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Strategies Some Female Musician Entrepreneurs Use to Increase Profitability and Sustain Success Without an Additional Source of Income

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Without a solid understanding of marketing, booking, and branding strategies, female musician entrepreneurs may struggle to achieve profitability. Developing these strategies is crucial to mitigate risks that could jeopardize the sustainability and success of their independent businesses. Grounded in the theory of constraints the purpose of this pragmatic inquiry was to explore the strategies some female musician entrepreneurs used to become profitable without an additional source of income. The participants were five independent artists within the Southeast region of the United States who performed and published original music during the last 5 years. Data was collected from interviews. Three themes emerged with four subthemes while conducting a thematic analysis: networking, marketing, and self-motivation with subthemes of relationship building, branding and booking, and perseverance. A key recommendation is for female musician entrepreneurs to utilize social media, branding, marketing, relationships, and networking to support the success and growth of their businesses. The implications for social change include the potential for women musician entrepreneurs to achieve success by generating profitability and relevance independently, thereby supporting their families while cultivating a strong sense of self and accomplishment.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my family. Thank you for always believing in me. Your encouragement and love have been a staple in my success throughout my life and for that I will forever be grateful.

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First, I would like to thank my heavenly Father for carrying me through this. During the hard times and the happy times, he has been my source of strength and guidance. Next, I would like to thank my family, friends, coworkers, and those close to me for the consistent and unconditional support they have given me while I have taken each step in completing this journey. Thank you to the faculty for the support and assistance. Thank you to my committee members Dr. Irene Williams and Dr. David L. Moody for your guidance and patience. Thank you to the participants for offering your time and willingness to enrich the knowledge of this topic for yourself and others. To my fellow musicians, always believe in yourself, love yourself, and know that you have a gift that could save and change lives.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

As small business owners strive to be more competitive in various markets, innovative ideas and strategies are needed to overcome obstacles to become and remain profitable. According to Nildawati and Ilhamsyah (2022), when various obstacles exist, a concentrated strategy is needed to overcome them. Survival as an entrepreneur is imperative to one's financial health if it is an individual's sole source of livelihood.

Nicolas (2022) stated that cash and credit constraints can force entrepreneurs to use assets intended for long-term capital to enhance short-term capital, which was detrimental to long- term assets. Integration of many different experiences unique to the entrepreneur and their advantages also enables the generation of success. Entrepreneurs often see opportunities that others see, but they see them uniquely. Akaehomen et al. (2023) conducted a study that supported how imperative it was that entrepreneurs receive the kind of support that recognizes and considers their uniqueness and entrepreneurial potential in its design, development, and delivery and that increases the likelihood of their entrepreneurial success. Appropriate integration maintains the overall objective of profitability. Also, identifying and anticipating competition is essential to supporting business continuity (Bachtiar et al., 2023). The inability of a woman musician entrepreneur to find work creates a decline in opportunities to grow. Ranganathan and Das (2023) stated the treatment of women is conclusive and documented to be less than men in team interactions and women are presented with less opportunities to participate.

As a result, female musician entrepreneurs could benefit from additional and new strategies to become profitable.

Business Problem Focus and Project Purpose

The specific business problem was that some female musician entrepreneurs lack the strategies to increase profitability and sustain success without an additional source of income. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry was to explore strategies some women musician entrepreneurs use to increase profitability and sustain success without an additional source of income. The target population was five female musician entrepreneurs with various industry success levels. The intent was to assist in providing solutions, insight, and innovative ideas to contribute to the success of female musician entrepreneurs in growing their businesses and becoming profitable. Participants were active working female musicians based in the South Atlantic and Eastern Region of the United States. The data source utilized for the project by the researcher was interviews. Langley and Meziani (2020) stated the one-on-one interview dominated all other data sources in the qualitative research realm. Open-ended questions were utilized to discover perspectives, characteristics, traits, and strategies that have been effective in a diverse group of female musician entrepreneurs. The theory of constraints was this study's chosen theory of conceptual framework. Goldratt established the theory of constraints by first publishing it in 1984. According to Taylor and Mead (2015), the theory of constraints did not focus on one process but rather on all the processes as a whole and how efficient they were to the business. Utilizing this theory helped to identify the weakest link in a process and improve it.

Research Question

What strategies do some female musician entrepreneurs use to increase profitability and sustain success without an additional source of income?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

According to Anderson (2017), assumptions are facts considered to be accurate but not verified by the researcher – a theoretical perspective of the researcher. Assumptions carry risks, and it was imperative to handle them as such. The first assumption for this study was that a qualitative pragmatic inquiry was the appropriate research method for lived experience as a woman musician entrepreneur. Adler (2022) contributed knowledge production as the result of qualitative research. Secondly, choosing the theory of constraints as the conceptual framework was assumed to be the best way to determine the best strategies to sustain profitability and growth while navigating obstacles and barriers. The third assumption was that the participants would respond honestly to the questions and that five participants would be a large enough pool to uncover themes of successful strategies. According to Arrogante (2022), in quantitative studies, it is not necessary to calculate a sample size as the purpose is to uncover repetitive themes and achieve data saturation; therefore, five participants were assumed to provide data saturation. Lastly, the findings contribute to the profitability and sustainability of a female entrepreneur musician's business.

Limitations

Limitations are evidence of the writer's capacity to reflect critically on their research, which may influence the findings (Zhao et al., 2004). Limitations were defined by Coker (2022) as issues that the researcher cannot resolve after being addressed during their study. The first limitation of this study was access to information regarding what the participant offers as strategizing opportunities. The second limitation was the personal bias of the success of each participant. Participants could have provided answers to inflate their profitability or disguise issues to remain socially acceptable. The third limitation of this study was demographics. Every geographic area had distinct aspects of what was good and profitable, and this study was mainly limited to the same geographic region.

Transition

In Section 1, I presented the foundation of the study. The following sections of this qualitative pragmatic inquiry are further developed as supporting research to benefit the problem statement further and develop a deeper understanding of the problem and purpose statement.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This research project aimed to explore some female musician entrepreneurs' strategies to increase their profitability via a qualitative pragmatic inquiry. Multiple sources and databases for research were utilized, including Sage Journal, EBSCOhost, Science Direct, and ProQuest. The terms used to search for literature were *pay disparity of musicians among genders, gender bias in music, women in music, glass ceiling, gender discrimination, equal pay, laws for gender equal pay, the difference in male and female performers from a booking perspective, women-owned business, female musician hardships, steps to success, obstacles faced by women musicians, obstacles faced by women business owners,* and *venture capital for women business owners.* Seventy-two peer- reviewed resources were used, and 65 of those resources made up 90% within the 5-year publication period of 2020 – 2024. In this literature review, four topics are discussed in the research. Entrepreneurship mindset is the first topic I explore to gain a better understanding of the entrepreneur. The theory of constraints is the second topic I discussed, as it was the conceptual framework used for the study, and in identifying obstacles entrepreneurs encounter. The third topic of discussion is the types of revenue streams that were currently available for musician entrepreneurs. The fourth topic of discussion is resources for small business owners in general to become and sustain profitability.

Entrepreneurial Mindset

The development of an entrepreneurial mindset was crucial to being profitable. Daspit et al. (2023) defined an entrepreneurial mindset as a cognitive perspective that enables an individual to create value by recognizing and acting on opportunities, making decisions with limited information, and remaining adaptable and resilient in uncertain and complex conditions. Feng et al. (2023) also saw women entrepreneurship as entrepreneurial diversity in their study. According to Kuratko et al. (2021), the entrepreneurial mindset allowed and empowered the entrepreneur to develop innovative ideas, promoted problem-solving, and generated unconventional and thoughtful solutions to business problems and situations. There was a perception that some musicians and artists needed to identify as entrepreneurs. According to Wall-Andrews (2022), creative individuals thought being recognized as an entrepreneur had a way of diminishing or changing the direction of their passion, which were some traits that were found to be similar in entrepreneurs and musicians, along with other industries worldwide, and due to traits, Feng et al. revealed that women were less likely to participate in entrepreneurial activity than men. The traits linked within entrepreneurs to sustainable economic success were leveraging innovative technology platforms and tools while exhibiting motivation, risk-taking, resilience, and ample creativity. As stated by Antonini Philippe et al. (2021), musical performance includes technical abilities and psychological competencies.

Another perspective of a successful mindset explored was that from the spiritual point of view. Spirituality proved to be a contributing factor in a study conducted by Margaça et al. (2022) that found spirituality, in fact, only affected the success of female

entrepreneurs. The study conducted by Margaça et al. showed that women saw business as an extension of themselves, a way to improve their self-esteem and self-concept, and a way to make meaning. Optimism, psychological resilience, and entrepreneurial success were considered psychological resources entrepreneurs utilized.

