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Exploring Critical Success Factors for Sustainable Togolese-Owned Small businesses in the United States

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MBA, Kaplan University, 2012

ML, University of Lomé, 1996

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

In the United States, although foreign-born individuals are more than twice as likely to start new ventures, immigrant-owned businesses often fail within the first 5 years. The purpose of this single case study was to explore the strategies that U.S.-based Togolese small business owners who were engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo. The Schumpeterian entrepreneurship theory underpinned the study and served as a theoretical reference. Interview data were collected from 20 successful Togolese small business owners who resided in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, who were engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo, and who had been in business for more than 5 years. Data analysis involved using coding techniques and word clustering, with the invocation of qualitative data analytical software. The use of methodological triangulation enabled deeper analysis and added to the rigor of the study. The 4 key themes emerging from the coding and thematic analysis of interviews included (a) entrepreneurial motivation and attributes, (b) overcoming financial hardship, (c) leveraging information technologies, and (d) addressing challenges in the dual business environment. The findings of the study may advance contribution to positive social change as immigrant business owners may use the knowledge to improve business success, which could lead to the creation of jobs and improvement in the standard of living of U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs. The discoveries from the research may also contribute to positive social change for local communities in Togo, as the diaspora flow of investments and remittances from the United States may increase.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my loved best half, Sylvia, who is holding my hands and heart through the ups and downs of life since 20 years, without whom my doctoral dream would never become true. To my daughter Antonella and son Patrick Jr, you are my inspiration; your support has been vital for my accomplishment. I dedicate this study to the man who has imparted the zeal for education in me, who is begging me for years, offering him a doctoral degree, my father, Kankoue Mathias. Dad, you have it. To my Mother Martine Solange, who sacrificed everything so, I could go to school. I dedicate this study to the memory of my late beloved mother-in-law Aimee Delphine, who departed this world before I finish this journey she started beside me.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Individuals from less developed countries often migrate to economically advanced nations to elevate personal standard of living. These individuals often create businesses in an effort to earn a living and adjust to the new environment (Lin & Tao, 2012; Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2013). Researchers have discussed the positive role played by immigrant entrepreneurs in both home and host countries (Agrawal, Kapur, McHale, & Oettl, 2011; Flisi & Murrat, 2011; Mullings, 2011). The U.S. government has also recognized the importance of small and immigrant-owned small businesses in contributing to the economic growth of the country (Sonfield, 2014). In the United States, however, 75% of small businesses fail within the first five years (Small Business Administration [SBA], 2011). In the United States, immigrant entrepreneurs face unique challenges such as language barriers, and often face difficulties in obtaining business loans (Bengtsson & Hsu, 2015; Sahin, Nijkamp & Stough, 2011), which may increase the likelihood of failure. Neville, Orser, Riding, and Jung (2014) suggested that research on immigrant business ventures may advance knowledge on the critical success factors for operating to sustainable enterprises. The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore the experiences of successful small business owners of Togolese origin, who have created businesses in the United States that involve entrepreneurial activities with Togo.

Background of the Problem

Immigrants from Togo represent a small percentage of the African population who venture abroad and to the United States**.** The Republic of Togo is a West African country bordered by Ghana to the west, Benin to the east and Burkina Faso to the north with a coastline of 56 kilometers on the Atlantic Ocean in the south. Togo covers an area of approximately 56,785 square kilometers, and has a population of 7,154,237 inhabitants (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2013).

There is a high rate of unemployment and poverty in Togo (CIA, 2013). Togolese citizens often travel abroad, especially to Europe and North America, to seek a higher standard of living (Ajilore & Ikhide, 2012). Between 1.5 and 2 million individuals of Togolese origin live abroad (Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt, 2012). The Togolese economy is among the sub-Saharan African countries that depend significantly on the repatriation of funds by the diaspora from economic activities. More than 10% of the national GDP comes from Togolese individuals living abroad (Ajilore & Ikhide, 2012). Togolese immigrants in the United States often try to create small businesses, involving commerce with Togo. Coniglio, Boly, Prota, and Seric (2014) recognized that, the diaspora contribute substantially to the trade and, financial flow, and the access to technology in the home country, especially true for developing countries.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has defined immigrants as individuals to whom the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has granted the right to reside permanently and work without restriction in the United States (IRS, 2015). Immigrants often try to create and conduct businesses from the new country residence they have settled in (Lin & Tao, 2012). Riddle and Brinkerhoff (2011), and Rumbault and Massey (2013) argued that immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States face unique challenges compared to native entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial consultant, researchers and policy makers have recognized that small businesses play a key role in the economic development of countries (Jasra, Khan, Hunjra, Rehman, & Azam, 2011). There is limited research on U.S.-based Togolese small business owners. The intent of this study was to explore the experiences of successful U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs involved in entrepreneurial activities with Togo in the Washington Metropolitan area. The findings from this study may be of value to entrepreneurs of Togolese origin, in the United States as well as other small business owners striving to operate sustainable businesses.

Problem Statement

Immigrant entrepreneurs are more than twice as likely to start new ventures in the United States compared to others, however often fail at higher rates within the first five years (SBA, 2012). In 2010, immigrant-owned firms in the United States generated over $775 billion in revenues, $125 billion in payroll, and $100 billion in income, and employed one out of every 10 workers (Liu & Wang, 2015; Partnership for a New American Economy [PNEA], 2012). The general business problem is that there is a higher failure rate of immigrant-owned businesses in the United States as compared to those founded by nonimmigrants. The specific business problem is that some U.S. business owners of Togolese origin engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo lack strategies to operate sustainable businesses ventures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that U.S. small business owners of Togolese origin engaged in entrepreneurial activities with

Togo need to be successful. The targeted population for this study included owners of U.S.-based Togolese small businesses, involved in entrepreneurial activities with Togo, and have successfully run a business for more than five years. The study population for this study was appropriate, and consistent with the view of Neville et al. (2014), who suggested that researchers should explore the experiences of entrepreneurs from various groups. The geographic location of the study was the Washington Metropolitan area, where several Togolese immigrant entrepreneurs reside. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change, and yield , which may help U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs succeed and also serve in furthering personal aspirations and elevating life standards.

Nature of the Study

Research Method

A qualitative method served as the research approach for this study, as the aim included understanding the challenges and opportunities of successful U.S.-based Togolese small business owners engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo. The rationale for selecting the qualitative research over the quantitative and mixed methods approach, stemmed from its suitability to serve to record, and explore cognitive dimension of human experience (Kainth & Verma, 2011; Rennie, 2012). Quantitative research involves a deductive approach drawing conclusions, and testing hypotheses, using statistical data from surveys and questionnaires (Horvath, 2012). The mixed methods approach is the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Fielding, 2012). After careful deliberation, quantitative and mixed methods research did not seem appropriate to explore the critical success factors for Togolese immigrant small business owners. A qualitative approach seemed more suitable to explore success factors for Togolese immigrant entrepreneurs who have created businesses in the United States involving entrepreneurial activities with Togo.

Research Design

The invocation of qualitative research presents the following five designs options to the researcher: narrative study, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology (Hays & Wood, 2011). The objective of understanding participants' perspectives prompted the rationale for the current study in using a case study and therefore also justificaton for the exclusion of the following research designs discussed herein. A narrative design entails participants expressing life stories and experiences in chronological order (Dickey, 2011); this was considered irrelevant because of the emphasis on the totality of information, drawn and analyzed from primary and secondary sources in a case study. The aim of a case study is also not to generate new theory, espoused with the invocation of a grounded theory design (Reiter, Stewart, & Bruce, 2011). Ethnographic involves immersion by the researcher in cultural groups that include communities, social movements, or organizations (Pritchard, 2011), and is outside the scope of a case study. A phenomenological study entails research efforts specific to understanding the meaning, individuals ascribe to lived experiences, and interpretations of events, (Englander, 2012; Fisher & Stenner, 2011), while for this study, the focus was on using discoveries from interviews, to triangulate results against other credible sources (Yin, 2014).

Research Question

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What strategies do U.S.-based Togolese business owners engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo need to be successful?

Interview Questions

The researcher has the critical responsibility to create suitable interview questions that fit the research objectives. Schultze and Avital (2011) opined that interviewing by itself will not provide the richness of data automatically and calls for the triangulation of the collected data against other credible sources, notably by supplementing qualitative research, with a case study design. A case study focus for this study led to the development of the following interview questions, as presented below and in Appendix B:

1. How would you describe your motivation for considering being an entrepreneur?
2. What innovative strategies, if any, have contributed to the success of your business?
3. How would you describe the way you initially financed your business?
4. What was your perception of the risk you are taking, in the decision to become a business owner?
5. What from your experience are the managerial skills necessary to conduct sustainable businesses?

6. How would you attribute the relevance of your background and education to your business endeavor?
7. What are the important strategies you have used to sustain your business past the first five years?
8. How do you relate your entrepreneurial endeavor to some challenges you experienced in Togo and / or the United States? How did you address these challenges?
9. How would you describe some opportunities from the Togolese and /or the U.S. environment that have contributed to the current state of your business?
10. What information you find pertinent and would like to share in respect of what we have not discussed in this interview?

Conceptual Framework

Entrepreneurship is a multidimensional concept, to which leading economists have provided a definition that reflects personal focus and perspectives (Bula, 2012; Sudabby, 2014). Economists, such as Bentham (1780), Cantillon (1730), Kizner (1973), and Knight (1921) presented perspectives that have contributed to further evolution of the entrepreneurship theory, originally developed by Schumpeter (1934). The entrepreneurship theory, as developed by Schumpeter (1934), one of the influential entrepreneurial researchers, grounded this study.

Schumpeter described the entrepreneur as an innovator, seeking monetary rewards through the discovery of opportunities. The principles of the Schumpeterian theory served as a valuable theory for understanding entrepreneurship in the context of innovation, risk-taking, and proactive behavior (Crockett, McGee, & Payne, 2013). According to the postulations of the entrepreneurship theory, developed by Schumpeter (1934), the entrepreneur is an individual who implements new processes or uses the existing ones, in an innovative manner (Berglann, Moen, Røed, & Skogstrøm, 2011).

According to the Schumpeterian theory, the entrepreneur is one who seeks new markets and exploits new opportunities, while also identifying and managing risk (Block, Sandner, & Spiegel, 2013). Schumpeter described the entrepreneur as an individual who addresses barriers related to entrepreneurial activities (Sadeghi, Mohammadi, Nosrati, & Malekian, 2013). Schumpeter (1934) also, viewed the entrepreneur as one who assesses the entrepreneurial potential (Zeffane, 2013). The Schumpeterian entrepreneurship theory was congruent with this research. The aim of this study, was to explore the success factors of Togolese immigrant entrepreneurs, through the lens of the Schumpeterian theory, notably across the attributes of entrepreneurial motivation, risk propensity, innovation, managerial and educational skills, and financial abilities (Frese & Gielnik, 2014).

Definition of Terms

In an effort to offer clarification and explanation of key terms, technical terms, jargon, and special words used in this study, this section is intended as a ready reference for the understanding of the reader.

Angel investors: Individuals investing alone or in a group, in external business ventures (Mitteness, Sudek, & Cardon, 2012).

Boot strapping: A funding strategy that involves using one's own money and resources to finance the business venture startup (Soni & Priyan, 2013).

Business survival: A business that is currently, or was previously, approaching failure but continues to exist and does not meet the criteria of definition of a failed business or a successful business (Tundui & Tundui, 2012).

Diaspora: Groups of migrants leaving home countries for a prolonged period, who still maintain a relationship with their roots (Kotabe, Riddle, Sonderegger, & Täube, 2013).

Entrepreneurship: Activities in which individuals who seek for monetary rewards and personal satisfaction through innovation, risk-taking, and proactive behavior (Rosenbusch, Rauch, & Bausch, 2013).

Immigrants: Individuals to whom the USCIS has granted the right to reside permanently, and work without restriction in the United States (IRS, 2015).

Home country: Country of the birth of individuals had settled in another country (Lin & Tao, 2012).

Host country: New country of settlement of individual emigrating from the origin countries (Lin & Tao, 2012).

Small business: An independently owned entity, and operating with less than 500 employees (SBA, 2014).

Venture capitalist: Equity financing to early-stage for high-risk entrepreneurial growth startup ventures (Jing, Hao, & Xiang, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are factors out of the control of the researcher, which may lead to the irrelevance of the study when inexistent (Denscombe, 2013). The first assumption in this study was that participants involved in the study would have the knowledge to provide useful information on the research topic. The second assumption was that some U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs lack strategies to conduct sustainable businesses. The third assumption was that the participants in this study would provide precise, honest, and truthful answers regarding individual experiences and perceptions.

