for Action

Some small business owners in Sekondi - Takoradi lack business promotion strategies that improve revenue and increase business viability. Small business owners should take measures that enable the development of effective business promotion strategies, which could improve revenue and increase business viability. Small business

owners seeking to gain insight into the trajectory of their small business should use effective business strategies that include ensuring good customer relationship, training personnel, giving freebies and discounts, exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and reducing operational costs. Small business owners could use the study findings to acquire further knowledge concerning improving revenue and increasing business viability. Small business owners pursuing an understanding of the business promotion strategies that propel the success of small business owners could profit from using the findings of this doctoral study to improve revenue and increase their business viability. Small business owners who experience obstacles, seek to strengthen their businesses, and seek to improve in business revenue and increase business viability will benefit from the collective experiences of the six interviewed small business owners. Small business owners should explore effective business promotion strategies' benefits over time. Small business owners should continuously explore effective business promotion strategies that lead to business viability. Small business owners who identify challenges and apply these effective business promotion strategies could prevent business failure.

Recommended actions for small business owners who lack effective business promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability include (a) ensuring good customer relationship, (b) training personnel, (c) giving freebies/discounts, (d) exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and (e) reducing operational costs. The findings offered additional insight, resources, and guidance to overcome diverse obstacles in opening and effectively sustaining a small business. Small

business owners could improve revenue and thrive by ensuring good customer relationship, training personnel, giving freebies/discounts, exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and reducing operational costs. I will share this study with credible academic agencies/institutions.

Sharing the results with these agencies would introduce an opportunity for sharing study results at conferences and training events. Additionally, small business owners could benefit from study information while continuing other business opportunities. The spreading of study results could occur across peer reviewed publications. The six qualified study participants might gain beneficial information from the study results. The six participants will receive a summary of the published results for their records.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for further research include potential researchers expanding the focus of the research to include small business owners who operate in diverse geographical locations. The sample size limited the study and restricted the transferability of the findings. The information provided by study participants might not be applicable characteristics of all successful small business owners in other parts of Ghana. Future researchers could increase transferability by expanding the focus of the research. Only six participants could participate in the study due to limited time of the study and also interested participants withdrawal when it came to signing documents for participation. Most individuals in the emergent countries have become crooks because of the harsh economy so some qualified participants were difficult to convince that this study was

solely for academic purposes. Allowing the researcher on their premises without seeing enough authenticity in the study documents (the exhibits) was an issue so that was another limitation. There are lots of illiterates in emergent countries who are not computer literates or have email addresses to satisfy the institution's preference to the consent form. To include more participants in the study, future researchers should work with the institution to get school letterheads for documents that needs to be signed or filled by prospect participants who are not computer savvy or might not have email addresses. Another limitation of the study involved the responses of small business owners. Sekondi-Takoradi medium and large firm owners might share comparable responses or business promotion strategies to the small owner participants in the study. Future researchers could explore the effective business promotion strategies of small business owners who improved their revenue and increased business viability using mixed-methods and quantitative designs. Future researchers could identify additional areas to research by focusing on the specific themes identified through the study, including (a) ensuring good customer relationship, (b) training personnel, (c) giving freebies/discounts, (d) exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility and (e) reducing operational costs.

Another recommendation is for future researchers to focus on the effective business strategies of successful small business owners and small business owners who failed to improve revenue and increase business viability. Conducting additional research in such areas could afford business owners and government leaders the opportunity to

continue supporting, expanding resources, and reinforcing local economies and communities.

Reflections

This doctoral study process included developing my scholarly voice and improving my ability to conduct research as an independent scholar. Additionally, completing my doctoral study included obtaining comprehensive information regarding the effective business promotion strategies small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana used to improve revenue and increase business viability. The process was lengthy, intricate, and arduous at times. The study's results functioned to provide an understanding of the influence and benefit of successful small business owners in the Sekondi -Takoradi of the Western part of Ghana. The information gained from the study's participants added to the existing literature regarding effective business promotion strategies leading to small business increase revenue and improve business viability.

Being the study's researcher included investing myself in the research process to maintain comprehensive study completion. Maintaining neutrality and relying on the collected data functioned as the approach to address the responses to the research question. The study participants were willing to share their lived experiences related to the effective business promotion strategies they applied to improve revenue and increase business viability. Maintaining neutrality throughout the data collection process established participant comfort. Bracketing functioned to reduce biases regarding the

study's findings when analyzing the data to identify emergent themes. Bracketing reduces researcher bias (Zwaan et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The purpose of this doctoral study was to explore the effective business promotion strategies that small business owners in Sekondi-Takoradi use to improve revenue and increase business viability. According to Zolkiewski et al. (2017), by personalizing the customer experience, responding promptly to inquiries, training employees, using technology, encouraging feedback, offering excellent post-sales support, and providing incentives, small businesses can enhance customer satisfaction, retain customers and drive revenue growth. From the six qualified participants, to improve revenue and increase business viability, good customer relationship is vital. Train personnel to know what to say and what to do when dealing with customers. This includes knowing customers need, helping them get what they need and recommending other products to improve revenue. Giving away free products (samples) and discounts will give the customer a chance to try out the sampled product especially if the product is new to the business. This helps with the sale of new products. Discounts help customers to indirectly spend more. This is because they know they are saving money. Community engagement help the community patronize the products or services knowing the company cares about them. This could be through doing charity work or volunteer work for the people in the community. It is an indirect advertisement for the business through the community's word-of-mouth and appreciation. Paying attention to how much you are making and how much you are spending in the business helps in reducing unnecessary

costs to improve revenue and also keep the business thriving. According to the participants, indulging in fancy business promotions might help but not help enough to sustain the business. Participants attested that small business owners need to be calculative above all when handling effective business promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability.