Theory of Constraints

The chosen framework for this study was the theory of constraints introduced by Goldratt. The theory of constraints was first mentioned in 1980 in the APICS 23rd Annual International Conference proceedings but was not developed and published until 1984 (McCleskey, 2020). The theory of constraints has developed into a theory of managing an organization successfully. There are five steps to continuous improvement with theory of constraints, which are as follows: (a) identify the constraint, (b) exploit the constraint, (c) subordinate everything else to the constraint, (d) elevate the system's constraint, and (e) repeat the cycle if a constraint was broken (Gupta & Boyd, 2008).

Five Steps to Theory of Constraints

Step 1: Identify the Constraint

To be successful, a business entrepreneur must know where improvement and/or constraints exist so they can resolve them to move forward. Constraints can affect productivity, creativity, and overall success. Identifying the constraint or problem is the first step in theory of constraints.

Step 2: Exploit the Constraint

When exploiting a constraint, the business entrepreneur needs to realize what other factors are affected by the constraint and whether the constraint itself or using the constraint affects the business's productivity.

Step 3: Subordinate Everything Else to the Constraint

After the constraint is exploited in a business to make a productive adjustment, all other working parts of the currently utilized must be placed within the process to support the constraint to become more efficient.

Step 4: Elevate the System's Constraint

If the constraint does not become more efficient, the constraint is eliminated. Elimination is necessary if the previous steps have not been successful.

Step 5: If a Constraint Was Broken, Repeat the Cycle

Once the five steps are completed, other constraints will emerge that must be evaluated with the same process.

The theory of constraints framework can assist a business owner with identifying constraints within their business early enough that they can be addressed so longevity is not hindered (Akaeze & Akaeze, 2017). In a business environment, longevity encourages profitability. Identifying constraints is imperative in any business. However, this study needed to exhibit the generation of profitability with no additional source of revenue or income. Businesses in every area face constraints; however, entrepreneurs face numerous constraints from when the business venture arises, is identified, and is pursued until the business pursuit becomes a reality (López & Neves, 2020). According to López and

Neves (2020), constraints are the person's appraisal of challenge and threat that determines the response. Constraints are tangible or intangible factors limiting a manager's actions (Kakabadse et al., 2020). There are diverse constraints, including social, financial, institutional, regulatory, market, resource, and physical (Naor et al., 2013).

A type of constraint described by Kakabadse et al. (2020) is time management. Time management constraints hinder efficiency and, ultimately, a finished product to deliver, affecting income, demand, and relevance in the music industry. According to Sirén et al. (2020), time is a crucial yet scarce resource in innovation management. A second constraint is the lack of financial literacy. Financial literacy is imperative to business entrepreneurs. However, according to Anshika and Singla (2022), the level of financial literacy among entrepreneurs is low. Finance contributes to maintaining efficiency to have a profitable business effectively. Anshika and Singla found insufficient funds to disrupt operating efficiency in a business. A third example of constraint for an entrepreneur is wealth and or capital. The lack of wealth extensively affects the distribution of the output an entrepreneur could supply (Zhao et al., 2004). Braff (2023) asserted that women-led businesses were 63% less likely to receive venture capital funding than those led by men. Lurie (2021) reported that female-founded companies received only 2% of all venture funding in 2018, with Moudry and Thaichon (2020) indicating that approximately 39% of entrepreneurs are female, depending on the culture and country.

Small business owners could benefit from a strategy that identifies and mitigates constraints to obtain sustainability and longevity. Without a successful strategy a business is set to fail. According to Hai et al. (2022), innovation is the key to long-term sustainable endogenous growth. Innovation of specific technological applications assists in the identification of constraints.

The life cycle of a business goes through several stages, beginning with its creation and progressing to consolidation or exit from the market (Michelin et al., 2022). The beginning stage, the entrepreneurial stage, has a primary goal: to occupy a niche in the market (Kolobov, 2023). According to Kolobov (2023), the stages of the market life cycle are based on the assessment of total revenue or production volumes. Hurtado-Hernández et al. (2020) implied that entrepreneurs demonstrated different leadership according to the company's business life cycle stage.

When the business begins, it usually reflects the vision of the business leader’s desires. Personal desires can initiate different constraints. Michelin et al. (2022) also stated that knowledge of the organization's position in the business life cycle allows it to take preventative measures in advance, either addressing future problems or avoiding them altogether. During the multiple cycles in business life, there are changes and challenges, including changes in the behavior of the person leading the business. The theory of constraints views the efficiency of all the processes rather than the efficiency of any single process (Taylor & Mead, 2015). However, the thinking process system can be used within the theory of constraints or alone to work through business problems and processes. The thinking process was developed as the constraint was not always easily

observed and consists of a series of steps. The steps are (a) what to change, (b) what to change to, and (c) how to make the change, as discussed by Taylor and Mead (2015). Business owners should address constraints utilizing the thinking process as it supports the theory of constraints.

Constraints are active in meeting project objectives and being fully developed (Sirshar et al., 2019). Growing a business was a form of evolution and should be treated as such. Also, according to Singh and Dash (2021), risk aversion of banks, lack of financial services, lack of collateral, and low accessibility to finance are some of the specific constraints women-owned businesses face. Small businesses, in particular, face several financial and nonfinancial bottlenecks, inhibiting them from achieving their growth potential (Singh & Dash, 2021). The major hindrance for women entrepreneurs is the need for more timely and adequate funds to finance their business operations (Singh & Dash, 2021). Most musicians fail to make their career big in the music industry due to various challenges presented by digital technology (Murphy, 2020). The failure of musicians has been credited to not taking marketing seriously, expecting success immediately, not releasing content consistently, taking fans for granted, not taking enough risks, looking for shortcuts, making excuses, too much time compared to already successful artists, and awaiting approval from the music industry. Understandably, there is a need for marketing and consistency. However, these things could be a financial burden. The general business problem was that musical entrepreneurs struggle to remain viable and active in their field without alternative employment.

According to Ennico (2023), there are steps to building a successful art business: art, music, and authorship. Creative industries are the industries that hold businesses with talents such as art and music. The four steps are as follows: first, remember, a business is when you get paid for what you do; secondly, give your customers what they want.

Third, remember that the "rights" count, not the art itself. Lastly, form a limited liability company that owns the rights to your work. A musician's work is defined by that musician's personality, experiences, and thoughts. Songwriters and recording artists are legally permitted to get paid for (a) reproductions and public performances of the notes and lyrics they create (the musical works), as well as (b) reproductions, distributions, and specific digital performances of the recorded sound of their voices combined with instruments (the sound recordings; Scherer, 2018). The shift of the traditional music industry into the music industry known in 2023 broadly encourages musicians to think and structure themselves as entrepreneurs. Haynes and Marshall (2018) stated that musicians have to find their niche in a market to become profitable. Musicians are seen to sustain themselves and thrive with little capital or infrastructural support and thus are more likely to prevail within the current formation of the economy and labor market, as stated by Haynes and Marshall in a study they conducted in 2018 that reviewed the musician’s perspective on their actions and if they were that of an entrepreneur. As stated by Maudonnet et al. (2019), those musicians, like other artists, are predominantly highly educated, self-employed professionals who work in metropolitan areas, perform different activities simultaneously, and have significant variations in monthly income.

Types of Revenue Streams for Musicians

Streaming

During the COVID-19 pandemic, musicians' futures were uncertain, along with the global decline of income previously produced from recorded music sales. Haynes and Marshall (2018) discovered that between 1999 and 2013, there was a 43% decrease in recorded music sales in physical form rather than digital. Further, the pandemic encouraged a new way of communicating with the superfans, as Lank and Dewetering (2020) referred. According to Cirwasano (2021), the music industry has always had a dependence on superfans, which are the individuals who buy the most, stream the most, and share the most, which can account for 50% to 80% of a musician's overall revenue.

Streaming original music online directly links the artist and the fans. The use of the internet to share music offered numerous opportunities to reach audiences and supply niche products without the support of a major record label (Haynes & Marshall, 2018). Numerous musicians found success with streaming during the pandemic, and some became known as "authentic" internet (micro) celebrities (Vizcaíno-Verdú et al., 2021). Social media innovation has increased within the entrepreneurial environment, especially within the music industry, by serving as an income-generating tool that can monetize a service. Lichy (2021) described digitalization in the form of social technologies, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, are a pathway for women entrepreneurs and micro entrepreneurs to connect with social networks to further their enterprises. There are also data management programs that artists can use to approximate the number of superfans they need to sustain their careers at a given level (Cirwasano, 2021). Streaming and other

digital music services represented most of the recorded music industry's revenues for the first time in 2016 (Scherer, 2018). However, music as an asset is among the messiest due to archaic laws governing royalty rates (Aswad, 2022).

Because the music industry has been disrupted by Covid 19, entrepreneurship has become a necessary hindrance and somewhat overwhelming necessity to musicians who know how to earn income and stay relevant.