Limitations

The limitations of a study involve potential weaknesses and drawbacks that are out of the control of the researcher (Denscombe, 2013). The first limitation was that participants might not recall accurately experiences and perceptions on strategies needed to conduct sustainable businesses, or might not be willing to answer the interview questions. The second limitation was that including only small business owners who have been successful beyond the first five years, may resullt in the exclusion of other valuable insights from business owners who did not fit the established participation eligibility criteria for the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the characteristics that define the scope and delineate the boundaries of the study (Rusty, Corner, & Sun, 2012). The scope of this study involved Togolese business owners who live in the Washington Metropolitan area. Selecting participants beyond the Washington DC Metropolitan area was not the purpose of this research. The eligibility criteria for participation in this study required the inclusion of only U.S.-based Togolese small business owners who have been operating beyond five years.

Significance of the Study

This study might be of significance as the knowledge from the findings could be useful to increase the success of U.S.-based Togolese small business owners. Immigrants-owned businesses encounter more challenges than those owned by others (Riddle & Brinkerhoff, 2011). There is limited research on Togo-owned small businesses in the United States.

Contribution to Business Practice

Immigrant-owned businesses play an important role in the U.S. economy (SBA, 2014). Immigrant-owned businesses, however, fail at a higher rate compared to others (SBA, 2012). Sharing the strategies of some U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs who have been in business past five years may help others for operating sustainable ventures. The discoveries from this study could contribute to advancing business practice and represent a source of knowledge to U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs on strategies needed to conduct sustainable ventures.

Implications for Social Change

The discoveries of this study might contribute to positive social change as the findings could help U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs to be successful. Sustainable Togolese-owned ventures could contribute to the economy as immigrant-owned businesses play a significant role in the United States (SBA, 2014). Successful business ownership could imply that individual and community economic empowerment can help entrepreneurs of Togolese origin to improve the standard of living. This research might also contribute to social change in Togo as the diaspora plays a significant role in the socioeconomic development of the home country through investments, remittances, and job creation (Vaaler, 2013).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners of Togolese origin, in the United States, engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo, need to be successful. The intent in this section was to synthesize and summarize contemporary and peer-reviewed literature as it relates to the research topic (Rhoades, 2011), which includes studies that address limitations, weaknesses, and potential for future research. The other sources reviewed for a holistic research included texts on business management, government, and other influential reports on small businesses. The literature review of this study covered the following key areas: the concept of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial characteristics and attributes, entrepreneurial finance, business versus failure, immigrant or diaspora entrepreneurship, and the business environment including the home and the host countries. The following keywords were useful to search relevant articles to the study, diaspora entrepreneurship, immigrant entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial characteristics, entrepreneurial education, and entrepreneurial intent, immigrant-owned businesses, entrepreneurial motivation, home country, host country, and entrepreneurial finances.

The use of the keyword Boolean searches guided the research of relevant articles through multiple databases, which included ProQuest database, ScienceDirect database, and Academic Journals database. The scholarly and peer-reviewed publications included journal articles, from publications such as: *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *International Journal of Vocational and Technical Education*, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, and *Journal of International Management Studies*, and *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. Others included the *International Small Business Journal*, *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, *International Journal of Management*, *Journal of Economics and International Finance*, *African Journal of Business Management*, and *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research*. This review of the literature included 132 (96%) peer-reviewed articles published within the five past years from 137 sources examined**.**

The Concept of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is an evolving concept and unanimously accepted definition of the concept entrepreneurship has been the subject of debate among scholars and practitioners in entrepreneurial research (Wiklund, Davidsson, Audretsch, & Karlsson, 2011). Karahan and Okay (2011) noticed that the entrepreneurship is a multidimensional concept that is vital to the market economy. The lack of a consensus on the definition of the term entrepreneur is challenging for economists. Rusu, Isac, Cureteanu, and Csorba, (2012) found that measuring the level of entrepreneurial activities and the impact on the economic performance, is challenging due to the lack of unanimous definition of the concept of entrepreneurship.

The term etymological origins of the word entrepreneur traces to the French word *entrepreneur,* which means *to start something, undertake*. The Irish economist of French origin, Cantillon was the first to use the word in the economic theory in 1759 (Gündoğdu, 2012). Schumpeter, considered as a widely recognized influential entrepreneurial researcher (Vivarelli, 2013) defined the entrepreneur as an innovator and agent of constructive destruction who initiates change in the economic environment (Schumpeter, 1934). Drucker argued conversely to the Schumpeterian definition hat an entrepreneur is not necessarily a change agent but one who seeks for change, consider it as an opportunity and exploits it (Drucker, 1985). Waziri (2012) observed that the entrepreneur is one who transforms and expands existing business structures into productive ventures.

The definition of an entrepreneur provided by Schumpeter (1934) has served as a milestone for several modern economists who considered the entrepreneur as an innovator. Many definitions stemmed from the Schumpeterian theory since 1934 (Caliendo & Kritikos, 2011). Berglann et al. (2011) concurred with Schumpeter and defined the entrepreneur in economic terms, as someone who integrates human and financial capital. According to the Schumpeterian theory, the entrepreneuris an individual who identifies and pursues new business opportunities, and overcomes barriers to entrepreneurship (Sadeghi et al., 2013). An entrepreneur is the one who identifies and manages risk (Gündoğdu, 2012), and is able to assess entrepreneurial potential (Zeffane, 2013).

Entrepreneurial activities, in respect of the definition of Schumpeter (1934), consist of performing new activities or actions in an innovative way. Consistent with the

Schumpeterian theory, Crockett, McGee, and Payne (2013) defined innovation, risk-taking, and proactive behavior as the key features of entrepreneurship. In the same way, Mai and Zheng (2013) found that risk-taking, creativity, and a new approach to existing challenges are factors that provide the entrepreneur with the opportunity to develop alternative approaches.

Entrepreneurial Characteristics and Attributes

Tengeh (2013) identified several characteristics and attributes that could contribute to sustainable immigrant-owned businesses. Schumpeter considered creativity and innovativeness major characteristics and attributes of an entrepreneur. Other views in literature arising from the Schumpeterian theory have included regarded risk-taking as a key factor that enabled an entrepreneur to conduct sustainable business.

Economists have tried to map some critical factors of proactive entrepreneurs. Proactive entrepreneurs display personal attributes such as risk propensity and the need for achievement (Block et al., 2013). Ekpe (2011) defined among others innovativeness, motivation, managerial abilities, and education as major entrepreneurial characteristics and attributes. Frese and Gielnik (2014) used the Schumpeterian theory to identify entrepreneurial motivation, risk propensity, innovation, managerial and educational skills, and financial abilities as the key attributes of an entrepreneur.

Entrepreneurial motivation. Frese and Gielnik (2014) observed that motivation is an important factor of the Schumpeterian theory, and has received increasing attention recently in entrepreneurship literature. Entrepreneurial researchers identified motivation, as one major factor that often leads to the decision to start a new business. Alibaygi and Pouya (2011) opined that the desire for achievement, affiliation, or power drive the motivation often results in individuals venturing into a path of entrepreneurship. Similarly, Bijaoui (2012) noted that the motivation to create a business emanates from an individual's zeal to attain a given life goal.

Motivation is a multidimensional concept, therefore, lacks a unanimous definition. The concept has been the subject of debate in the field of entrepreneurial research. The relationship between motive and achievement has also been an area of debate for decades. Tlaiss (2013) observed that economic and noneconomic reasons cause individuals to venture into business; these reasons include personal development, improved social status and the need for achievement, and contribution to the community welfare. Researchers have distinguished between necessity and opportunistic motivation, and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Carsud & Brännback, 2011).

The motivation for individuals to venture into the path of entrepreneurship can be intrinsic, extrinsic, and sometimes a combination of both. The motivation is intrinsic when an individual embraces entrepreneurship for the socially responsible reasons. These motives include among others philanthropy, helping the needy, the desire of independence and family security. Extrinsic motivation involves the excitement of individuals for financial rewards, fame, and recognition. A combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations can lead potential entrepreneurs to venture into business.

Another classification of entrepreneurship motivation distinguishes between pull and push factors (Fatoki & Patswawairi, 2012). Push factors force individuals to embrace entrepreneurship to address unemployment or a low-paying job. Pull factors attract individuals to venture into starting a business by offering opportunities.

Immigrant and nonimmigrant entrepreneurs share the majority of personality traits involved in entrepreneurial motivation (Liargovas & Skandalis, 2012). Some traits, however, pertain exclusively to immigrant individuals. Several studies on immigrant entrepreneurship addressed the factors that can drive an individual to venture into business.

Fatoki and Patswawairi (2012) identified three theories that have explained the motivation of immigrant individuals towards entrepreneurship. These theories are the cultural, the mixed embeddedness, and the disadvantage theory. The cultural theory considered cultural characteristics including work ethics, family ties, social values, savings, and religious beliefs as the basis of immigrants' orientation towards entrepreneurship. The mixed embeddedness theory shares similar characteristics of the cultural theory, also to the socioeconomic and socioethnic characteristics. Jones, Ram, Edwards, Kiselinchev, and Muchenje (2014) denoted, in respect of the mixed embeddedness theory, that immigrants often opt for entrepreneurship for socioeconomic situation betterment. According to the disadvantage theory, referred to also as blocked mobility theory, immigrant entrepreneurship often appears spurred on from disadvantages suffered by immigrants in the host country, such as the lack of access to the labor market.

The motivation for achievement is another factor that drives an individual's decision to venture into entrepreneurship. Heydaria, Madania, and Rostamib (2013) found that individuals with a stronger need for achievement are more likely to direct energies towards entrepreneurship and are more likely to success compared to others. Deshpandé, Grinstein, Kim, and Ofek (2013) shared the view of Heydaria et al. (2013) contending that there is a strong positive correlation between the need for achievement and entrepreneurial performance.

Risk-taking. The findings of many studies have denoted, that individuals who are less risk-averse, are more likely to start new businesses ventures. Many views expressed in literature have indicated that risk preference is one of the key characteristics of entrepreneurship (Gündoğdu, 2012; Hung & Chin, 2011). Jiao and Robinson (2011) opined that there is a universal consensus about risk-taking as one of the key attributes of individuals with a natural tendency to become entrepreneurs. Hvide and Panos (2014), in a quantitative study on risk tolerance and entrepreneurship, used investment data for 400, 000 individuals, shared the view of Gündoğdu (2012), and Hung & Chin (2011), confirming that risk tolerant individuals are more likely to start a new venture.

Hvide and Panos (2014) argued that although risk tolerant individuals are more likely to start a new venture, risk-averse businesses outperform risk-tolerant entrepreneurs. Willebrand, Lammers, and Hartog (2012) made a distinction between risk propensity and risk perception. Willebrand et al. (2012) observed that entrepreneurs with high-risk perception are the ones who take cautious action to address risk and show better performance. Elston and Audretsch (2011) posited that failure is one of the greatest challenges for risk-tolerant individuals, who often fail to assess business adequately and start a business with sufficient capital and expertise. Willebrand et al. (2012) argued that even if successful entrepreneurs are risk tolerant, these business owners who take precautionary measures, are not gamblers. Fairlie and Holleran (2012) even found that risk-tolerant individuals are more likely to benefit more from entrepreneurship training than risk-adverse ones.

Immigrants are more likely to create new businesses in the community (Bianchi, 2013). Economists also found that immigrant entrepreneurs are more risk-tolerant as compared to native-born ones. Gedajlovic, Honig, Moore, Payne, and Wright (2013) observed that, immigrant entrepeneurs have an above average level of courage, ambition, resourcefulness, and bravado, which make these business owners, a highly risk-tolerant group to venture into business.

Creativity and innovativeness. Creativity and innovativeness form the main features of the Schumpeterian theory. Schumpeter (1934) described the entrepreneur as one who does things in a creative and innovative way. Belso-Martinez, Molina-Morales, and Mas-Verdu (2013) expressed congruence with the Schumpeterian theory and posited that creativity and doing things in an innovative way are the main attributes of successful entrepreneurs. Creativity involves the entrepreneur generating new ideas (Klonoski, 2012). Creativity is the way that an entrepreneur can achieve innovation. Baron, Hmieleski, and Henry (2012) contended that creativity is integral to innovation, which is important to the entrepreneurial process. Leitao and Franco (2011) shared the same view as Baron et al. (2012) considering creativity as the key attribute of the entrepreneur. Monahan, Shah, and Mattare (2011) even argued that with creativity and innovation, small businesses can reverse any economy.