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Appendix A: Partner Organization Agreement for DBA Case Study

Partner Organization Name

Partner Organization Email

Partner Organization Phone Number

Date

The doctoral student, Shirley Owusu-Ankomah, is conducting a case study involving our organization and is therefore approved to collect interview data from one or more of our organization's leaders (managers, directors, or decision-makers whom I will identify to the student).

INTERNAL RECORDS (OPTIONAL):

The signer of this agreement should indicate which internal documents, if any, can be shared with the researcher.

- Our organization cannot allow access to internal records.
- Our organization will allow this student to analyze the following internal records that I deem appropriate (***and shall be de-identified or redacted, as needed***):

- training materials*
- protocols*
- manuals*
- reports*
- agreements*
- operational records*
- meeting minutes*
- digital/audio/video documents*
- other internal documents:* _____

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

I understand that, as per the student doctoral program requirements, the student will publish a scholarly report of this case study project in Proquest as a doctoral capstone (withholding the names of the organization and participating individuals), as per the following ethical standards:

a. In all reports (including drafts shared with peers and faculty members), the student is required to maintain confidentiality by removing names and key pieces of evidence/data that might disclose an organization's/individual's identity or inappropriately divulge proprietary details. If the organization itself wishes to publicize the findings of this project, that is the organization's judgment call.

b. The student will be responsible for complying with the organization's policies and requirements regarding data collection (including the need for the partner organization's internal ethics/regulatory approval, if applicable).

c. Via an Interview Consent Form, the student will describe to interviewees how the data will be used in the doctoral project and how all interviewees' privacy will be protected.

d. The doctoral student will not use these data for any purpose other than the doctoral study outlined in this agreement.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research activities in this setting.

Signature _____

Partner Organization Leader's Name and Title

Appendix B: Invitation

There is a new study about promotion strategies that will help small business owner improve revenue and increase business viability. For this study, you are invited to describe your experiences with your business promotion strategies that have enhanced your business revenue and have kept your business thriving.

About the study:

- One 20-30 minute face-to-face interview that will be audio recorded {no videorecording)
- You would receive a 200 ghc (Ghana Cedis) cash gift as a thank you
- To protect your privacy, the published study will not share any names or details that identifies you

Volunteers must meet these requirements:

- Business owners
- Has used promotion strategies to improve revenue and increase business viability

This interview is part of a doctoral study for Shirley Owusu-Ankomah, a doctoral student at Walden University. Interviews will take place during July 2024.

Please reach out 0598964888 to let the researcher know of your interest. You are welcome to forward it to others who might be interested.

Appendix C: Business Leader Interview Consent Form for DBA Case Study

You are invited to take part in a leader interview for a business case study that I am conducting as part of my Doctorate of Business Administration research.

Interview Procedures:

If you agree to be part of this study, you will be invited to take part in audio-recorded interviews about the organization's operations and problem-solving. Opportunities for clarifying statements will be available (via a process called member checking).

Transcriptions of business leader interviews will be analyzed as part of the case study, along with any archival data, reports, and documents that the organization's leadership deems fit to share.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this study would not pose any risks beyond those of typical daily life. This case study's aim is to provide data and insights that could be valuable to other leaders and organizations. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will share the overall results by publishing the final study on the Scholarworks website.

Privacy:

Interview recordings and full transcripts will be shared with each interviewee, upon request. I am required by my university to protect the identities of interviewees and their organizations, within the limits of the law. I am only allowed to share interviewee identity or contact info as needed with Walden University supervisors (who are also required to protect your privacy) or with authorities if court-ordered (very rare). Any reports, presentations, or publications related to this study will share general patterns from the data, without sharing the identities of individual interviewees or their organizations. If I were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by password protection. The interview transcripts will be kept for at least five years, as required by my university. The collected information will not be used for any purpose outside of this study.

Contacts and Questions:

If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Walden University Research Participant advocate via 612-312-1210. Walden University's ethics approval number for this study is (The IRB will provide the ethics approval number to the student after the appropriate documents have been received).

Please share any questions or concerns you might have at this time. If you agree to be interviewed as described above, please reply to this email with the words, "I consent."

Table 2: Theme frequency with Study Participants

Themes	SBO1	SBO2	SBO3	SBO4	SBO5	SBO6
Ensuring good customer relationship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training personnel	0	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Giving freebies/discounts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Exercising community engagement/corporate responsibility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reducing operational costs	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	✓