Merchandising and Marketing

Connecting to people is a valuable tool; sharing who you are as a person is part of marketing. According to Hopkins (2023), for a musician to be successful marketing of themselves, not just their music is necessary. Hopkins discussed the steps of (a) putting oneself in the fan's shoes, (b) letting fans connect with you as the musician or artist, (c) capitalizing on what makes you interesting, (d) knowing your audience and targeting them on social media and as stated previously, and (e) marketing oneself not just the music. One example of this is Shirley Manson from the band Garbage. During COVID, Shirley traded the everyday t-shirts sold on tour for something more personal to her and her fans: toilet paper (Córdoba, 2022). Shirley knew her quirky personality would appeal to her fan base and disrupt the normal, pique her interest in sales, and make her relatable. Shirley noted to have wanted to recreate a feeling of unexpected humor. Other musicians noted to follow the same marketing style, introducing self-care and comfort products.

Marketing a tangible product to the fans forms a bond with a long-lasting emotional connection. Sometimes, memories of time spent with people and specific places are triggered by an item, such as a song, poem, or word, which can promote

positive feelings. These tangible connections kept musicians afloat during COVID-19 and into the present now that it was a known revenue method. Email marketing is also still known as being the most potent way of generating sales (Hopkins, 2021). Merchandising and advertising were not identified as musicians' practices in the past; however, Haynes and Marshall (2018) stated that the decline in hostility towards merchandising and advertising has served as growth into a more entrepreneurial role.

Social Media

Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, online music lessons and teaching became popular among musicians as performing live was not an option, and the job of a live performer needed to be improved. When concerts and recitals were canceled, the logical course was to host prerecorded and live performances on social media platforms (Berkowitz, 2021). Because music is a social activity (Onderdijk et al., 2021), a lockdown of a physical gathering was not permitted. Social media also opened doors for musicians involved in other areas, such as mixing, recording, and mastering, by providing a no-contact environment to promote their business. However, income still fell short for those who relied solely on performance for income (Lank & Dewetering, 2020). According to Breese et al. (2020), intermediate players in the industry are less needed. Increasingly, in 2020, musicians moved toward platforms such as Facebook and YouTube to stream live concerts and request payment via virtual tools such as Venmo, PayPal, and many others, which proved successful for musicians, including women musician entrepreneurs. Statistics have shown that social media marketing grew in importance, with ad spending in the social media advertising segment expected to reach

$207.10 billion in 2023 (Murphy & Hume, 2023). It was estimated to increase at a 4.53% annual rate, resulting in anticipated market demand of $247.30 billion by 2027, with the United States accounting for most of the ad spending of $72,330.00 million in 2023 alone (Khaki & Khan, 2023). The prediction of Facebook's market share was 16% of the social media advertising category (Murphy & Hume, 2023). Most, including the smallest businesses, use social media within the online marketplace to generate revenue.

Crowdfunding

Crowdfunding was defined as soliciting funding for a project through an open call, often via an online platform (Bannerman, 2020). There was a promise of empowerment from crowdfunding with the hopes that the need for funding was fulfilled (Brzozowska & Galuszka, 2021). Crowdfunding began to gain project support for musicians, artists, and other creative people. According to Bannerman (2020), three diverse groups can generate economic capital through crowdfunding. Platform owners and operators, cultural creators, and campaigners include campaigns not seeking to generate a profit and funders. Musicians represent cultural creators through their lyrics, songs, and styles. Crowdfunding does make funding more accessible to those who have difficulty accessing credit from banks, where banking was in a more remote location. In fields where women are traditionally underrepresented, women are more successful than men in crowdfunding (Bannerman, 2020). Tewary and Mehta (2021) discussed how crowdfunding was beneficial to raising funds for a business after the COVID crisis and how the process works to educate other business owners as one of the targeted audiences. Three primary models for crowdfunding have emerged: rewards-based, equity-based, and

donation-based. Rewards-based crowdfunding was when a donor contributes money for project creation and then receives something in return, such as a note, a copy of the project itself, or, most commonly, a t-shirt. Rewards-based crowdfunding was most comparable to traditional fundraising. Equity crowdfunding was more of a business profit sharing because it deals more with selling debt or stakes to investors, who profit from the company based on what they bought. Implications suggest donation-based crowdfunding was another form of disaster relief.

Live Performances

The Copyright Act of 1909 outlined the exclusive rights of copyright owners of musical compositions, stating the musical composer shall have the exclusive right to perform their copyrighted work publicly for profit (Jackson, 2021). Live performances allow musicians to express their thoughts and feelings through their original art, particularly music. According to Aswad (2022), touring was considered the primary source of income for many musicians.

Live music has produced a stream of revenue for musicians and has become increasingly important since the development of file sharing. Streaming and download platforms have become prominent and created an income void for musicians. Street theatres exist across the world, and there are diverse types of creatives that occupythem. One form of expressing music in the street theater was known as busking. Buskers are also known as street musicians. Specific factors that contributed to a study conducted by Stäbler and Mierwasch (2022) on the street theatre and how to receive contributions were as follows:

How to Receive Contributions While Performing on the Street Theatre

Quality is imperative to success as a street performer, among many other things. To make a profit, an entrepreneur must present a product perceived to have value to the audience. In the busking arena, the product delivered was music. Child musicians are also an earning commodity for the public. Often, children spark emotion within an audience rather than a need to protect or help a child as that of a parent or guardian. The larger the audience, the better. Social perception of giving is a driving factor in motivation. It is perceived that the larger the group watching the busker, the more favorable one will appear if they contribute a donation, also known as a tip, and be socially recognized as performing a good deed.

Environmental Factors

Weather is often considered an obstacle for performers; however, some consumers view how a performer reacts to the obstacle as a judgment of what amount of money the performer should make. To what degree was a good performance measured when an obstacle of weather was explored? To some individuals, harsh weather makse it more challenging to give an outstanding performance; therefore, individuals are compelled to contribute more to the musician in less desirable weather. The temperature is also encompassed in the weather. Different days of the week are also a factor in the emotional component of giving. The prediction for this study was that Sundays would be more profitable due to religious persuasion and the influence of the golden rule, along with the desire for good human nature.

Consumer Specific Factors

When other friends accompany friends to an event or an impromptu performance, there is more social pressure to contribute to the betterment of society and appear to be a good person. Women are also generally perceived as more empathetic; therefore, they may be more apt to be charitable and give donations than men.

All the factors considered in the study of why individuals contribute to buskers apply to those of musicians in other markets. This study will likely reveal strategies aligning with profitability and have emerging themes of similar factors contributing to female entrepreneurs' profitability and sustainability. In recent years, revenues from live music made up nearly half of the total profit for musicians (Breese et al., 2020). To create a stream of revenue from live performances, an artist needs to connect to the audience, which technology accomplished. The artist's connection with the audience is imperative to the experience. Live performances can be profitable. However, they can have disadvantages. There are economic costs, sensory costs, and time-related costs that are direct influences that determine whether people will attend concerts and whether the musician will ultimately get paid. Technology has assisted musicians in determining a way to monetize the live performance by live streaming. Relevance in the industry could result in tax revenue, employment opportunities for musicians, inspiration for social movements, and legal change. There are implications that messages through music can increase awareness of and, in some cases, legal change of humanitarian issues reflecting social change. Music was a form of communication credited with emotional attachment and influence of experience and ideas. Music creates a bond to a time, place, or situation

that brings people together as a community. Like other art forms, music enables relationships and sensibilities that challenge hegemonic norms and subjectivities (Enriquez, 2022).

Philanthropic contributions can be encouraged through a musical message that enhances a musician's ability to continue spreading a message, which in turn was filtered back into the economy by creating music that generates downloads/electronic purchases, concert profits that generate income and tax revenue that if invested back into communities to provide physical preservation of monuments, physical preservation of historical buildings, and overall enhancement to a community and the communities needs an example would be housing for veterans, or housing for people experiencing homelessness.

Royalties

Royalties are legally binding payments made to compensate one party for using another party's assets. Royalties are negotiated through licensing agreements, which are a tool of negotiation. An asset can describe artwork and music. A form of revenue is generated when a song is used or played for the benefit of monetary gain. Described as the "lifeblood" of music's ecosystem (Legrand, 2020), royalties are a way to monetize emotions that come with songwriting and performing. Royalties turn thoughts and experiences into something tangible. Intellectual property is a field of law that provides legal protections and ownership rights for products of human creativity and ingenuity, such as royalties. On October 11, 2018, the president signed the Music Modernization Act to find a compromise on royalty structures from past copyright laws and music

distribution (Kramp, 2023). The Mechanical Licensing Collective was created from the Music Modernization Act to ensure the collection and distribution of royalties to the owners of copyrighted work, mostly involving record labels and streaming services.

There are identified characteristics that entrepreneurs integrate to create their value and likelihood of becoming an entrepreneur. The characteristics are previous business knowledge, elevated level of initiative, open-mindedness, and an entrepreneurial family environment, with no other distinction made for other factors (Rosado-Cubero et al., 2022).