Rosing, Frese, and Bausch (2011) opined that generating new products, new services, or new business practices starts with a person or a team having a good idea. Baer (2012) observed that a good idea is not sufficient to generate innovation, and innovation requires the implementation of the idea. The implementation of a good idea is what often distinguishes creativity from innovation. Sarooghi, Libaers, and Burkemper (2015) found a strong correlation between creativity and innovation, which is even stronger at the individual level. Sarooghi et al. (2015) argued that creativity and innovation are two sequential steps in creating new products, new services, or new business practices.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy involves assessing individuals' belief and confidence in personal capabilities to complete a given task (Heilbrunn & Almor, 2014). Researchers observed that the self-efficacy was vital for the entrepreneurial process. Barnir, Watson, and Hutchins (2011); and Shinnar, Hsu and Powell (2014) found that there is a positive correlation between entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE), and entrepreneurial intention (EI). Barnir et al. (2011) and Shinnar et al. (2014) observed that individuals with high self-efficacy showed high entrepreneurial intention. Measuring self-efficacy has been subject to debate among entrepreneurial researchers. Some researchers recommended using a general concept of self-efficacy (GSE) while others have suggested utilizing the specific domain concept, entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) to measure self-efficacy in entrepreneurship. In the light of Tumasjan and Braun (2012), recent students on entrepreneurship behavior show preference to the ESE rather than the GSE.

Managerial skills. Managerial skills are important for conducting sustainable businesses. Peter Drucker, the father of the modern management, suggested that proper management is critical to conduct sustainable business (Drucker, 1985). A review of the literature indicated that proper managerial skills are vital to conducting sustainable businesses. Ivanov (2011) identified management skills as a critical factor for small businesses and the lack of these skills lack in the entrepreneurial process could lead to failure of ventures. Osman, Rashid, Ahmad, and Hussain (2011) held a different view to that of Ivanov, arguing that management skills are necessary characteristic for big and not for small businesses. Osman et al. (2011) contended that leadership skills are the factor that is critical for small businesses and that there is evidence that small businesses with leadership approach outperform those with the managerial approach.

Researchers have tried to identify the managerial skills that are necessary to ensure sustainability to business. Fassin, Rossem, and Buelens (2011) regarded the effective manager as one who considers ethics and social responsibility in decision making beyond financial profits.

Entrepreneurial education. Several researchers have recognized the key role played by entrepreneurship in the economic growth. The importance of entrepreneurial education or training has been the subject of some debate (Drucker, 1985). Nasr and Boujelbene (2014) observed that developing training and academic programs in the small business ownership field, may help to enhance the educational needs of potential small business owners. Donellon, Ollila, and Williams Middelton (2014) consistent with the observation of Nasr and Boujelbene found is a positive correlation between entrepreneurial education and intention. Donellon et al. (2014) argued that the enrollment in entrepreneurial courses triggers an individual's aspiration to embrace entrepreneurship and to construct an entrepreneurial identity. Setiawan (2012) shared the view of Donellon et al. (2014) emphasizing that entrepreneurial education is strongly important and inevitable. Some researchers found no relationship even a negative correlation between entrepreneurial education and intention (Bergman, Rosenblatt, Erez, & De-Haan, 2011).

Researchers making the case for entrepreneurial education, have argued that individuals operating businesses, with a high level in the field and involved in continuing education had a lower failure risk (Kabongo & McCaskey, 2011; Teck-Hong & Yong-Kean, 2012). Elmuti, Khoury, and Omran (2012) argued that the entrepreneurial education remains a major determinant, and it overshadows other factors in evaluating the success or failure of a business. Box (2011) argued that, the realities of the 21st century, require business owners to be flexible and adaptable to meet in the best way possible, the wants and the needs of customers. Continuing education and training may help to ensure the success of businesses ventures (Box, 2011).

Ertuna and Gurel (2011) opined that the entrepreneurial education plays a significant and positive role in an individual's decision to venture into entrepreneurship. There is, therefore, an increased awareness of the necessity of entrepreneurial education in a global environment (Pittaway, Rodriguez-Falcon, Aiyegbayo, & King, 2011). Elmuti et al. (2012) examined how entrepreneurship education and training affected the development and enhancement entrepreneurial skills, to conduct sustainable business. The sample of this qualitative study consisted of 171 entrepreneurs and prospective entrepreneurs of Togolese origin, in the United States Elmuti et al. (2012) found that there is causal link between entrepreneurial education and training, and the effectiveness of the ventures.

Heilbrunn and Almor (2014) suggested that business schools should strive to achieve efficacy through programs and curricula to strengthen attitudes and behavior of their students towards entrepreneurship. There have been several areas of debate about entrepreneurial education. One question was whether higher education institutions can teach entrepreneurship or not (Warhuus & Basaiawmoit, 2014). Another concern was what and how to teach entrepreneurship (Lautenschlager & Haase, 2011; Karlsson & Moberg, 2013).

Drucker (1985) observed that any individual could learn the entrepreneurship as a discipline. Zakic, Stamatovic, and Stevovic (2012) congruently with Drucker argued that none is a born entrepreneur, and individuals become an entrepreneur, by acquiring, knowledge, skills and abilities through entrepreneurial education. Ollila and Williams Middleton (2011) observed that lectures and theory appeared ineffective ways to teach entrepreneurship. Nisula & Pekkola (2012) sharing the view of Ollila, and Williams Middleton (2011) suggested that the use of alternative methods such as cases studies and guest speakers could ensure the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education. Asvoll and Jacobsen (2012) made a distinction between the science of entrepreneurial practice that is teachable and the art of entrepreneurial practice that is instinctive and comes from experience. Warhuus and Basaiawmoit (2014) recommended that higher education institutions should implement programs for entrepreneurship rather than designing curricula about entrepreneurship.

The focus of some previously conducted studies was the impact of the socio-economic background of students in business schools on the effectiveness of the program. Falck, Heblich, and Luedemann (2012) observed that parents and peers group shape the entrepreneurial identity of individuals. Heilbrunn and Almor (2014) conducted an empirical study in Israel to examine the impact of the socio-economic background on the entrepreneurship program with a sample of 1230 students from business schools. The findings of Heilbrunn and Almor (2014) indicated that the business program was very effective for students from the medium and upper socio-economic environment who showed a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. Heilbrunn and Almor (2014) found that the program was ineffective, and even worsened the attitude of students, from a low socio-economic environment, towards entrepreneurship. Heilbrunn and Almor (2014) recommended creating business programs, taking into consideration the socio-economic environment of potential learners.

Entrepreneurial finance. Lucky and Olusegun (2012) observed that potential entrepreneurs could not bring big ideas to fruition without adequate funding. Arthur and Hisrich (2011) identified congruently with Lucky and Olusegun, access to capital as one of the main reasons why new ventures fail. Gaining access to funding, to start new ventures, is challenging for entrepreneurs, who should adopt a funding option that aligns with individual business strategies. Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) argued, however, that small business owners experience acute financial hardship and the lack of critical financial resources, prevents small business leaders from applying required strategies for the survival and growth of ventures.

Monahan et al. (2011), and Tracey, Phillips, and Jarvis (2011) posited that there is an escalating number of entrepreneur businesses in the current business environment. The proliferation of entrepreneurial firms combined with the lack of critical financial resources requires business owners to be proactive and aggressive to gain access to funding in the current marketplace. Parhankangas and Ehrlich (2014) observed that many businesses remained unfunded because fledging entrepreneurs often failed to demonstrate the sufficient value of ventures and to convince investors. Navis and Glynn (2011) therefore suggested that business leaders should implement unique strategies, in seeking funding for ventures, in the contemporary business environment.

Moore (2011) suggested that fledging business owners should strive to identify investors who are likely to provide long-term investments to achieve the business objectives. Maxwell, Jeffrey, and Levesque (2011) opined that various strategies implemented by nascent entrepreneurs to find funding are subjective and non-verifiable claims. A critical responsibility of nascent entrepreneurs, therefore, after the identification of potential investors, is to present the ventures in a way to convince these investors to gain access to funding. An exploration of studies in the field of entrepreneurial research revealed bootstrapping, angel investors, super angels, venture capital (VC) and crowdfunding as options to fund start-ups of new businesses. The next section involves various available options to fund new ventures.

Bootstrapping involves individuals using personal money to fund the early-stage of businesses. Fledging entrepreneurs experience financial hardship due to the proliferation of new businesses. Lending institutions such as banks and venture capitalists become more selective in allocating funds to secure investments. Voelker and McGlashan (2012) opined that one's money, family, and friends' money remains the last option for the nascent entrepreneurs to finance the early-stage of businesses. Soni and Priyan (2013) conducted a quantitative study in India to examine the startup funding preference of young entrepreneurs. The findings revealed that these young business owners were aware of the financial hardship and adopted bootstrapping to fulfill entrepreneurial dreams.

Angel investors are individuals who invest personal financial resources at the startups of businesses created by people other than friends and family (Moore, 2011; Mitteness et al., 2012). The term angel investor originated on Broadway in the late 1800s where rich individuals invested personal funds helping directors to secure new music and play (Ramadani, 2012). The role played by angel investors has evolved over time, and the investments of these individuals were critical to the survival of promising businesses, such as Bell Telephone, Google, Ford, and Apple (Ramadani, 2012).

Leaders recognized the importance of angel investments in supporting entrepreneurial activities developed various strategies to encourage the phenomenon. Hendon, Bell, Blair, and Martin (2012) reported that more than 20 states in the United States, have implemented the angel investment's tax credit to enhance entrepreneurial activity credit that can vary from 10% to 100%. Bell, Wilbanks, and Hendon (2013) found that angel investment's tax credit increases entrepreneurial activity.

Both academics and practitioners have recognized that venture capital is an optimal way to finance a business startup. Several studies highlighted the positive impact of VC on businesses (Puri & Zarutskie, 2012; Croce, Marti, & Murtinu, 2013). Croce, Marti, and Murtinu (2013) conducted an empirical study with a sample of 696 entrepreneurial firms of which, 267 are VC-backed located in six European countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Croce et al. (2013) concluded that financing is a valid tool that contributes to improving the performance of European entrepreneurial businesses. Venture capital plays a key role in new ventures'startups, making a fruitful decision, however, is a critical task for venture capitalists as these businesses are new to the marketplace and do not provide observable track of records (Block, De Vries, Schumann, & Sandner, 2014).

Bengtsson (2013) observed that relationship matters in the decision of a VC in a business, while Kollmann, Kuckertz, and Middelberg (2014) observed that trust and controllability are the two important factors, which triggers VC fundraising in Europe and North America. Bengtsson and Hsu (2015) examined the role of the entrepreneurial founders, and the VC partner coethnicity impacted investment relationship, using data from the United States The findings of this quantitative study indicated that co-ethnicity is a factor that increases the likelihood of attracting a VC investment in a business, reflecting promptness and deeper commitment from the VC. Bengtsson and Hsu (2013) found however that VC based on shared ethnicity lead to poor entrepreneurial performances.

Block, De Vries, Schumann, and Sandner et al. (2014) recommended that venture capitalists should use intellectual property (IP) criteria to evaluate ventures startups. Literature focused on patents as a significant predictor in the decision to finance business startups (Audretsch, Bönte, & Mahagaonkar, 2012). Sanders and Block (2011) opined, however, that beyond patents trademark is a significant criterion to consider while making a VC financing decision.

Crowdfunding is another novel option for nascent entrepreneurs to obtain access to funding for ventures. Crowdfunding that appeared in the 15 past years has become a popular option to finance a new business startup. In 2012, President Obama signed the Jumpstart Our Business Startups (JOBS) Act, to help new entrepreneurs to finance the startups of businesses (Mollick, 2014). Crowdfunding involves individuals raising money through social networks, and various internet platforms without using financial intermediaries (Ordanini, Miceli, Pizzetti, & Parasuraman, 2011). Crowdfunding can take the form of equity purchase, loan, donation, or pre-ordering of the product (Mollick, 2014). Kickstarter, which is a crowdfunding mechanism launched in 2009 (Voelker & McGlashan, 2012) is an example of crowdfunding.

There is little literature on crowdfunding because it is a novel phenomenon. Mollick (2014) observed that even though Crowdfunding is an emergent phenomenon that receives attention from entrepreneurially focused researchers and practitioners in entrepreneurship. A few researchers have attempted to create a theoretical framework for and against choosing crowdfunding (Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacheret, 2014). Sorensen and Fassiotto (2011) assigned the success of crowdfunding to the social network of individuals seeking funding. Zheng, Li, Wu and Xu (2014) found that, entrepreneurs' social network ties, obligations to fund other entrepreneurs, and the shared meaning of the crowdfunding project between the entrepreneurs and the sponsors, had significant impacts on crowdfunding performance, in both the United States and China. Stemler (2013) observed that the legalization of crowdfunding in the United States through the JOBS Act, is a significant shift away from the securities laws; entrepreneurs and small business owners, may use the crowdfunding exemption to raise up to $1 million within a year without involving the SEC.