All individuals have unique experiences, goals, obstacles, characters, abilities, advantages, relationships, and values. Often, cultural values affect a business owner or entrepreneur's strategy (Antonius & Setiawan, 2020): unique experiences and goals driven by values that determine perception. Resilience, confidence, and innovation are credited with success (Lank & Dewetering, 2020). Entrepreneurship can be unstable due to market demand and presence, among other things. Potential internal chaos can erupt because of an unclear path and adaptability resulting from relevance in the specified market of choice of the entrepreneur, which partly determines increased and decreased financial stability. A female musician and entrepreneur can expect a certain amount of turmoil from the music industry. A musician's success depends on their integrated strategy in the ever-changing demand of the times, trends, industry culture, social demand, and uncertainty in the market.

Changes within the music industry can disrupt the finances of the musician entrepreneur. Taking months off due to COVID had a massive impact on the blue-collar

income-level performers. The avenues that produce income for musicians are advances, merchandise, royalties, licensing fees, and playing live music jobs. Depending on the musician's success, additional fees and salaries may be paid to a record label, manager, promoters, public relations, and others on the musician's payroll. Women musicians find it particularly difficult in the industry as sexual harassment and recognition are among the top obstacles that still haunt the music industry and have been argued to be a fixture of the culture. Components of uniqueness and likeability are contradicted by gender bias and are complex and crucial to a woman musician finding success and profitability. Dating back to the 19th century, patriarchal beliefs determined what types of lessons a female musician entrepreneur could have to perform music along with the type of instrument they could learn to play and the type of music the female entrepreneur could perform as the male gender was more inclined to perform the more desirable and difficult pieces due to their superiority (Marisi, 2024).

While pursuing the different types of revenue, there can be a disconnect and a limited understanding of navigating the process to obtain these revenue-producing items. Women generally struggle to remain profitable as small business owners, even more so in the music industry.

Small businesses have generally struggled to have longevity for the past five years. Female musician entrepreneurs could use the results from this study to infiltrate new strategies that improve their advertising, promotion, booking, marketing, and productivity methods. Implementing the strategies discovered could also help manage

financial assets to promote themselves and their careers better. The following resources guide business owners to expedite their growth and success.

Grants

Grants can be helpful with running a business as an entrepreneur. A grant impacts the output of a business as the grant ensures the placement of needed capital and, in a way, can endorse approval within an industry by the grantor (Srhoj et al., 2022). Kavin (2023) stated that services for entrepreneurs were available for everyone depending on demographics and industry. Srhoj et al. (2022) stated that due to the financial crisis of 2008, entrepreneurs needed the support of grants made available to support economic development. It was challenging for women entrepreneurs to obtain financial assistance. In 2019, Guzman and Kacperczyk found that females were 63% less likely than males to obtain external financing in areas of risk capital. Sato et al. (2021) discussed the seminal study published in 1997 by Wenneras and Wold that also displayed findings of the grant peer review process. Sato et al. stated that female applicants were found to receive lower evaluations in the previously mentioned study than male applicants. They were required to be 2.5 times more productive than the average male applicant to receive identical scores in their review evaluations of approval for grant funding.

Therefore, women entrepreneurs must combine various resources to start, run, and obtain a profitable business. According to Atarah et al. (2021), these sources are made possible through social capital within the realm of female entrepreneurs, including prominent funding sources, gifts/grants from friends, families, and well-wishers, personal

savings, and interest-free loans. Cash was in demand for nearly every opportunity to grow a small business and provide substantial services, even in the music industry.

Accelerators

Accelerators are designed to assist in fast-tracking small businesses (Kavin, 2023). Examples of accelerators are programs that assist in building relationships, providing technology, mentorship, coaching, educational resources, and additional information on funding opportunities. More giant corporations that accept applications periodically provide numerous programs for free. Kavin (2023) also stated that some businesses offer tailored services at a complimentary or discounted price for financial tools and marketing. González-Uribe and Reyes (2021) stated there was compelling evidence that participation in an accelerator has significant positive impacts, such as an estimation that over the first 3 postapplication years, participation in the accelerator increases annual revenue. Regarding accelerators, Kwapisz (2022) found that women entrepreneurs value knowledge, and education provided by accelerators and men value the networking benefits more. de Klerk and Hodge (2021) discussed creative-specific accelerators designed to assist business owners in creative industries by creating new employment opportunities, specific mentorship, presenting venues, co-working spaces for collaboration, and providing a sense of belonging to encourage creativeness to flourish. A specific presentation venue discussed by de Klerk and Hodge was the Street Theatre.

When Kavin (2023) asked 10 business executives what small business leaders needed to know, they responded that to become 10% more efficient, build a broader network, get their money faster, be innovative with funding, think more about privacy,

prepare, prepare, prepare, become financially literate, beef up on cybersecurity, invest more in the digital pivot, and remember the little things.

Transition

The literature review in Section 2 presented prediction factors as possible findings from the qualitative pragmatic inquiry. The following section enhances the understanding of the research project methodology.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Section 3 includes information involving the data collection and analysis process. The project ethics are also covered in Section 3 to provide a better understanding of the research methodology. Participant expectations and the processes chosen to ensure reliability and validity are outlined in Section 3. Table 1 shows the participants' home state geographical location.

Table 1

Participant's Home State Geographical Location

# of participants	North Carolina	Tennessee
1	1	
2	1	
3	1	
4	1	
5		1

Project Ethics

As a researcher, one is responsible for interpreting, collecting, analyzing, and presenting findings. As Yin (2017) stated, these things are a researcher's responsibility to do. Upon collecting the data from my study, I analyzed the data for emerging themes by utilizing a thematic analysis and presentation of my findings. A researcher should not include bias at any step of the study process to disrupt the findings. However, a researcher should analyze data and conduct studies to understand their interest better. As

a woman entrepreneur musician, it was imperative and exciting to me to determine how to become profitable or succeed in the music industry. According to Redman and Caplan (2021), the Belmont Report provides protection for participants from research harm by providing a moral framework while research was being conducted.

The participants that I chose for the study identified as working female entrepreneur musicians via social media and or word of mouth in musician communities. All participants received an invitation in writing to participate via email or social media communication which included a consent form that outlined their participation and interview protocol. If the participant chose to withdraw from the project, I would have asked for a withdrawal notice in writing. During the data collection, I ensured ethical standards for reputable findings. I organized and retained all notes, answers, and any additional interview responses to assist in the maintenance of the data. Atlas.ti technology was utilized to assist in maintaining the data as well. Atlas.ti technology has comparable storage and allowed the researcher to store data as needed. Ronzani et al. (2020) stated that Atlas.ti is reliable and easy to use when locating emerging themes and validating data. Guidelines were established, and verbiage that informed the participants of their consent and what that involved including the informed consent form and agreement documents. The participants' identities were masked to protect the integrity of the data, and all raw data will be securely stored for 5 years and safe guarded with access controls, and encryption authorization. If there is a future audit, Yin (2017) stated that data would need to be safeguarded.

Nature of the Project

Three types of methods that are used in research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method studies. The qualitative research method used for this research project was a pragmatic inquiry. This approach was appropriate for this study because strategies are not easily quantified. According to Allwood (2012), process explanation was less amenable to statistical approaches since it deals with specific events and processes. Arguments that statistics or other forms of quantification should not be, and are not, used in qualitative research exist. The qualitative method was used when exploring human experiences (Lekan et al., 2021). The qualitative research method was data collection in the form of nonnumerical data to gain insight into a subject. Aspers and Corte (2019) defined qualitative research as an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied. Qualitative results consist of individuals' motivation, thinking, and attitudes. Qualitative study tools are documents and verbal communication, such as interviews and documents. The qualitative method can help understand the thought process in developing strategies with uniqueness from different perspectives and aid in the exploration strategies that some women musician entrepreneurs use to increase profitability.

A quantitative method was not chosen for this study because a relationship between numeric variables was not the outcome desired for this study. Mixed method research was also not chosen for this study because there was no need for a numeric analysis of strategizing. Because the mixed method includes both quantitative and

qualitative research, a mixed method was not a viable, appropriate option to support the intent of this study. The pragmatic inquiry was used for this study. According to Kelly and Cordeiro (2020), the first noted appearance of pragmatism was with Charles Peirce in 1878 when he outlined what came to be known as the pragmatic maxim rule. The pragmatic inquiry was open-ended and allows the researcher to ask questions that will probe for solutions to real-world problems involving individual decision-makers.

According to Bowen et al. (2020), the pragmatic inquiry will give the reader a renewed sense of possibilities in capturing complexities in a social environment. Other designs considered for this study were ethnography and phenomenology. Ethnography is a qualitative method for collecting data often used in the social and behavioral sciences, collected via observations and interviews (Lekan et al., 2021). This study was not centered around the interactions and functions of the individuals but the strategies the people utilized, so there were better options for this study. The phenomenological design is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon. As stated by Dodgson (2023), phenomenology is focused on the lived experience and how it is understood. Again, this design was inappropriate as the problem statement does not seek results from experiences involving a specific phenomenon but results from unique experiences and perspectives within an industry.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

The study must have located participants with experience, knowledge, and strategic skills around the area of interest. In this study, the sample size was five female entrepreneur musicians. Participant eligibility was desired to be based on working women

entrepreneur musicians who are profitable. Social media was an excellent place to connect to actively working musicians. I obtained a list of women entrepreneurs and musicians via social media and observed their credentials listed on public profiles. I contacted participants via instant messenger, email, or telephone, depending on what was available on their social media platform. A prior screening was conducted with each participant to determine eligibility. Upon prescreening, I advised the participants, if they were chosen, regarding confidentiality and privacy. I also advised the participants of the importance and implications of change in the lives of future women entrepreneurs for the strategies they share. Participants who were knowledgeable and had expertise were identified in the music field. A purposeful sampling technique was used to identify the participants. According to Ames et al. (2019), using the purposeful sampling technique and semistructured interviews with the participants will provide the best opportunity to describe the attitudes and opinions of each participant. Interviewing was also a process that needed to be developed. A well-developed interview protocol was an essential data collection tool in qualitative research (Jain, 2021).

Questions were open-ended. According to AbuSabha (2013), open-ended questions seek to evoke longer answers that retrieve relevant information from the respondent using his or her own words. When using an open-ended question, the counselor expects the respondent to delve into a detailed explanation that will add meaning to the discussed topic. Janwas (2022) stated that dependability, also called consistency, is one of the four criteria in rigorous and trustworthy qualitative research. The four criteria for good qualitative research are credibility, dependability,

confirmability, and transferability. According to Stenfors et al. (2020), one key marker for assessing the quality of qualitative research is the selection criteria used to recruit study participants.

Data Collection Activities

I was the primary data collection instrument in this qualitative pragmatic study. An interview protocol was utilized to collect the data. According to Ames et al. (2019), using the purposeful sampling technique and semistructured interviews with the participants will provide the best opportunity to describe the attitudes and opinions of each participant. Interviewing was also a process that needed to be developed. Jain (2021) stated that a well-developed interview protocol was an essential data collection tool in qualitative research. I identified participants actively working in the music field and knowledgeable as the researcher via social media channels. A purposeful sampling technique was used to identify the participants and an invitation along with consent form was sent to the participant.

Ten questions made up the semistructured interview and were open-ended (see Appendix). According to AbuSabha (2013), open-ended questions seek to evoke longer answers that retrieve relevant information from the respondent using his or her own words. When using an open-ended question, the counselor expects the respondent to delve into a relatively detailed explanation that will add meaning to the discussed topic. Janis (2022) stated that dependability, also called consistency, is one of the four criteria in rigorous and trustworthy qualitative research. The four criteria for good qualitative research are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. According to

Stenfors et al. (2020), one key marker for assessing the quality of qualitative research is the selection criteria used to recruit study participants. Data saturation also impacts the quality of research, as a lack of it hampers validity (Francis et al., 2020). Saunders et al. (2018) stated that saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion to conclude data collection and analysis; additional data located will not discover any new emerging themes, and it needs to be more varied. Member checking was utilized to strengthen the validity of the interviews and open the conversation again for any additional thoughts the participants may have after the initial interview.

Interview Questions

1. What was your primary expectation when becoming a female musician entrepreneur?
2. What strategies did you implement to maintain focus and sustainability?
3. What strategies are used in your marketing and booking processes that have been profitable?
4. What prior knowledge was used to understand industry practices before becoming a working musician?
5. How have you been able to maintain consistent revenue from music alone?
6. What are the top three challenges you have encountered as a female musician entrepreneur?
7. How did you determine the effectiveness of the strategies implemented to address the top three challenges of being a female musician entrepreneur?
8. How did you measure your success within the industry?

9. How did you obtain capital to sustain your success?
10. Was there anything additional you would like to add in reference to strategies that have been useful in increasing profitability and sustaining success in music?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

Along with Excel, I utilized Atlas.ti technology as the data organization method to keep track of the responses given during the interview and or additional information that was deemed necessary. This technology provided artificial intelligence assistance to determine themes using coding and enabled researchers to extract critical insights from interviews. Ronzani et al. (2020) defined Atlas.ti as software that organizes, retrieves, and analyzes data continuously and cyclically. Ronzani et al. acknowledged that using Atlas.ti demonstrated better outcomes in studies such as a qualitative pragmatic inquiry.

I determined the appropriate data analysis process for this research design to be thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was a commonly used method for analyzing semi structured interviews, as Quintão et al. (2020) declared. Yin (2017) developed a five-step process for analyzing data. The five steps are compiling the data, data breakdown, data resembling, interpretation of the data, and conclusion from the data. The first step of compiling the data begins after collecting data from the participants' interviews. Atlas.ti was used to determine if there was any redundancy and or patterns in the data received. Once there were patterns, determined themes and findings emerged. The thematic analysis was then completed to ensure the findings were correctly identified and developed. About the literature, the thematic analysis was used to check similar findings

from other studies that may have been conducted during this process and are unknown to me. Johnson et al. (2020) implied that an analysis and objective interpretation of obtained qualitative data was often modified to assist the researcher in answering the research question.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Quintão et al. (2020) asserted that the validity and reliability dimensions are fundamental so the findings obtained can be credible, confirmable, transferable, and dependable. Reliability was the same as dependability. Interview protocol was a tool utilized to maintain reliability in collecting data in a qualitative pragmatic inquiry. Interview protocols were followed in the research for this study, along with member checking of the data presented. All raw data will be securely stored for 5 years to protect the confidentiality of the participants,

Validity

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are elements of validity (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). Validity is referred to as accuracy and trustworthinessin a comparison of qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data. Member checking is the tool used to ensure the credibility of the data. Stahl and King (2020) defined transferability as the extent to which research achievements can be transferred to other contexts or generalized. Transferability is addressed by providing accurate data that can be used in cross-study comparison involving future research, according to Lekan et al. (2021). Confirmability shows whether others can confirm the achievements, as Stahl

and King (2020) stated. Confirmability was exhibited by professionally approaching the data collection and making the right decisions that best fit the study to maintain the objective of answering the research question and minimizing errors.

Data Saturation

Data saturation also impacts the quality of research, as a lack of it hampers validity (Francis et al., 2020). Saunders et al. (2018) stated that saturation is used in qualitative research as a criterion to conclude data collection and analysis; additional data located will not discover any new emerging themes and was redundant. Open-ended questions and member checking ensured data saturation by serving as a platform to allow the participant to give exhaustive information. The Walden IRB approval number for this study is 05-24-24-0313508 and it expires on May 23, 2025.

Transition and Summary

The qualitative research method research design has been previously identified. The topic of discussion in Section 3 included research ethics, population, and participants. Data collection, organization, and analysis were also included in Section 3. I concluded Section 3 by discussing what actions was taken to ensure study reliability, validity, and data saturation. Section 4 will contain findings, business contributions, professional practice recommendations, and further research recommendations.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question in this study was as follows: What strategies do some female musician entrepreneurs use to increase profitability and sustain success without an additional source of income? The interviews consisted of 10 interview questions. The five participants had different perspectives prior to becoming working musicians and differing levels of industry understanding. Upon data saturation, I conducted data analysis using qualitative software Atlas.ti and manual coding to develop group codes into three prominent themes. The three themes that emerged were the art of networking, marketing, and the role of self-motivation. The sub themes were relationship building, branding and booking, and perseverance.

Theme 1: The Art of Networking and Relationship Building

Networking

A consensus of all interview participants was that there are a number of obstacles encountered by musicians especially female musician entrepreneurs. The participants were all aware of the possibility of obstacles and noted the importance of identifying what constraints would be created by these obstacles and how addressing them could result in sustainability and profitability. P1 stated, “It’s got to be something bigger than just you,” when referring to overcoming the imbalance of power with men versus women in the music industry. All participants addressed gender constraints, which at times hindered the ability to build relationships and networks. According to the participants, development of acceptance and acknowledgement into what was still considered to be

very much a male industry was imperative for sustainability. McAndrew & Widdop (2021) reiterated the reasoning for female underrepresentation in the music industry is inherently social. Networking and relationship building with other genders is imperative to survival. P3 said, “I’m all about energy and vibrations,” when discussing networking, and relationship building which involve booking locations. Ranganathan and Das (2023) contributed the boost in performance and spread of asynchronous teamwork to new technology, which also encourages a possible decline in the gap of gender disparity while referencing performances on creative projects.

According to all participants, women musician entrepreneurs struggle to gain the audience and booking power more so than their male counterparts. P1 stated that in business settings, there have been males that did not take her seriously when presenting her business plan and ideas. P1 stated that this happened because they had the mind set or disproportionate sense of reality that they could mold a female into being what they wanted her to be rather than listening to the business plan in hand.