The investors and the investees in angel investors and venture capitalists funding must strive to create a suitable collaborative working environment to achieve value maximization (Collewaert 2011). Collewaert and Fassin (2013) used an embedded case study to examine the perceived unethical behavior by business owners, venture capitalists, and angel investors. These unethical behaviors could involve goal incompatibility, inefficient communication, scarce resources, and interference in reaching goals. Collewaert and Fassin found that the unethical behavior triggers conflictual situation between partners. Literature is replete with studies on the vital role played by venture capitalists and angel investors in financing businesses (Ramadani, 2012; Croce et al., 2013). Collewaert and Fassin (2013) recommended that future research should address the dark side of the relationship between investors and investees involved in the funding of business (Collewaert & Fassin, 2013).

The Government of the United States has implemented various programs and agencies, to mitigate the financial hardship faced by small business owners. The SBA is an example of a government agency that provides assistance and guidelines for small business to obtain funding (Voelker & McGlashan, 2012). The Government can also support small businesses, through direct mandates for contract awards (Voelker & McDowell, 2011). These direct mandates often involve the most vulnerable categories such as minority-owned businesses (Gibson, McDowell, Harris, & Voelker, 2012).

Riddle and Brinkerhoff (2011) observed that immigrant business owners face several challenges. Azmat (2013) indicated that access to capital is a challenge, which is even greater for immigrants coming from less developed countries. Immigrant entrepreneurs have to choose between formal and informal sources, to fund the start-up of ventures. According to the SBA (2012), immigrant business owners use mostly informal sources to overcome the hardship to access funding. Matricano and Sorrentino (2014) observed that loans from friends and families and personal savings are the main sources of funding, that immigrant entrepreneurs use to finance the startup of businesses; as often there may be no formal application, interest rate, and no repayment deadline. Quan (2012) noted that social networks could also provide ethnic entrepreneurs with funding for businesses.

Business Success versus Failure

Business success. There is no generic definition of the concept of entrepreneurial success. Defining success is a hard task because definitions and measurements of the concept vary from researcher's personal perspectives (Gorgievski, Ascalon, & Ute, 2011). Financial achievement serves most often to evaluate the success. Brush, Edelman, Manolova, and Shaver (2012) recognized however that a mix of financial and nonfinancial factors should serve to measure success as a multi-dimensional concept. Leskinen (2011) suggested using factors such as survival, independence, or self-fulfillment to measure business success. The SBA (2014) defined business success as profitability and longevity of five or more years in business (SBA, 2014). This definition of the SBA served as the contextual meaning in this study.

Business failure. Yallapragada and Bhuiyan (2011) found that approximately 34% of new entrepreneur businesses in the United States fail within the first two years. Yallapragada and Bhuiyan (2011) also recognized that the high rate of failure of small businesses had been a significant challenge for the United States for centuries. Predicting business failure, however, has been a big challenge for researchers in economic and financial fields (Xu, Xiao, Dang, Yang & Yang, 2014). Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) argued that the success of existing had widely received greater attention from entrepreneurial researchers versus failure that had been the focus of few studies. Philip (2011) suggested that rather than success, authors should focus on business failure.

The phenomenon of business failure is a multidisciplinary concept that reflects the personal perspectives of researchers, and the reasons that lead to business failure vary. Box (2011), Hotho and Champion (2011) found that the lack of adequate marketing strategy could be a factor that causes business failure. Arthur and Hisrich (2011) identified access to capital as the main cause of failure for new ventures. Box (2011) suggested that business owners who want to be successful in this millennium must show flexibility and adaptability, by implementing marketing strategies that fit the needs and the wants of customers.

Kabongo and McCaskey (2011); and Van Gelderen, Thurik, and Patel (2011) found that the lack of a high level of education is a factor that can contribute to business failure. Ivanov (2011) instead identified the lack of consistent management experience as the root of the failure of new businesses. Osman et al. (2011) held a different view from Ivanov (2011), contending that rather than the lack of management process, which is applicable to bigger businesses, the lack of entrepreneurial leadership is the factor that leads to new business failure.

Lussier (1995) in a revolutionary study outlined a comprehensive framework of 15 factors including all the factors above, which could lead to business failure. The important factors include industry experience, capital, education level, planning, management skills, and minority ownership (Teng, Bhatia, & Anwar, 2011). Teng, Bhatia, & Anwar (2011) recognized the importance and the significance of the Lussier model 15 years after its development. Teng et al. (2011) added 11 to the 15 factors, to provide an actualized and a more comprehensive framework to assess businesses after the first decade of this third millennium. Some of the added factors, included the cost of running business, organizational skills, government policies, leadership skills, and technology; Appendix C includes all the 26 factors identified by Teng et al. (2011).

Leading economists have tried to apply personal perspectives to deciphering the small business failure. Some researchers defined single factors that drive business failure (Kabongo & McCaskey, 2011; Box, 2011); others provided a comprehensive framework that integrates several factors (Teng et al., 2011). Spence, Orser, and Riding (2011) however opined that there is no static factor to define business failure. Spence et al. (2011) advised, therefore that the researcher should be innovative and aggressive at this beginning of this second decade of the 21st century to uncover the failure factors of small businesses. Uncovering these factors may help to mitigate the secular challenge of the high rate of failure of small businesses in the United States.

Migration and Immigrant Entrepreneurship

Migration involves individuals leaving the home country, to live in a foreign country. According to the United Nations Population (UNFPA, 2014), there were 214 million migrants across the world in 2010. The financial crisis of 2007 has influenced the migration inflows in some industrialized countries such as the United States, Spain, United Kingdom, and Australia. More than 10% of the individuals living in these countries are foreign-born (UNFPA, 2014). Researchers in the migration field have attempted to understand the reason individuals migrate from a country to another one.

Hwang, Liao, and Huang (2013) found that the economic reason driven by the wages difference between countries is a strong motivator than can trigger a decision to migrate to another country. Couyoumdjian (2012) opined that migrating individuals seek for a suitable institutional context to exploit human capital, and maximize on it. Beckhusen, Florax, Graaff, Poot, and Waldorf (2013) argued however that there is an imperfect transferability of the human capital acquired in the migration sending country to the host one. Chiswick and Miller (2013) held the same view as Beckhusen et al. (2013), noting that immigrant individuals can be overqualified, and most of the time underqualified for the job market of the host country. Crockett (2013) and Bianchi (2013) observed, that immigrant often display higher abilities and stronger motivation compared to other categories in the community.

Gillespie and McBride (2013) observed that the literature on diaspora entrepreneurship was relatively recent and appeared at the turn of the 21st century as a key factor in the international business field. There are many studies on the achievements of immigrants' entrepreneurship, especially for gains and contribution to the home country. There is an extensive body of literature on achievements of the immigrants' entrepreneur businesses. Vaaler (2013) argued that remittances from the diaspora represent the second largest capital inflow in non-industrialized countries after foreign direct investments; and the largest inflow in developing countries. Diaspora entrepreneurship may help to boost the internationalization of developing countries (Boly, Coniglio, Prota, & Seric, 2014).

Lin and Tao (2012) in a quantitative study, used data collected from the Chinese Canadian community, to examine the characteristics, drivers, and factors of success of transnational entrepreneurs. Lin and Tao (2012) described the typical successful diaspora entrepreneur as a 45 year-old married man, with one child, with a Master's or higher educational degree, and not holding a full-time job. Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013) suggested that researchers in diaspora entrepreneurship field should move from the descriptive stage, which consists of the achievements of the immigrant entrepreneurs, to the theory-building stage of the phenomenon. Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013), listed Lin and Tao (2012) among the existing theory-building studies. Nkongolo-

Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013) noted that, besides the success factors of traditional entrepreneurship, parameters such as altruistic motivation, need for social recognition, friendliness, and receptivity of the home country, entrepreneurial opportunities, and support to immigrants in the host countries, are drivers of a successful diaspora entrepreneurship. Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013) suggested that further research should address these success factors in respect of each particular diaspora.

Immigrant-Owned Businesses and Export Activities

Immigrant-owned businesses engaged in export and import activities received considerable attention in entrepreneurial research. Wang and Liu (2015) quantitatively studied the transnational activities of immigrant-owned businesses, in respect of the performances in the United States, using micro data from the Survey of Business Owners (SBO) of 2007. Wang and Liu found that immigrant business owners are more likely to engage in transnational activities than nonimmigrant entrepreneurs are, because of the accrual of human and social capital in respective countries of current and former residences respectively. The findings of Wang and Liu (2015), and Neville et al. (2014) have indicated that young immigrant-owned businesses involved in export activities outperform other new ventures. Neville et al. (2014) argued that immigrant entrepreneurs are export-oriented because of routines and decision-making mechanisms, in respect of the historical home country environments, which may enhance business success and performance. Liu and Wang also observed that immigrant-owned entities not involved in transnational activities are less performant than nonimmigrant; and immigrant entities involved in transnational activities such as outsourcing jobs and exporting, perform more than nonimmigrant firms do.

Business Environment: Home and Host Countries

Diaspora entrepreneurs, who conduct business with the country of origin, operate in an environment that involves both the host and the home countries. Several researchers have addressed the influence of the environment on the success of the international entrepreneurial business (Dyck & Ovaska 2011). Lin and Tao (2012) conducted a study on characteristics, drivers, and success factors affecting Chinese - Canadian entrepreneurs. Lin and Tao (2012) found that a significant advantage for immigrant entrepreneurs was the capability to draw resources from both home and host countries respectively.

Governments of various countries implement strategies to attract foreign investors. The U.S. government shows a preference to grant entry visas to foreign individuals who can invest $1 million and generate at least 10 full-time jobs in the United States. The Startup Act 2.0 bill is a feature that provides immigrants with more opportunities to start a business in i through the EB-5 visa (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012). Anderson (2012) observed however that, the EB-5 visa is insufficient to harness foreign individuals to invest in the United States because of the required minimum of $500 000, and there are few immigrant business owners performing in the United States under the EB-5 visa in the past years.

Governments and international organizations across the world widely recognize that small businesses play a key role in the economic growth of the country

(Gstraunthaler & Hendry, 2011; Uy, 2011). As small businesses, and immigrant-owned ventures especially, contribute significantly to the economic growth of the host country, leaders of this country strive to address the high failure rate of small businesses. Solomon, Bryant, May, and Perry (2013) suggested that agencies and programs that support small businesses, such the SBA, and similar agencies should strive to mitigate the high rate failure of ventures. Immigrant business owners may find in the host country, agencies and programs that provide support for sustainable ventures.

Riddle and Brinkerhoff (2011) observed that the immigrant individual confront new beliefs, norms and behaviors in the institutional business environment of the country of settlement. Immigrant support programs, therefore, in the host country represents a vital factor that promotes sustainable immigrant-owned businesses. Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013) noted that, several governments and international institutions, have implemented programs to encourage diaspora members to participate in the economic development of the country of origin. These agencies and programs include the Diaspora Network Alliance (DNA) sponsored by the USAID and the U.S. State Department (Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2013). Bowen (2012) found that privately held corporations, government and international agencies, in response to political and ethical calls have implemented programs to help small or/and minority businesses.

Another advantage is the residence in a geographically concentrated immigrant community, in the host country. Beine, Docquier, and Ozden (2011) observed that immigrant individuals are sharing a similar ethnic heritage in a geographically concentrated region benefit from the low-cost information and affordable services that trigger investments in the home countries. Vaaler (2013) shared the view of Beine et al. (2011) and conducted a quantitative study in 50 developing countries analyzing data from diaspora investments from 2002 to 2007. Vaaler (2013) found that diaspora concentration is more likely to facilitate immigrant individuals' investments back home. Vaaler (2011) argued that the informal relationship with extended family and community members helps immigrant entrepreneurs secure investments in the home country.

The home country of the immigrant business owner influences the venture on several aspects. Goktan and Gunay (2011) identified three factors that can influence investment from the diaspora in the country of origin. These factors are government attitude, local infrastructures, and the sociocultural beliefs about conducting business.

The findings in several studies have highlighted the positive role played by the diaspora through its remittance and investment in the economic growth of the home countries on several aspects. These aspects can involve capital (Flisi and Murat, 2011; Mullings, 2011; Ellis, 2011), the expectations of the way to conduct business (Riddle & Brinkerhoff, 2011), and technical knowledge (Agrawal et al., 2011). Researchers posited that investments from the diaspora played a key role in the economic growth of developing countries (Vaaler, 2011). Kotabe et al. (2013) argued that, diaspora investments do not play an important role only in developing countries, and capital from individuals living abroad have postively impacted the economic growth of several developed countries such as those of Italy, Ireland, and Israel. A positive business environment in the country of origin could be a catalyst to attract diaspora investments.

Beyond the economic role, Barnard and Pendock (2013) identified diaspora investors as bridges between the home and host countries. Goktan and Gunay (2011) viewed the government attitude as a critical factor to encourage diaspora investment.