The result for a female in this situation was being labeled with bad names and stating she was not willing to work hard or hard to work with because the female musician did not agree with what the male was proposing. P2, P3, and P4 all experienced similar situations with a male counterpart to humiliate, educate, or diminish female musician entrepreneurs by assuming they did not know how to set up equipment, play appropriate songs, meaning not “girly music” or play an instrument correctly at all. P1, P2, P3, and P4 referred to this behavior as “mansplaining.” P4 stated, “Yeah they get kind of loud, so I have to assert my voice.” Mansplain was a term defined by Johnson

(2020) as a neologism that means something like "explaining without regard to the fact that the explainee knows more than the explainer, often done by a man to a woman." (p.2). P1 suggested overcoming gender inequality in the industry by continuing to put out good music, touring, and not allowing bad comments or pressure to change them or their mindset of being a great businesswoman. P3 encouraged getting ahead of the inequality by addressing it when it happens, and P4 mentioned awareness and working together as a community. In reference to networking and how to network P4 stated, "It is learning how to pull your resources and use the connections that I do have."

Relationship Building

Relationship building was a subtheme of networking. All five participants noted relationship building and getting to know other people in the industry was a major contribution to their sustainability and success thus far. Getting out and getting to know food truck vendors, wedding venues, bartenders, restaurant managers, chamber of commerce members, art councils, organizational clubs, and party planners are some key contacts in networking. P1, P2, P3, and P4 also discussed how having those relationships with other musician entrepreneurs being male or female was beneficial due to being involved in the ambiance of the industry, which contributed to creativeness and positive mental health. P1, P4, and P5 also stated getting to know musicians who have achieved a level higher of success than where they currently were has impacted their careers by being able to open for those musicians and follow the strategies that are passed along to them by those musicians. P4 and P5 stated watching and learning from other musicians succeed has opened many doors and opportunities for them.

Theme 1: Connection to Literature

Theme 1 networking and the subtheme relationship building aligned with current literature. According to Klyver and Arenius (2022), networking behavior is defined as individuals' purposeful social interactions with others to develop and maintain relationships to gain benefits in various domains. Female entrepreneurs who network with purpose and strategy are more likely to grow a successful business and survive (Klyver, & Arenius, 2022). Not only does networking enhance trust and being a part of something it also creates opportunities, gives the entrepreneur credibility, and encourages relationships that can support much needed resources. Constantanidis (2021) discussed scarcity of resources and lack of legitimacy in the world of entrepreneurship for women and it was noted that networks are crucial for the development of a female entrepreneur in a male dominant environment. There is a perception of a woman's network approach and a man's network approach with the latter being considered instrumental and the first being relational therefore detrimental to a female's success. Along with having a limited network due to the approach, attitude, behavior, and structure of networking women experience a lack of support by men, which limits their access to financial investors and decision makers as they are mostly found to be men (Constantinidis, 2021). Klyver and Arenius defined categories of ties as social and weak and are crucial to relationship building. Network ties are particularly important to female business owners, because they enter entrepreneurship with deficits linked to their social position (Surangi, H. A. K. N. S., 2018) Social ties consist of friends or family and weak ties are considered business related and or an individual that the entrepreneur is acquainted with but not close to. It

was determined by Constantinidis (2021) that in order for women to be successful with networking to build their business, they needed to be more thoughtful in the size of their network, minimize the emotional relation, and maximize the economical reason for the network versus the gender and how they related to the individuals in the network and have a more diverse group that can provide the useful tools for success. However, the problems encountered by women entrepreneurs in attempting to network with others in business groups were related to their domestic responsibilities and their culture not allowing them to operate their business in the same capacity that men were able to operate theirs (Surangi, H. A. K. N. S., 2018). The emotional relation has reflected as weakness with women while building their network.

Ranganathan and Das (2023) referred to women as having a lower status in mixed gender environments whereas women would speak less, get interrupted, and very rarely receive credit for their ideas or efforts. These are reasons women are often “stereotyped” into subordinate roles (Ranganathan, & Das, 2023).

Constantinidis (2021) stressed that for female entrepreneurs to overcome gender dynamics, a reliance on developing strong ties along with relational approaches to networking is needed and would promote relevant strategies to avoid a disadvantage and achieve success, in male-dominated contexts. A combination of masculinity and femininity approach has been confirmed to grow success.

Theme 1: Connection to Conceptual Framework

Theme 1 networking and relationship building aligned with the conceptual framework of theory of constraints. Networking and relationship building are part of an

approach to achieve goals; therefore, it is part of helping manage constraints. Networking and relationship building forms connections that enable the entrepreneur to learn from others in the industry that have been successful. P5 stated that "just learning from your peers" was effective in overcoming obstacles and assists the entrepreneur craft solutions to overcoming obstacles and constraints that hinder profitability. By sharing experiences, the entrepreneur gains knowledge of how to identify constraints effectively. Kornfield and Toma, (2020) stated that shared experiences and anticipated interaction can also lead individuals to more clearly conceive the views of others and improve self-awareness or inspire novel connections between ideas. A different perspective is valuable when building a business. When relationships are formed from networking there are often several people that share the same common goal. A common goal is critical for effective coordination (Fortwangler & Sydow, 2020). Having likeminded people to collaborate with and assist in cohesive problem solving.

Theme 2: The Process of Marketing, Booking, and Branding

The second theme that emerged included marketing, with subthemes of booking and branding. Marketing, booking, and branding are all vital to the success of a musician especially in the consistent social media market that is today. These are three different items that work in conjunction with one another.

Marketing

According to P1, marketing is learned and expands into the social media market as techniques to enhance and promote a business. Marketing and management are cohesive in the success of a musician entrepreneur. According to P2, organization is

imperative in marketing. Marketing also encourages sponsorship which also generates income that can be reinvested in the entrepreneur's music business. P2 added that marketing for her is applicable when it is authentic and consistent. P2 discussed "telling the story" with original music that is relatable. P4 revealed a marketing strategy she has used in the past was the development of her own merchandise. The uniqueness that set P4 apart from other musicians was the type of merchandise she had available. Not only did she have the standard T-shirts, koozies, and hats but also P4 would package a fresh salsa recipe and have her own logos made to put on the salsa containers and then sell at her shows. P4 said, "The fans really went for it." This type of forward thinking was similar to that of Shirley Manson and the toilet paper. P4 also leaned into "breaking down stereotypes by providing historical content and becoming more grounded in who I am, who my people are and really embracing that." When addressing marketing, P5 stated website building and a social media presence were key to success. P2, P3, and P4 all referenced purchasing an upright banner as a way of marketing/branding at live performances.

Booking

The first subtheme of marketing was booking. When operating a business P1 expressed "being knowledgeable is having the power to make decisions and craft a schedule that is fulfilling both financially and emotionally." Choosing who to work with and where to work plays a big role in a positive mentality. Knowing the booking process contributes to ideas for growth and opportunity. P3 spoke of the booking process used to book shows, which included knowing the audience and demographic to determine if it

would be profitable to perform on that date, place, and time. An example P3 used was a college town. If you are booking in a college town around a holiday, it may be less profitable as there may not be as much of an audience to enhance the experience with tipping if the students are all gone home or away for the holidays. P3 explained building a relationship with the other vendors who may be at a venue is also helpful with coordination of knowing your audience such as food trucks at a brewery. P2 explained her booking strategy as being business oriented. While explaining her process of choosing when and where to book, P3 stated, "Mortgage is usually due on the first, a lot of credit card bills kind of come out in the middle of the month, and some people might only get paid once a month at the end of the month." P2, P3, and P4 all agreed it is most profitable for bookings to be scheduled and well thought out according to the schedule the entrepreneur musician chooses to play and that the bookings are done in advance. P2 stated that she separates her year from January to June and then June through December. P2 stated that she knows or determines when venues start to book for the following year and makes continuous contact with the venue and/or their booking agent. Once she is booked for the upcoming year, she makes sure to plan a coffee date or lunch appointment with the booking contact around the time they start booking again for the next year to stay relevant in their prospect list of entertainers. P2 keeps a strict schedule of utilizing Monday as her booking day to fill in empty days she had not been able to schedule previously for that week and often contacts venues to let them know she is available in the event they have an opening or need entertainment. P2 also uses Monday as the day to text or call the individuals she met the previous weekend while performing to keep her

fresh in their minds as a prospective form of entertainment. P2 makes sure to contact three or four new venues a week also to create buzz around getting to play at the venue. Following up, keeping a calendar, utilizing some form of bookkeeping system such as google sheets as P3 uses, and booking as far out in advance as possible is imperative to keeping a business relationship intact with venues, keeping the musician entrepreneur paid and keeping a musician relevant in that area. P2 also stated she did not use business cards rather she puts her number in the individual's phone and that has been more beneficial for her than someone misplacing her card after a long night out and never contacting her. Another strategy P2 mentioned is that she always posts two to three times a week on a social media platform but makes sure to post her weekly schedule no later than Tuesday so it will show on her friend's newsfeed by Friday. All participants stressed the importance of posting on social media platforms. P5 discussed the impact of developing and creating content and how that has contributed to the relevance of musicians and growing their following. P4 stated a musician entrepreneur wears many hats with one of the most important overseeing bookings. In reference to booking P4 said, "That's how we gained the knowledge, we gained it by doing and you know trial and error really it was all it was." P3 said keeping good records will make continuous contact with venues and booking agents a smoother transition. Persistence is key in all aspects of success, especially booking according to P5.

Branding

The second subtheme of marketing was branding. In the music business a female musician entrepreneur must find a gimmick to set them apart from the standard musician.

P1 thought of branding as an avenue to get the audience and/or a company to buy into an image whether it was true or not if it is something the musician entrepreneur can live with and defend as the representation of their craft and themselves. P5 ranked branding as one of the most useful strategies to increase and sustain profitability for reasons such as, recognizability, relatability, uniqueness, and a way of piquing interest. P5 noted that she lived her brand meaning everywhere she went she was dressed as her musician brand. P5 noted living as her brand was very successful for her because it did attribute to building relationships with random people when being out in places such as the grocery store. She stated that people would be observant and ask questions as to why she was dressed in performance clothes to go grocery shopping so that would give her the chance to explain who she was, the type of music she performed, and where her performances would be. P5 stated that she has been able to acquire multiple fans by living her brand and being authentic. P5 stated she lives her brand to show authenticity to her fans, which includes living full time on her tour bus that she travels in and she sews and designs her own outfits, along with special jewelry as part of her brand. Originality has become popular with the use of social media platforms enabling musician entrepreneurs to release music they have written, produced, and created by themselves without the resources of a large record label.

Theme 2: Connection to Literature

Theme 2 the process of marketing and subthemes booking and branding aligned with the current literature. Marketing is part of branding and booking is a result of the perception of branding and marketing. Brand perception is at the core of an individual's

brand management and success (Dzyabura & Peres, 2021). How people relate to things and remember events has a lot to do with how they remember the presentation. Porto (2024) stated that the management of a human being branding on social media is one of the top marketing processes. Branding can affect emotions and scenarios, and brands can be thought provoking and encourage uniqueness and identifiability (Dzyabura & Peres, 2021). Dzyabura and Peres (2021) defined three steps to ensure the measurement of success in eliciting brand association. The first step is to allow the audience to develop their connection to the brand without prompting. According to Strand (2020), the band name is one of the most important assets along with their style and fashion. Second, it should adjustable and appealing to allow a larger number of respondents. Third, in efforts to minimize the effect of external variables, the elicitation of the brand should directly ask respondents for their associations rather than promote a secondary external source as part of their response such as social media influence. One example of a female musician entrepreneur who discovered and implemented a gimmick that was and is quite successful for a female musician entrepreneur is Dolly Parton. Dolly Parton branded herself as what she thought to be glamourous and beautiful, which was different as a female musician at that time. The glamourous image portrayed by Dolly assisted in the exposure of her music, which would later display her business sense and philanthropic spirit. According to Edwards (2023), Dolly created a stage persona and media image that also included her authentic self to gauge interest. Parton described her look as a gimmick to elicit attention, as stated by Edwards (2023).

At one time, Parton's brand was so impactful that she had to prove she was what she created when her former partner Porter Wagner famously sued her and stated he created her image (Edwards, 2023). Parton is known for merging her own lived experiences into her lyrical creations of music which is part of her brand and what makes her appealing as genuine. Dolly Parton's brand has been perceived in many ways. For a brand to be successful it must be continuously evolving. Edwards (2023) referred to Parton's brand as branded authenticity. Branded authenticity is defined as a brand attempt to engage more deeply with their consumers and elicit loyalty by projecting an authentic image (Edwards, 2023). The definition rather than perception of who Dolly is comes to light when discovering her music, lyrics, and the realization that her physical appearance is fake and unique as the fakeness draws attention to the realness of who she is which a branding strategy. Branding is also a form of marketing. Foy (2022) mentioned ways to stand out and attract a fan base, the media, and the industry were to gather PR assets, build a media list, perfect your pitch and follow up, master the interview, leverage media coverage, and lastly build your team. If an artist markets themselves with or in relation to a successful product, the popularity of artists' brands tends to increase along with continued marketing, exposure, and frequency, which can also increase the value of the artists name in the social media world (Porto et al, 2024).

Theme 2: Connection to Conceptual Framework

Theme 2 the process of marketing and subthemes booking and branding are very relevant in the theory of constraints. According to the theory of constraints, there is always going to be a constraining component in any process or system and the output is

always controlled by this constraint. Part of the marketing process is identifying the audience that fits and does not fit with a brand. Marketing draws attention to attributes that do not hinder success. Booking aligns with the chosen conceptual framework as a solution to a problem or alternative solution to the limiting possibility of earning an income as a female musician entrepreneur. Branding is a way of presentation and assists in identifying what type of avenues will be taken in the journey of entrepreneurship so a strategy can be developed within the process of becoming the brand to overcome and strategize success. Branding is a way of testing a constraint and can promote creativity. An example of this would be Janet Jackson and her album Rhythm Nation 1814. Janet Jackson branded herself as a strong empowered Black female performer who was able to use her music as a platform to talk about issues important to her and others which overcame the inability for her to speak out. Janet's music was her voice to fight for a cause she was passionate about. Rodman (2019) recalled Janet's Rhythm Nation album was created out of her shared vision and mission statement: "It's time to give a damn, let's work together."

Theme 3: The Role Self-Motivation and Perseverance

Self-Motivation

All five participants related self-motivation as contributing to success and sustainability. All the participants must be able to profit but the barometer for measuring their success is very different along with what motivates them. Whereas P1 took an encouraging approach of learning new things about herself and finding ways to bond with other like minds in the music industry to stay motivated, P2 just wanted to be able to

make rent and pay her bills. P3 believed music is a way to make a living to sustain herself but is also motivated to enjoy and savor the benefits and flexibility of working as a musician. P3 stated how important it is to not forget to live while you are building a life but to make sure you are building the life you want. P3 stated, “It is important to not get burnt out while performing.” All participants stated that there are times it has and can be discouraging to not be at the level of success they want to achieve but that is why self-motivation is necessary.

The belief and investment a musician makes in themselves is the beginning of any future or movement toward a goal and P4 stated that is something that no one can take away. In reference to self-motivation P4 stated, “I always have my sights set on music and one day it’s going to take off like I would keep telling myself keep grinding and one day it’s going to happen.” P5 spoke about motivation to help other people and share her story in the form of music. P5 also discussed if an entrepreneur is working toward others believing in them, they have to first believe in themselves: “If you don’t believe in yourself how are you asking other people to believe in you?” Success was determined to be measured by growing audiences, feedback received on songwriting, living a stress-free life that is enjoyable, changing lives, appreciation, self-growth, survival, and self-accomplishment of a successful business. All participants expressed the urgency to make enough money to provide the necessities of life and they accomplish this by living within their means, reducing expenses by methodically booking continuous shows to maximize their profit. P5 stated that she sews the majority of clothes that she wears to all of her performances, so she does not have to spend money on performance wear. Another

reduction of expense in the long run as discussed by P2 and P3 is the purchase of good quality equipment that will last as it will enhance your performance. P2 stated having a good line of credit that can be paid off quickly is helpful in starting out. P1, P3, P4, and P5 all had initial investments by family or friends. P4 stated to not be afraid to ask for what is needed, if it is money, you need then ask for it. P1, P2, P3, and P5 expressed the importance of honing their craft and making themselves marketable as solo artists and being able to play their own instrument and sing rather than having to depend on someone else. Watching documentaries, YouTube videos, attending conferences, and interviews with other artists have been ways P1, and P3 expressed learning new industry practices. Having a vehicle that has space for equipment and being able to sleep in also reduces the cost of a hotel for gigs that are further away than normal.

Perseverance

A subtheme to self-motivation was found to be perseverance. The music industry as part of the entertainment business has long been referred to as a business of perception. P1 referred to women having to work harder in the industry when it comes to appearances to live up to what the desired image is to be mainstream. Sexism is still very much a part of the industry that according to P3 is frustrating. P3 discussed booking venues that male counterpart's book and get paid more to perform the same amount of time. P4 also stated stereotyping has been something that has happened to her due to her heritage.

All participants stressed the importance of overcoming and pushing forward to live their dreams and continue being their own boss. Finding other women who are

supportive and self-improvement encourage growth and perseverance. P5 expressed the need for women to be taken seriously in the industry as currently she thinks women are not. P5 expressed concern for understanding by saying, “I just feel like there’s so many obstacles about being a woman in country music and I’m still trying to understand why it’s that way.” An example P5 used was when booking gigs is there are times a price will be offered to a man and a price to a woman and if the woman is not good with what the venue is willing to pay, they will just move along to the next woman that is willing to take less. However, often there is no issue with the pay for the man.