Regarding the government attitude, Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013) distinguished between hostility and hospitality attitude. Nkongolo and Bakenda (2013) observed that the highest level of hospitality is critical to optimizing the diaspora investments in the country of origin. The governments of these countries often try to implement strategies through diaspora engagement policies to harness individual living abroad to invest in the home countries (Kotabe et al., 2013). Governments of countries with high emigres are continuously seeking creative ways to create an attractive environment for diaspora investors by implementing rules, regulations, and structures.

For example, governments from which a large number of immifrants emanate often allow dual nationality for individuals who have acquired the citizenship of the host country by naturalization. In its effort to promote diaspora entrepreneurship in Togo, the Togolese government passed a law effective in July 2014 that implicityly recognized the dual nationality to Togolese individuals living abroad. According to the Togolese Government’s official website, the new law waives entry visas to Togolese individuals, using a passport of another country. Togolese immigrant individuals, can enter the home country, upon the presentation of a document attesting the former Togolese citizenship such as a birth certificate, a Togolese citizenship certificate, or passport even expired (Togolese Government, 2014).

Transition and Summary

Section 1 contained an introduction and rationales for conducting this study. The focus of this study was to explore the critical success factors of Togolese immigrant entrepreneurs, in the United States, involved in entrepreneurial activities with Togo. Section 1 included the problem statement, the purpose statement, the nature of the study, research questions, the conceptual framework, the significance of the study, and the literature review. The entrepreneurship theory served as the conceptual framework for this study. A review of related literature provided a better understanding of the experiences of successful Togolese immigrants living in the United States, involved in entrepreneurial activities with Togo. Section 2 consists; of a detailed account of the research strategies enacted to undertake and complete this research study. This section includes a description of the research methodology and design, population and sampling, data collection instruments, and techniques used in the study. There is also a discussion of the compliance with ethical standards and reliability and validity of the study.

Section 2: The Project

Small businesses have failed at a high rate within the five first years in the United States, (Valadez, 2011); and foreign-born individuals who want to conduct business, encounter additional challenges as compared to native ones (Riddle & Brinkerhoff, 2011). This section will contain a systematic explanation of the research objectives in exploring the critical factors for sustainable Togolese-owned businesses in the United States. The outcome and findings of this study could be of value for entrepreneurs of Togolese origin based in the United States, engaged in business with Togo, to conduct sustainable businesses. Notable features of Section 2 includes details to the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, research methodology, participants, population sampling, data collection, data analysis techniques, reliability, and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners of Togolese origin, in the United States, engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo, need to be successful. The targeted population for this study included owners of U.S.-based Togolese small businesses, involved in entrepreneurial activities with Togo, and have existed for more than five years. The study population was appropriate, consistent with the view of Neville et al. (2014), who suggested that researchers in the future should explore the experiences of entrepreneurs from various groups. The geographic location of this study was the Washington Metropolitan area. This study may contribute to positive social change as the findings could provide knowledge to help U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs succeed and thereby serve in furthering the aspirations of individuals emigrating to advanced countries in elevating personal life standards.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher becomes an instrument for data collection (Collins & Cooper, 2014; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). My role as the researcher in this study was to recruit participants, collect, organize, and analyze data, besides selecting the research method and design. The data collection process involved conducting semistructured interviews, and collecting useful documents for the realization of the objectives of the study.

This qualitative study involved the use of an exploratory case study design. The exploratory case study design requires having face-to-face collaboration, and interaction with participants, through in-depth, semistructured interviews, and secondary data related to small businesses performance (Draper & Swift, 2011). I conducted the interviews, asking questions included in Appendix B, following the interview protocol (Appendix A).

After the data collection, the use of QSR NVivo qualitative data analytical software served to identify emergent themes and explore relevant aspects of the research phenomenon. The features of the software are useful to save time, organizing, and visualizing data (Rowley, 2012). The software cannot however replace the in-depth understanding and scrutiny of the researcher (Hanson, Balmer, & Giardino 2011). A transcription and analysis of the themes that emerged helped to analyze and ascribe meaning to the data.

I have never been a small business owner. I hold an MBA with a concentration in International Business, and am a part of the Togolese immigrant community in the United States. With this background, venturing into business is one of my aspirations.

Maintaining ethical standards throughout the research process is critical to successful completion of the study (Campbell & Scott, 2011). The ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects, included in the Belmont Report (1979) have denoted a distinction between research and practice, the three basic ethical principles, and the application of these principles. This study involved gaining insight into human subjects who are Togolese business owners living in the United States. As a researcher, I followed the three basic principles of the Belmont Report notably to protect participants in this study and demonstrate, (a) respect of persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice.

Yin (2014) observed that researcher bias could change the direction or the outcome of a study. I strived, therefore, to mitigate bias, setting aside personal beliefs and perceptions during this study (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The use of a suitable interview protocol that applies to all participants served to optimize each interview session, increasing consistency, and reliability of the study (Foley & O’Conner, 2013). I applied the same interview (Appendix A) protocol to all the participants in this study.

Participants

The selection of the participants for this study was from the Togolese immigrants small business owners in the Washington Metropolitan area, engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo owners who have successfully surpassed five years in business.

There was no focus on a particular industry, in selecting the participants. All participants were required to (a) reside legally in the United States, (b) be at least 18 years old, (c) have created a business and engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo for more than five years. For example, Buchanan (2013) used a purposive sample of 20 employees in a single Fortune 500 company, to explore the improved competencies 21st century’s business leaders, should adopt to achieve long-term sustainable results for ventures. This study involved 20 participants selected through a purposive sampling (Noor, Batra, & Byrne, 2011). Participants were from my existing contacts list.

After receiving the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval No 10-23-15-0396356 and the permission of Walden to start data collection, I contacted potential participants via telephone, and sent email requests to participate in the study, with the accompanying consent form and a letter of introduction. The acceptance of the selected individual to participate in the study was the last step that preceded the data collection.

Research Method and Design

Method

A qualitative method served to explore the success factors for small businesses, owned and operated by individuals of Togolese origin, based in the United States, and involved in entrepreneurial activities with Togo. A researcher has to select from the following research options: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Chaiklin, 2011). From all the available approaches, a qualitative method seemed most appropriate to meet the objectives of this study. The rationale for selecting qualitative research, over the quantitative and mixed methods was that it is conducive to exploring complexities in individual behaviors from the viewpoint of the participants on a contemporary phenomenon (Blau, Bach, Scott, & Rubin, 2013; Yin, 2014). Cambra-Fierro and Wilson (2011) posited that the qualitative method generates rich results. The use of open-ended questions may helped to explore the central phenomenon (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). This study involved understanding the experiences of successful Togolese immigrant entrepreneurs, living in the United States, engaged in business activities with Togo. Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012) opined that a qualitative research is appropriate when the study is exploratory, and solving the problem is too complex for a yes-or-no hypothesis. A qualitative method served, therefore, as the optimal data collection option for this study on the imperatives and critical factors, U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs need to conduct sustainable businesses. .

A quantitative inquiry was not the selected method for this study as it involved a deductive approach in drawing conclusions, examining relationships among variables (Hanson et al. 2011). In a quantitative study, the researcher interprets causes of change in social events, using objective measurement and quantitative analysis (Arghode, 2012). The aim of this study was to interpret the essence of the experiences of the participants rather than quantify individual responses. The mixed methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study (Fielding, 2012). Although a mixed methods approach may yield superior results than a single method (Harrison, 2013), it requires extensive research experience and creates additional time and data processing (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The objective of this study did not involve testing hypotheses; there was no intent to combine quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study. The quantitative and the mixed methods approaches were therefore, inappropriate, and the qualitative approach guided this study.

Research Design

An exploratory single case study was the most suitable design for this research. The case study design involves the researcher exploring in-depth a social phenomenon in respect of the real life (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014), and its objective is to analyze a case and propose the best possible outcome (Gallego, Fortunato, Korol, Moretton, 2013). For this study, data saturation involved leveraging the depth of the sample, and finding repetition in the data through the interview of successful U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs in the Washington Metropolitan area (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). O'Reilly and Parker (2012) observed that with an exploratory single case study, achieving data saturation entails soliciting the insight of the individual with the most knowledge to answer the research question often requiring multiple interviews, to the point in the process, when no further data emerges. The sample for this study was optimal to ensure the repetition and relevance of the findings, with the data triangulated against small business reports, and other credible secondary data helped in in-depth analysis of the data from multiple perspectives.

A researcher using a case study has to choose between an exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, intrinsic, instrumental, collective, and multi-case study (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, O., & Neumann, 2011). After careful consideration and deliberation, an exploratory single case study that involves a situation where the intervention under evaluation had no clear single set of outcome (Yin, 2014), was determined as the most appropriate design to explore the experiences of successful U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs living in the Washington Metropolitan area.

Kupers, Mantere, and Statler (2012) observed that the use of the phenomenological design, enables the researcher to gain an understanding of the phenomenon from the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants involved in a study. A phenomenological design might be a plan for this research if the intent was to explore the lived experience of Togolese immigrant owners in the United States in general. As the aim of this study was to focus on Togolese entrepreneurs who have been successful beyond five years and based in the Washington Metropolitan area, a phenomenological design was not appropriate.

Other qualitative research designs include narrative, ethnographic, grounded theory, and case study. Dickey (2011) observed that in a narrative study, individuals narrate the life stories and experiences chronologically, which was not the intent of this study. In an ethnographic study, the researcher relies on personal interviews, collections of personal histories, and observation. Shover (2012) argued that an ethnographic study offers to the researcher the opportunity to respond to unclear actions; that involves the immersion of the researcher in the topic scenario (Pritchard, 2011). The intent of this study was not about the immersion in the scenario, an ethnographic design, therefore, was inappropriate. In a grounded theory, the researcher can explore the elements of experience, and a specific group in a specific setting (Gambetti, Graffigna, & Biraghi, 2012), which leads to begin a new theory (Reiter et al., 2011). The purpose of this research was not to develop a new theory; therefore, the grounded theory was not suitable for this study.

Population and Sampling

The general population for this study included Togolese immigrants in the United States, who have created small businesses, and have a record of accomplishment of successful entrepreneurial engagement for more than five years, and living in the Washington Metropolitan area. Yin (2014) contended that for case studies, purposeful sampling procedures are more suitable than random sampling because of the specific boundaries comprising the nature of the case study. The selection participants for the study relied on purposeful sampling. Kornhaber, Wilson, Abu-Qamar, and Mclean (2014) observed that in purposeful sampling, researchers rely on personal judgment, to select the participants in respect of the predefined criteria for the study.

The researcher in purposeful sampling should strive to select cases or participants that provide more information on the phenomenon under study (Evans & Buehner, 2011). The experiences of 10 to 20 participants could lead to new knowledge (Hanson et al., 2011). The purposeful sample in this study, consisted of 20 successful Togolese business owners, who meet the following eligibility criteria: (a) a minimum of 18 years of age, (b) sucessfully running a small business in the United States, (c) legal resident in the United States, (d) the business must have existed beyond five years, and involve entrepreneurial activities with Togo, (e) geographic locationin the Washington Metropolitan area.

The researcher has the critical responsibility to select sample sizes in respect of the research objectives (Suri, 2011). Muyeed (2012) suggested that a sample size of 18 to

30 participants is appropriate for a single case study. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenote (2013) advised that a sample size of 15 to 30 participants is appropriate for a case study. Crowther and Lloyd-Williams (2012) found that a sample size of 20 to 50 participants is appropriate for effective response. Buchanan (2013) used a sample size of 20 participants to explore the improved competencies needed for sustainability in the 21st century. This study, therefore, involved a sample size of 20 participants.

Carlsen and Glenton (2011) observed that the data saturation occurs when conducting additional interviews does not provide new meaningful information. O'Reilly and Parker (2012) advised that data saturation involve participants with the most knowledge on the topic of a study. A sample of 20 participants, who have knowledge on the topic, was adequate to reach the stage of data saturation. Identification and invitation to participate in the study to the selected business owners followed the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants received the consent form stating that there was no significant risk to participate in the study. Data collection involved one-on-one interviews through Skype.

Ethical Research

The successful completion of a doctoral study requires the compliance with ethical standards. The treatment of the participants in a given study is a critical responsibility of the researcher (Jones, Edwards, & While, 2011). Walden University ethical standards, and the three basic principles of the Belmont Report (1979), which include (a) respect of persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice, serve as the guiding premise to protect participants in this study.

Potential participants received an email that included an informed consent form, which explained the purpose and the intent the study. Individuals, who accepted to participate in the study then, filled out, signed electronically, and sent back the consent form by email. Upon acceptance to participate in the study and the terms of the consent form, interviewees received information about the purpose of the study, how to answer open-ended semistructured questions via an electronic communication platform such as Skype. There was a request for participants to review the respective responses to the interview questions, and make sure that the transcription was accurate. Interviewees did not receive any incentive or compensation for participating in the study; however, those who desired, received a copy of the findings as a token of gratitude.