The gender inequality in the music industry is apparent in the number of songs played by a female artist versus a male artist on the radio as referred to by P1 and P5. When discussing radio play P5 stated, “I was researching the billboard charts and it was like 88% men, 5% women and the rest was collaborative. I think your songwriting has to be better to stand out because they will only play a certain percentage of female songs on the radio.” All participants stressed the distinction of knowing the value of themselves and how that drives them to persevere and survive supporting themselves by doing what they love and believe they are meant to do. P3 stated, “Never be afraid to ask for more,” while discussing payment for a gig and the value of the performance.

Theme 3: Connection to Literature

Theme 3 self-motivation and subtheme perseverance aligned with the current literature. Koehler et al (2023) delved into how the motivation to make music affects an entrepreneur’s health and well-being. When it comes to the motivation to pursue an activity such as music making, Koehler et al. (2023) found that individuals generally

choose to do so for rewards peer pressure, pressure by parents, teachers, and peers, or joy for the instrument or a musical piece itself. There is a misconception that creative work is always precarious and should be positive work. Bilton et al. (2021) used motivation in the form of a lens on the lived experience of creative work to provide more of an understanding of how creative workers experience work in the creative industries and how they navigate circumstances other than the material conditions of their creative livelihoods. Bilton et al. also assumed creativity to be driven by motivation. Family support was also a driving source of motivation for all participants with them all referencing it throughout the interview whether it is financial support or emotional support. Philippe (2022) discussed mental energy and relationship with the musician's body during a performance. To prepare a musician uses all their mental energy to master their technique and variety of music performed. There is a positive association of psychological fulfillment and autonomous motivation with the quality of music practice and how often it is practiced. Schmidt and Gruber (2023) stated evidence exists that deliberate practice is an essential predictor of acquiring expertise across a range of domains including music. Self-determination is another form of perseverance. A musical performance is not only having technical abilities, but the musician must be psychologically competent as well and part of that competence consists of resilience and self-efficacy (Philippe et al., 2022). In order for entrepreneurship to exist, Lichy (2021) defined four conditions that are necessary for entrepreneurship to occur: motivation, expertise, expectation, and a supportive environment. These conditions align with the four main motivational topics in music identified by Schmidt and Gruber (2023), which

are noted as satisfying personal needs, developing and maintaining a positive musical identity, acquiring effective approaches to learning music, and having a supportive environment.

Theme 3: Connection to Conceptual Framework

Theme 3 the role of self-motivation and perseverance play a key role in theory of constraints. Among the personality traits discovered in the work of Iuşcă (2021) on the success of music performers, self-motivation and perseverance were present. Additional traits were androgyny, independence, sensibility, communication skills, extroversion, need for attention, and trait anxiety. Without self-motivation an entrepreneur would not have the drive to determine what constraints existed in their business. If there is no self-motivation, there is no need for success. Iuşcă referred to music performers as having a great sense of self-motivation and being known as "bold introverts" because of having the discipline to hone their craft but also the brave courage to perform out in a public environment. The theory of constraints relates to self-motivation as the entrepreneur being able to have a stable focus on what objectives need to be obtained along with how to change the limitations and how to adapt to the environment that has changed because of the limitations. A musician goes through much judgement and evaluation on a constant basis that can lead to low self-esteem; therefore, a successful musician has to maintain a certain degree of vulnerability to withstand the emotional stability needed to push forward (Iuşcă, 2021). Being a musician is a creative art when in the context of theory of constraints adaptability is born from perseverance. Resilience, determination to be successful, and in some cases, survival is what drives entrepreneurs' self-motivation.

While resilience and determination are key elements of perseverance, persistence is also relatable to developing a solution to improve or circumvent a constraint. According to P2, "I think persistence is key and just coming together with other women." Persisting in finding ways to be successful and trying new solutions or methods to create revenue and profit are what breeds encouragement and lyrical creativity. To navigate constraints and overcome them self-motivation and perseverance are vital.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

Women in general struggle to remain profitable as small business owners even more so in the music industry in general, small businesses struggle to have longevity past five years. Ranganathan and Das (2023) specified the creative projects to be an area in which women are typically the minority and held back from full performance potential. Women musician entrepreneurs could use results from this study to infiltrate new strategies that improve their methods of advertising, promotion, booking, marketing, branding, networking, and productivity. The implementation of the strategies discovered could also be useful in the management of financial assets to better promote themselves and their careers. The research also contributes to unexplored or gaps in knowledge of new entrepreneurs that have limited access to information. The study's findings have significant implications for the professional practice of female musicians in efforts to prevent or mitigate the costs of travel, performance, management, and booking.

Implications for Social Change

The strategies, systems, and practices that emerged from this study can be beneficial to women musician entrepreneurs by providing ways to generate profitability,

and relevance without a second form of income. Relevance in the industry could result in tax revenue, employment opportunities for musicians, inspiration of social movements and legal change. This study could be beneficial to share knowledge of what strategies musicians use to control different aspects involved in a successful performance as well as the strategies used to face or to avoid the different difficulties possibly encountered during performances (Antonini Phillippe et al, 2021). Messages through music can increase awareness of and in some cases legal change of humanitarian issues reflecting social change.

Music is a form of communication that is credited with emotional attachment and influence of experience and ideas. Music creates a bond to a time, place, or situation that brings people together as a community. Yanko and Yap (2020) stated that the arts play a role in meaning making through reflection, awareness, and transformation, leading to a heightened and focused relationship between the individual and what was previously unseen. Philanthropic contributions can be encouraged through a musical message that enhances a musicians ability to continue spreading a message which in turn was filtered back into the economy by creating music that generates downloads/electronic purchases, concert profits that generate income and tax revenue that can be invested back into communities to provide physical preservation of monuments, physical preservation of historical buildings, and overall enhancement to a community and the communities needs an example of this would be housing for veterans, or housing for the homeless.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study's findings outlined strategies that some female musician entrepreneurs use to be profitable. While reviewing the literature for this study, I found that there was very little information to support the scarcity of resources available to female musician entrepreneurs and more importantly how to access what was available. There was also an abundance of literature on being a musician in the entirety but not much when related to viewing being a musician as a business. This study was a qualitative, pragmatic inquiry that produced perceptional, lived, experienced rich data; however, a researcher should conduct a similar study that is quantitative to support the findings numerically.

Trends and probability of used strategies and success rates could contribute to the generalization of this area of study. Another limitation of this study was the geographical limitations. Geographical bias can possibly occur if the scope of research is narrowed to a specific geographical location (Skopec et al., 2020). In this study, some of the objections may have been different based on gender if the demographic was changed. This study was conducted with participants that resided in the Southeastern part of the United States. Musicians in this region may be exposed to different demographics than musicians in other areas, such as the Northeast region or the Midwest of the United States. Music is shared and heard throughout the world; further research should be explored into other cultures. Further research should not limit interviews to only female musician entrepreneurs' so that researchers can compare the different genders findings, which would increase the validity of the overall findings.

Conclusion

It is evident that women entrepreneurs as a whole need solutions that can be implemented to promote both a positive home environment and work environment. The need to understand how gender effects livelihood is crucial. This pragmatic inquiry aimed to explore strategies some female musicians use two become profitable without an additional source of income. The participants recruited were women that work full time as musicians within the music industry with no additional source of income. The reason only women were chosen for this was because a perspective solely from this gender was needed to understand constraints they experience. The five participants adequately represented small business female musician entrepreneurs as a whole.

The interviews displayed the numerous obstacles that needed to be overcome by these women so that they could be successful doing what they love to do. An enormous amount of strategy and drive contributed to the willpower these women have to keep pushing toward their goals. The power these women have bestowed is knowledge and information that will continue to impact future female musician entrepreneurs to enhance future experiences and growth within themselves and their businesses.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Hello, my name was KasCie Page. I am a Doctoral Candidate at Walden University. The purpose of this interview was to identify and explore the strategies used by some female musician entrepreneurs to be profitable. I am going to ask you ten questions to which I would like your responses to. Then, I will conclude the interview. Do you have any questions?

Interview Questions:

1. What was your primary expectation when becoming a female musician entrepreneur?
2. What strategies did you implement to maintain focus and sustainability?
3. What strategies are used in your marketing and booking processes that have been profitable?
4. What prior knowledge was used to understand industry practices before becoming a working musician?
5. How have you been able to maintain consistent revenue from music alone?
6. What are the top three challenges you have encountered as a female musician entrepreneur?
7. How did you determine the effectiveness of the strategies implemented to address the top three challenges of being a female musician entrepreneur?
8. How did you measure your success within the industry?
9. How did you obtain capital to sustain your success?
10. Was there anything additional you would like to in reference to strategies that

have been useful in increasing profitability and sustaining success in music?

Thank you for participating in the interview, an integral part of my research project. I will contact you in a week to schedule a time for us to review the accuracy of my interpretations of your interview responses.

Follow up member checking interview protocol:

Hello Interviewee,

Thank you for taking this time to meet with me again to review the accuracy of my interpretations of your interview responses. I will read the questions one at a time and my interpretations of your responses to them and ask you if my interpretation was correct. I will read the interpretation, then ask: Was my interpretation correct? Did I miss anything? Or Would you like to add anything?