The selected candidates received information that the participation in the study was voluntary and confidential, and had the latitude to withdraw from the study at any time, without any negative consequence. Participants only had to express at any time the desire, to opt out of the study via phone or email. Participants remained anonymous; the use of codes (for example, *PP1*, *PP2*) served to identify each participant, to preserve confidentiality. There was no significant risk for the respondents stemming from participation in the study. I am the only person to have access to the password protected interviews responses saved on a personal computer, and other study related documentation kept in a locked safe, will protect the confidentiality of participants. The data storage plans included provisions to delete data, five years after the completion of the study, through incineration of hard copies, and erasing of all study related electronic data.

Data Collection

This section contains a description of the data collection instrument, the data collection technique, and the data organization. Using a single case study enables the researcher to gather in-depth qualitative data from members involved in the case (Yin, 2014). The following data collection section covers research instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, and data analysis.

Instruments

As the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument (Suri, 2011, Yin, 2014). This study entailed collecting data from screened and qualified research participants using one-on-one interviews. Wilton, Paez, and Scott (2011), and Giorgi (2012) posited that semistructured interviews were helpful to gain insight and understanding of personal experiences of individuals. Dibley (2011) observed that in-depth, and open-ended semistructured interviews, ideally suited to explore a given phenomenon. Using in-depth, semistructured interviews, therefore, was a suitable option to explore the experiences of successful Togolese small business owners in the United States who transact business with Togo. The interview process in the study consisted of administering 10 predetermined open-ended questions (Appendix B) to the participants, following the same interview protocol (Appendix A) for all participants, to ensure consistency. The primary data collection tools for the study involved the use of Skype, which is a software application and service. Skype enables users to communicate and record voice over the Internet; and Pamela for Skype, a software program that facilitates easy recording of Skype audio calls. The version is 6.16.0.105 for Skype and 4.8.0.115

for the Pamela for Skype. An HP G71-340 Notebook is the computer that hosted the software programs.

The interview questions helped to gain insight of the experiences and deeper understanding of participants regarding sustainable immigrant-owned businesses. These factors included the personal and entrepreneurial attributes, the financing, and the business environment where these immigrants conduct business, the home, and host countries. Scoring is a technique used exclusively for quantitative research. Scoring does not apply to qualitative studies (Muller et al., 2011). This study hence did not include scoring.

Shea, Grinde, and Elmslie (2011) opined that data collection instruments are tools that help to gather data from human participants. The researcher must strive to implement a data collection process that, is consistent, stable, and not self-contradictory with precise and unambiguous questions, to have a reliable data collection (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) argued that transcription review, member checking, triangulation and prolonged engagement and persistent observation are strategies to ensure validity to a qualitative inquiry. The reliability of a study depends on the researcher's proficiency (Dibley, 2011; Ferroff, Mavin, Bates, & Murray, 2012). In this study, there was use of member checking, which consisted of seeking participants' opinions to confirm the accuracy data collected or affirm the accuracy of study initial findings through participant feedback (Harvey, 2015). The use of a similar interview protocol (Appendix A) to all the participants served to ensure validity and reliability for this study (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Yin (2014) observed that to achieve the completeness of the data analysis a researcher uses a data collection approach that includes document review and individual interviews to improve reliability and validity of the research. This study involved a review of documents such as government reports, small business trends, and other credible sources of information on small and /or immigrant-owned businesses.

Data Collection Technique

The study involved the use of personal interviews with participants, documents and passive observation. Kisely and Kendall (2011) observed that using multiple data sources enhances research scope and facilitates triangulation. Personal, in-depth, semistructured interviews, consisting of 10 predetermined questions, with 20 participants through Skype, served as the data collection approach for this study. Skype is a software application and service that enables users to communicate and record voice over the internet drove this qualitative study. There was an electronic recording of each interview in the study through Pamela for Skype, which is a software program that facilitates easy recording of Skype audio calls. Interviews through Skype have the advantage to produce data as reliable and in-depth as produced during face-to-face encounters (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). An advantage of interviewing through electronic media is that it provides participants with more convenience to respond to the interview questions than face-to-face interviews (Egan, Harcourt & Rumsey, 2011).

The use of the electronic interviews with open-ended questions provided an appropriate framework to capture experiences of successful U.S.-based Togolese business owners, involved in entrepreneurial activities with Togo. Qu and Dumay (2011) asserted that electronic interviews enable researchers to identify the common themes from the experiences of the participants. There are, however, potential disadvantages to interviewing through Skype, which include logistical and technical, rapport building, and ethical issues (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). To have reliable data, the researcher has to tests devices and software (Corley, 2011), and make the participant aware of the recording of the respective interviews.

After the transcription of the interviews, I used review of questionnaire responses, which consists of each participant receiving a copy for review, to ensure accuracy in recording of response. There was a request to each interviewee to send an email and/or make a phone call confirming the accuracy or not of the information. Participants could request to fill out missing pieces or changes if the transcription did not reflect accurately the original conversation (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). I deployed member checking that involved a researcher having the opportunity to confirm the accuracy data collected or affirm the accuracy of study initial findings through participant feedback (Harvey, 2015).

Yin (2014) suggested that data collection through document review complements face-to-face semistructured interview for a comprehensive case study. This study involved a review of secondary data and credible documents related to the study to ensure that the findings of the data received adequate triangulation, comparison, and analysis against other credible secondary sources. These documents included government reports, small business trends, and other credible sources of information on small and /or immigrant-owned businesses.

Data Organization Techniques

After the completion of all the interviews, there was a transcription of all the recorded interviews electronic data. Each participant received a copy of the transcription to ensure accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012). The next step involved loading the transcriptions into NVivo, which is a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDS) program. During the organization, consistent with the view of Markova, Perry, and Farmer (2011); there was an identification of themes, patterns, trends, and dominant topics that emerged from the interviews. Yin (2014) observed that reviewing all data creates a quality analysis. A systematic review of all the study-related documents such as field notes and memos preceded the data analysis stage. An assigned code (PP1, PP2…) served to identify each participant to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. A separate included the contact information of the interviewees without any ties to the identity or assigned codes. Data were in a password-protected database, and study related documentation stored in a locked fireproof safe. As required by Walden University, data will be inaccessible to any other person than me for five years after the completion of the study, and then destroyed as described herein.

Data Analysis Technique

The case study design enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of participants (Gee, Loewnthal, & Cayne, 2013). The intent of this study was to gain knowledge and understanding of the critical success factors of Togolese-owned businesses in the United States, engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo. Torrance (2012) observed that methodological triangulation requires two or more data sources to give a fuller insight of the research topic, which provides more validity than using a single data source. Interviews, documentation, and additional source information triangulated this study (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011). There was also the use of member checking to ensure completeness and accuracy of data of each participant (Torrance, 2012). The following were the interview questions for the study, also viewable in Appendix B.

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your motivation for considering being an entrepreneur?
2. What innovative strategies, if any, have contributed to the success of your business?
3. How would you describe the way you initially financed your business?
4. What was your perception of the risk you are taking, in the decision to become a business owner?
5. What from your experience are the managerial skills necessary to conduct sustainable businesses?
6. How would you attribute the relevance of your background and education to your business endeavor?
7. What are the important strategies you have used to sustain your business past the first five years?

8. How do you relate your entrepreneurial endeavor to some challenges you experienced in Togo and /or the United States? How did you address these challenges?

9. How would you describe some opportunities from the Togolese and /or the U.S. environment that have contributed to the current state of your business?

10. What information you find pertinent and would like to share in respect of what we have not discussed in this interview?

There was a systematic analysis of each response to the interview questions to identify emerging themes related to immigrant-owned small businesses sustainability. Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), notably NVivo QSR version 10, served to manage, and analyze data. Transference of the uploaded data in NVivo followed the transcription of the interviews. NVivo is a flexible data analytical software, with features helpful to the researcher to identify nodes (Ishak & Bakar, 2012). Nodes that are coding features of NVivo, and can represent concepts, processes, people, and other categories. Nodes come in five different forms: free nodes, tree nodes, case nodes, relationship nodes, and matrices (Ishak & Bakar, 2012). The NVivo auto-code feature helped to create case nodes for each participant, and all the participants were under a parent node. The evaluation of the research findings provided deeper insight into the following overarching research question of this study: What strategies do U.S.-based Togolese business owners, engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo, need to be successful? Data related to the selected conceptual framework of this study helped to determine if entrepreneurship theory, as developed by Schumpeter (1934) who described the entrepreneur as an innovator, was suitable for U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs, who transact business with Togo to be successful. Answers to the interview questions revealed the attributes and factors needed for U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs need to conduct sustainable businesses.

Reliability and Validity

Researchers have the critical responsibility to provide credibility to studies through appropriate measures intended to improve reliability and validity (Hassi, Storti, & Azennoud, 2011). Houghton et al. (2013) suggested that in qualitative research, the concept of trustworthiness should replace the quantitative criteria of reliability, validity, and objectivity. Criteria to ensure trustworthiness should include credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Whiteley, 2012). Ensuring rigor in this study involved instituting appropriate steps to ensure its creditability, dependability, confirmability and transferability with strategies recommended by Houghton et al. (2013).

Reliability

Miner-Romanoff (2012) observed that the researcher must be aware of biases that could occur during the research process; the researcher has, therefore, a critical responsibility to ensure reliability at each step of the study. There are no straightforward tests to evaluate the reliability of qualitative inquiry; however, adopting some steps can enable the researcher to ensure reliability to the study (Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie,

& Green, 2012). Evaluating the reliability of qualitative research involves exploring its dependability and confirmability (Houghton et al., 2013).

To ensure dependability in this study, I used strategies that included member checking and methodological triangulation that involves the use of multiple sources to ensure the collection of comprehensive data to address the research topic (Torrance, 2012). In this study, there was a collection of data by interviewing eligible participants and review of documents from credible sources about immigrant-owned businesses. After completion of an interview, each participant had the opportunity to review a transcript to ensure that it accurately conveyed the recorded discussion (Torrance, 2012).

Maintaining an audit trail, which consists of a thorough collection of documentation regarding all aspects of research, facilitates conducting an orderly and organized study, served to ensure confirmability in this study (Houghton et al., 2013). For this research, keeping comprehensive notes on the contextual background of the data, and rationales for all methodological decisions helped in increasing research rigor. The use of the NVivo enables the researcher to achieve robust qualitative analysis through the features within this software, which enables querying, auditing, and coding of interview data (Bergin, 2011). Optimally leveraging the technical capabilities of the NVivo software further aided to enhance quality and in implementing strategies that increase dependability and confirmability of data in this study.

Validity

Researchers should show both ability and efforts to ensure truthfulness and certainty to the findings of studies (Trotter, 2012). Credibility replaced the quantitative criterion of internal validity, and transferability for the external validity (Trotter, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013). In this study, the following strategies served to ensure validity.

To ensure credibility to a study, the researcher should select among techniques such as triangulation, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, member checks, peer debriefing (Houghton et al., 2013). Member checking, triangulation, and prolonged engagement and persistent observation were the validation strategies used in this qualitative study. The implementation of member checking provided participants involved in research with the opportunity to review the accuracy of the transcription of the interviews, and the initial findings and interpretation (Houghton et al., 2013). Togolese immigrant small business owners, participating in the study received, therefore, a copy of the transcription of respective interviews for review. After the review, interviewees had the opportunity to request changes to any part not reflecting personal perceptions accurately.

Methodological triangulation involves using several sources on the same phenomenon to confirm data, and ensure completeness to increase the credibility of findings (Houghton et al., 2013) served to provide credibility in this qualitative research. Various secondary sources helped to check and establish the validity in this qualitative inquiry. These sources included government publications that consisted of reports from the Chamber of Commerce of the , the USCIS, and other stakeholders such as organizations or advocate programs for immigrant entrepreneurship. There was in this study a comparison of primary data against these secondary sources for a holistic analysis.

The third technique was data saturation or prolonged engagement and persistent observation. This strategy requires the researcher in the data collection process, to strive to reach a level where there is no new emerging data, which means data saturation occurred, and there is a full understanding of the phenomenon under study (Houghton et al., 2013). Data saturation occurred in several qualitative studies, after a maximum of 15 interviews (Simeone, Salvini, Cohen, Alvaro, & Vellone, 2014; Ali, Vitulano, Leel, Weiss, & Colson, 2014). Hanson, Balmer, and Giardino (2011) recommended a sample size of 20 participants, however, to achieve data saturation in a case study research. O'Reilly and Parker (2012) opined that in a case study, data saturation occurs with a small number, if participants have, the most knowledge to answer the research questions. Responses of 20 participants involved in this study were optimal to reach data saturation. A contingency plan consisted of recruiting new participants and administrating additional interviews based on similar criteria for the initial interviews if the sample size of 20 participants was not sufficient to reach data saturation.

A critical responsibility of the researcher is to ensure to the study transferability to the study by describing appropriately the original context of the research (Houghton et al., 2013). External validity or transferability in qualitative research consists of the extent that the findings of the study are analytically generalizable to other populations (Ali & Yusof, 2011). The purpose of a qualitative study was more about understanding than generalizability (Nicola, Oliver, & Graham, 2012). Thick description is a strategy that may help readers to make an informed decision on the transferability of the findings of a study to the specific context (Hanson et al., 2011). There was a verbatim transcription of each interview to ensure accuracy and original responses of participants remain intact in a standard data set.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of Section 2 was to provide a detailed explanation and rationale on the purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research methodology, ethical research, population and sampling, data collection instruments, techniques, organization, analysis, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, there is a categorization and interpretation of data to reflect the meaning of the experiences of each participant involved in this study. Section 3 contains the findings of the research that include the application of the study to professional practice, the implications for social change, recommendation for action, and specific recommendations for further studies.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 involves a detailed description of the outcomes of the research study. The section includes an overview of the study, presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action. Recommendations for further studies, reflection on experience, summary and study conclusion end this section.

Overview of Study

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners of Togolese origin, in the United States, engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo, need to be successful. The research question that guided this study was as follows: What strategies do U.S.-based Togolese business owners engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo need to be successful? The research participants included 20 U.S.-based Togolese business owners engaged in entrepreneurial activities with Togo for more than five years and living in the Washington Metropolitan Area.

Each participant responded to 10 open-ended questions, in a semistructured interview format, to elicit the central research question. After transcription and coding of the participants' responses, a thematic analysis revealed four key themes: (a) displaying motivational and entrepreneurial spirit, (b) abilities to overcome financial hardships, (c) leveraging information technologies, and (d) addressing major challenges in the United States. The next component includes a detailed analysis of each theme.

Presentation of the Findings

The main research question that guided the study was as follows: What strategies do U.S.-based Togolese business owners engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo need to be successful? I was able to obtain relevant information and data for the study by purposefully sampling small business of Togolese origin for the study. The sample for the study was conducive to the maximum opportunity for repetition and relevance of the findings for achieving the imperative of data saturation (Walker, 2012). Participants met the research criteria of creating a business, which has been in commercial activity for more than five years, and the business involved entrepreneurial activities with Togo. The participants lived in the Washington DC metropolitan area. The 20 U.S.-based Togolese business owners participated in the semistructured interviews.

I emailed to each participant the invitation letter to participate in the study and the consent form. Each participant responded to my email with the phrase, *I consent* and confirm personal involvement in the research study. I conducted all interviews in a two-week period, and each interview lasted no more than 30 minutes. I member-checked the rephrased interpretation of all participants' words, by requesting personal feedback from each participant during and after the interview, to enhance the validity of the results.

I used an assigned code from PP1 to PP20 to identify each participant. After completion of the interviews, I reviewed documents about small and/or immigrant businesses to ensure methodological triangulation. I loaded the transcription of each interview and other relevant documents into NVivo 10 software, to facilitate coding and analysis of themes. In the following section, I have presented the key themes and the findings emanating from each interview question.

Based on the central research question, data analysis of participants' responses led to the identification of 20 core emergent themes, comprising (a) motivation and entrepreneurial attributes, (b) overcoming financial hardship, (c) leveraging information technologies, and (d) addressing challenges in Togo and the United States. According to the Schumpeterian theory, the attributes of entrepreneurial motivation, risk propensity, innovation, managerial and educational skills, and financial abilities distinguish an entrepreneur (Frese & Gielnik, 2014). Also, an entrepreneur is an individual who addresses barriers related to entrepreneurial activities (Sadeghi et al., 2013). The themes emerging from this study may reflect a common set of characteristics and strategies that U.S.-based Togolese immigrant entrepreneurs may need to conduct sustainable businesses.

Theme 1- Motivation and Entrepreneurial characteristics

Motivation. A thematic analysis of the participants' answers to interview question 1 portrayed the motives that often provoke immigrant entrepreneurs participating in the study to venture into setting up personal businesses (See Table 1)

Table 1

Motivational Spirit (Interview Question 1)

Excerpts of Answers to Interview Question #1: How would you describe your motivation for considering being an entrepreneur?	Interpretation & Analysis	Emergent Themes
PP1 "… I worked for long hours, but my income was not enough to pay my bills and take a good care of my family". PP2 "...finding a job was very hard, and the one job I found was very difficult for a little pay." PP11 "But the only job I could find was in the factory and job was very hard and paid $ 9 an hour, ridiculous, right?"	Several participants related motivation to start businesses ventures to how it is hard to find a job in the United States. Many other participants, who were employed, were not also satisfied.	Unemployment or job dissatisfaction provided the impetus to start personal businesses
PP1 "…I decided to become an entrepreneur to have a better life." PP7 "…I came to the conclusion that creating my own business would be the best way to improve my life standards". PP10 "I travel to the United States because it is a land of opportunities where I can improve my standard of living."	Participants consistently asserted that improving personal standard of living was the reason to embrace entrepreneurship. Participants used consistently the phrase "improving standard of living".	The desire to improve personal standard of living inspired business entrepreneurship.
PP20 "…Another motivation for considering being an entrepreneur is the fact that I will be my own boss." PP3 "So I challenged myself not to waste… not working for anybody anymore." PP13 "because I am tired to work for others and make money or them. I want to be me, my own boss and free myself from the pressure of working for a company."	Participants frequently mentioned the willingness to control the source of income or being one's own boss, as the main motivation of running personal businesses.	Seeking greater personal financial control motivated entrepreneurship.
PP13 "…My motivation is also to operate my business and give others the opportunity to rise." PP5 "… would say that my primary motivation is to help people in Africa by creating opportunities for them in better ways. PP6 "I grew up to be a dreamer and have always felt that I have a mission to contribute to my society."	The data analysis revealed also that participants consistently related the motives to become an entrepreneur from the eagerness to help families and communities in Togo.	Residing in an advanced country provided the aspiration to help other in Togo through the creation of personal businesses.

In the data analysis, I used the technical features of NVivo to generate the word clustering and tree projection of the dominant perceptions of participants on the reasons that motivate immigrant individuals to start businesses (Figure 1). The core themes from data analysis revealed the following four perceived motivations for the participants involved in the study: lack of job or job dissatisfaction, improving the standard of living, exercising control and freedom or being one's own boss, and helping less-privileged people.

Bijaoui (2012) observed that motivation is fundamental to running a sustainable business. Motivation has a link to the sustainability of any business (Sullivan & Meek, 2012).

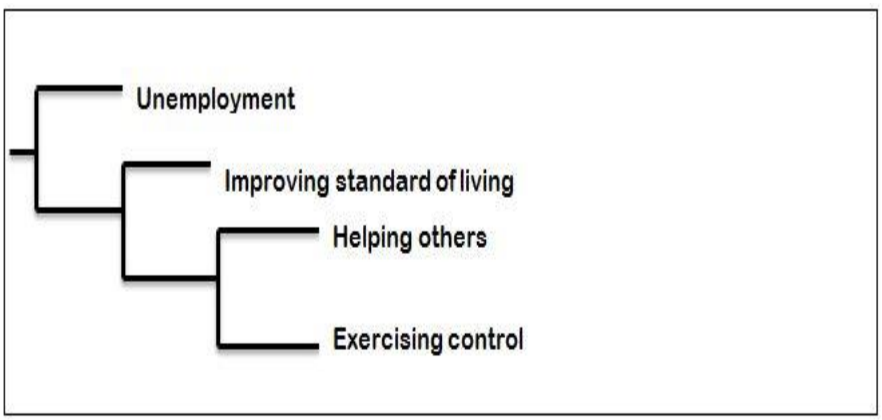

Figure 1. Word clustering depicting the major views of participants on entrepreneurial motivation.

Fourteen participants (Table 2) representing the highest frequency of occurrence, related the motivation to become a business owner to a lack of job or job dissatisfaction. The perception of these 14 participants is congruent with the view of Fatoki and Patswawairi (2012), who defined unemployment or a low-paying job, as push factors that force immigrant individuals to embrace entrepreneurship. From the findings, it appears that Togolese immigrants have ventured into businesses to overcome the job disadvantage suffered in the host country, the United States. Table 1 indicates that 70 % of participants confirmed that unemployment or low-paying job was the major motivation to become an entrepreneur. For example, Participant PP1 stated "… I worked for long hours, but my income was not enough to pay my bills and take a good care of my family." Participant 2, narrating a personal story, noted "...finding a job was very hard, and the one job I found was very difficult for a little pay. These two factors combined have shaped my aspiration to become an entrepreneur." Participant PP11 shared a personal story, "But the only job I could find was in the factory and job was very hard and paid $ 9 an hour, ridiculous, right? So I contemplated running my own business."

Eight participants (Table 2) claimed that they decided to embrace entrepreneurship to elevate personal living standards. Participant PP1, for example, stated, "…I decided to become an entrepreneur to have a better life." Participant PP7 narrated, "… I came to the conclusion that creating my own business would be the best way to improve my life standards". PP10, sharing a personal view, related beyond creating a business, moving to the United States, was in keeping with the quest for improving the quality of life,

> I owned my business in Togo, and I was doing well before I won the Lottery Visa. First, I didn't want to come to this country, but family members and friends advised me to travel to the United States because it is a land of opportunities where I can improve my standard of living. I sold my business and came to the

> Wonderland (laughter), and I started my business. Therefore, that was my motivation if I can say so.

Six participants related the motivation to create and operate their own business for altruistic reasons. Nkongolo-Bakenda and Chrysostome (2013) observed that altruism is one of the major reason that leads individuals from the diaspora to venture into entrepreneurship. Participants confirmed that they became entrepreneurs to help less-privileged people in Togo. Participant PP13 observed “My motivation is also to operate my business and give others the opportunity to rise.” Participant PP5 stated, “I would say that my primary motivation is to help people in Africa by creating opportunities for them in better ways.” Four participants asserted that the motivation of creating their own business came from the desire to exercise control and freedom or be their own boss. Participant PP13 stated, “I want to be me, my own boss and free myself from the pressure of working for a company that does not value you.” Participant PP20 also shared his perception, “Another motivation for considering being an entrepreneur is the fact that I will be my own boss.”

Table 2

Frequency of Emergent Themes: Perceived Motivation

Motivation	*N*	% of Participants
Lack of job or Job dissatisfaction	14	70
Improving standard of living	8	40
Altruism or helping other	6	30
Exercising control and freedom or Being own boss	4	20

Emergent entrepreneurial characteristics. An analysis of participants' responses to interview questions 4, 5, and 6 revealed the emergent themes in respect of the entrepreneurial attributes needed for immigrant business owners to be successful (See Table 3).

Table 3

Entrepreneurial Characteristics (Interview Questions 4, 5, 6)

Excerpts of Answers to Interview Question # 4: What was your perception of the risk you are taking, in the decision to become a business owner?	Interpretation & Analysis	Emergent Themes
PP1 "didn't think about risk…" PP2 "I know that there is a risk in any human undertaking." PP7 stated that: "There is a risk in everything you plan to do. I know it is risky to own a business." PP18 "…I knew that there was a risk, but my willingness to succeed was stronger."	An analysis of the responses indicated that all the participants did not consider the risk to venturing into personal businesses. The perceptions of the	Willingness to take measured risk, reflects willingness for moderate risk propensity.

	participants were congruent with extensive view of literature on immigrant risk propensity.	
Excerpts of answers to Interview Question # 6: How would you attribute the relevance of your background and education to your business endeavor?		
PP3 "…I have a bachelor in finance. With this educational ability, I have managed my money to be where I am today." PP4"…I have an MBA in project management, which has been very fruitful to me in readability of my business, and take necessary action when needed." PP10 "I have an associate degree in business administration, and an accountant certificate. I can tell you today that my education has been very relevant to my business."	Participants viewed formal entrepreneurial education as important in establishing sustainable businesses. Many participants related success to a bachelor degree in business.	Entrepreneurial education important in setting up businesses in the United States involving commerce with Togo.
Excerpts of Answers to Interview Question # 5: What from your experience are the managerial skills necessary to conduct sustainable businesses?		
PP6 "Leadership is the key." PP11 "you have to be on the top of everything regarding your enterprise." PP14 "Leadership is another important ability."	Some participants pointed out that leadership is a critical trait to be successful.	Leadership and personal drive, important for an entrepreneur.
PP5 "First and foremost, self-confidence." PP6 "it is self-confidence and courage." PP9 "I would say run your business with confidence." PP15 "Self-confidence is the key managerial skill that can make someone a successful entrepreneur."	Other participants claimed self-confidence as a vital attribute for immigrant entrepreneurs to be successful.	Self-confidence, an important attribute for sustainable businesses.
PP4 "You have to be alert to recognize and address any single signal." PP2 "Being a visionary… is very important" PP20 ". Importantly, the business owner needs to be proactive, visionary, flexible, and adaptable".	Participants' responses revealed that being visionary as an important characteristic to operate sustainable ventures.	Vision important characteristic for business sustainability.

Figure 4 indicates the word frequency in participants' responses to the question, on how participants relate personal success to some entrepreneurial characteristics. The perceived entrepreneurial characteristic that emerged were: (a) risk propensity, (b) entrepreneurial education, (c) self-confidence, (d) leadership, and (e) vision.

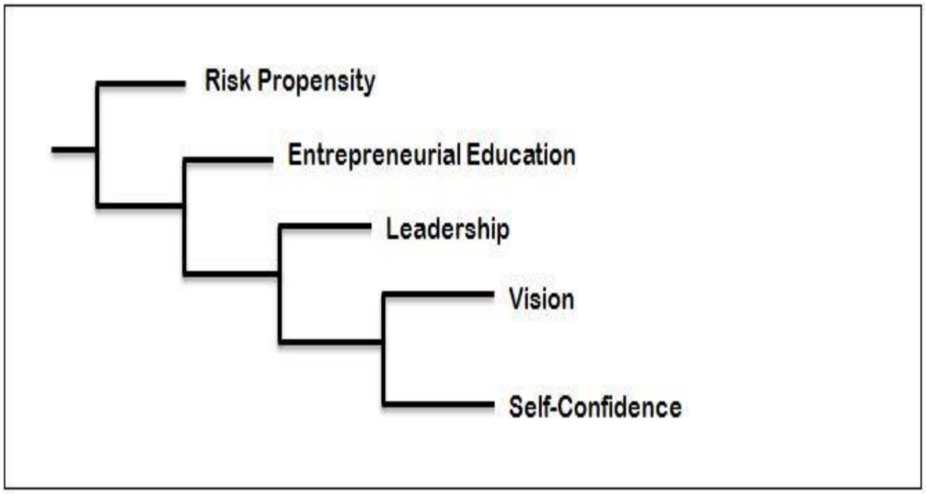

Figure 2. Word clustering depicting the major participants' views on entrepreneurial characteristics.

Table 4 reflects the numbers of participants who relate business sustainability to each entrepreneurial attribute.

Table 4

Frequency of Perceived Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Characteristics	*N*	% of Participants
Risk propensity	20	100
Entrepreneurial education	14	70
Leadership	8	40
Self-confidence	7	35
Vision	6	30

Risk propensity. Participants, in response to question 4 on the awareness of the risk in creating personal businesses, displayed various views. For some participants such as PP4 there was "a big risk", others participant such as PP1 "didn't think about risk…" All participants, however, were unanimous that risk-taking is a key entrepreneurial characteristic. The perceptions of the U.S.-based Togolese business owner involved in this study is congruent with the view of the literature on immigrant business owners' risk propensity. Gedajlovic et al., (2013) observed that immigrant entrepreneurs often have more than the usual amount of ambition, courage, resourcefulness, and bravado, which enable them to have a higher likelihood of taking risks and starting a business. Most of the participants observed that all the human existence is about taking risks (PP2, PP13, and PP18). Participant PP2 observed that: "I know that there is a risk in any human undertaking. But I know also that it is up to the undertaker to strive to make the risk irrelevant." PP7 stated, "There is a risk in everything you plan to do. I know it is risky to own a business."

Most of the participants while sharing perceptions acknowledged awareness of the risk, however seemed undaunted in venturing to start business. For example, PP18 stated that: "I knew that there was a risk, but my willingness to succeed was stronger." PP11 claimed that: "With the eagerness of owning my business at that moment, the potential risk meant nothing to me."

Entrepreneurial education. Interview question 6 involved gaining insight into the impact of formal entrepreneurial education on business sustainability. Table 4 indicates that 14 individuals representing 70% of the participants attributed personal success to a formal entrepreneurial education. Six participants acknowledged not having formal business education; however, related success to prior business experience. For example, Participant PP6 narrated, "…I have to admit that I didn't have a lot of education, business degree or anything relevant in that domain. However, my business heritage contributed enormously to my success. Business is not only about book knowledge."

The perception of the 14 participants is congruent with the views of literature on the relevance of a formal business education for business sustainability. Nasr and Boujelbene (2014) observed that developing training and academic programs in the small business ownership field is critical to enhancing the educational needs of potential small business owners. Donellon et al. (2014) argued that the enrollment in entrepreneurial courses trigger an individual's aspiration to embrace entrepreneurship and to construct an entrepreneurial identity. For example, Participant PP3 claimed, "I have a bachelor in finance. With this educational ability, I have managed my money to be where I am today.” PP4 stated, “…I have an MBA in project management, which has been very fruitful to me in readability of my business, and take necessary action when needed.”

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Participants' Views on the Entrepreneurial Education to Influence the Sustainability of Togolese-owned Businesses

Code	*N*	% of Participants
Formal education	14	70
No formal education	6	30

Note: *N* = 20

The frequency of distribution of the degree earned by participants with formal education, as shown in Figure 1, indicated that nine business owners, representing 65% of the respondents, held at least a bachelor degree, including two Master’s degrees. Three participants held an associate degree, and two a business specialized high school diploma. The outcome of the data analysis challenges the study of Lin and Tao (2012) who describe a successful immigrant business owner as an individual holding a Master’s degree or higher. The views of participants in this research indicated a minimum of a

Table 6

Distribution of Perceived Degree Earned for Participants with Formal Education

Degree Earned	*N*	% of Participants
Master's	2	15
Bachelor	7	50
Associate	3	20
Specialized business high school diploma	2	15

Note*:* *N* = 14

Leadership. Eight participants mentioned leadership as key entrepreneurial characteristic (See Table 6). Osman et al. (2011) contended that leadership skills are critical for small business owners to be successful. Participants related their success to effective leadership. For Participant PP6, "Leadership is the key". Regarding leadership, Participant PP11 thought, "You have to on the top of everything regarding your enterprise."

Self-confidence. Self-confidence is another core theme that emerged from the data analysis. Seven participants attributed sustainable businesses ventures to self-confidence. Halim, Muda, and Amin (2011) observed that self-confidence plays a critical role in an entrepreneurial endeavor, especially to address new challenges. Participants in this study concurred with the view of Halim et al. (2011), mentioning self-confidence as a key entrepreneurial characteristic. For example, Participant PP5 stated, "First and foremost, self-confidence. Because you have to trust in yourself before you can make a good decision or a bad one. Self-confidence is primary." To operate a sustainable business, Participant PP9 advised, "…run your business with confidence…" while PP8 suggested, "You have to hang on tight there will be some events, that will deflate you but never give up and the success will be yours."

Vision. The vision was also a core characteristic that participants perceived as essential to conduct sustainable businesses. For Participant PP2, "Being a visionary, I mean anticipating one's business outcomes and addressing them is very important managerial skill, to conduct successful business operations." In the same vein, Participant PP6 recommended, "You need to have a good vision about the direction in which you want to steer your business. Although PP4 did not use the word vision, the thematic analysis revealed personal view, "You have to learn from the past to manage the present, and to predict the future. You have to be alert to recognize and address any single signal."

Theme 2- Financial Hardships

The purpose of interview question 3 was to determine the participants' views on strategies in primarily funding businesses. Table 6 represents a portrayal of the thematic analysis of the responses and the consequent emergent themes on participants' business funding strategies and insights.

Table 7

Addressing Financial Hardship (Interview Question 3)

Excerpts of Answers to Interview Question # 3: How would you describe the way you initially financed your business?	Interpretation & Analysis	Emergent Themes
PP15 “banks are no more willing to grant loans to immigrant business owners…” PP1 “I want to have a loan at the bank to start my business but I was turned down.” PP16 “I realized that the requirements of these banks are directed to not granting me the loan.” PP20 “banks are no longer eager to finance immigrants’ business. I tried to get some bank loans, but it was not successful.” PP19 “Nowadays, banks are very careful now granting a little to zero loans to immigrants now.”	Participants felt that being foreign-born constituted a roadblock for securing business loans.	Financial assistance difficult for foreign nationals and immigrants.
PP3 “I have the money ready…I did not have to beg banks for loans or anybody else I was the luckiest one”. PP1 “I use money from my saving account.” PP5 “I did it through my own personal savings.” PP8 “To finance my business, I used money from by saving account.” PP11 “To finance my business, I use money from my personal savings in the United States and Togo.	Several participants indicated personal finances and loans from friends and families a way to negotiate lack of funding.	Resourcefulness critical in combatting the lack of financial assistance from lending institutions.
PP2 “While I was applying for $20, 000, the bank was able to grant me $ 5,000.” PP7 “After waiting for more than a month, they came back, and told me that they will give me $ 8000 instead of the $ 25000, I was applying for”. PP4: “To finance my business, I got a loan from the bank, but that was not enough to fulfill my business plan”.	A significant number of participants indicated that loan amount from banks were insufficient for meaningful investment into the business.	Resourcefulness critical in combatting the lack of financial assistance from lending institutions

Figure 3, generated by Nvivo, depicts the participants shared perceptions on financing businesses ventures.

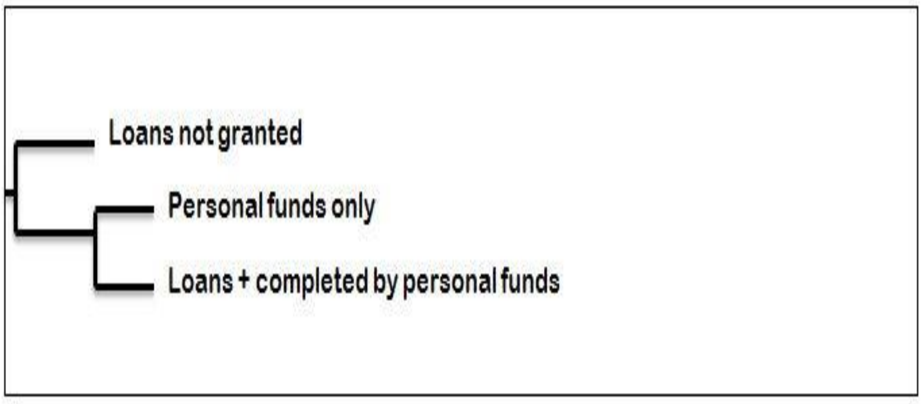

Figure 3. Word clustering depicting the major participants' views on sources of financing.

Boateng, Muhammed, and Abdulrahman (2013) observed that financing is critical to operating sustainable businesses ventures. I coded the emergent themes in three categories. The first category coded, *Only loans from bank*, involved participants who financed ventures exclusively with loans from banks and other financial institutions. The second category coded, *Insufficient loans completed by personal money*, included participants who received some loans that were insufficient and consequently had to use personal money to start the business. The third category coded, *Only personal money*, involved participants who used funding other than loans from banks and financial institutions. This category includes money from saving accounts, friends and family. Table 8 reflects the frequency of distribution of the sources of financing.

Table 8

Frequency of Distribution of Perceived Sources of Financing

Source of Financing	*N*	% of Participants
Only loans from bank	1	5
Insufficient loans completed by personal money	6	30
Only personal money	13	65

Note: *N* = 20

Lack of finance from banks and financial institutions was also one theme that emerged from the commonly shared views of all the participants. Most of the participants noted that having access to adequate funding to finance businesses had been challenging to them. PP1 stated, “I want to have a loan at the bank to start my business, but I was turned down.” PP16 narrated, “I request loans from banks and financial institutions; I realized that the requirements of these banks are directed to not granting me the loan.” PP20 added, “I tried to get some bank loans, but it was not successful.” PP1, PP16, PP20 and other participants expressed willingness to be funded; however, they failed to obtain a loan from banks and financial institutions. PP20 has provided an explanation of the perceived financial hardship,

> Having an appropriate and constant source of financing is essential to have a sustainable business. However, finding the source of financing such as a bank is difficult for an immigrant in my case. The reason is that banks used to finance immigrants’ businesses, but in the past years some immigrants defaulted in their

> payments and others vanished without paying back their loans. For this reason, banks are no longer eager to finance immigrants' business.

Some participants, such as Participants PP2, PP4, PP7, PP17, and PP18, recognized having received some loans from banks and financial institutions. All of them, however, denoted the insufficiency of the amount of the granted. Participant PP2 stated, "While I was applying for $20, 000, the bank was able to grant me $ 5,000." For Participant PP7, "After waiting for more than a month, they came back, and told me that they will give me $ 8000 instead of the $ 25000, I was applying for". In the words of Participant PP4, "To finance my business, I got a loan from the bank, but that was not enough to fulfill my business plan." In addition to the insufficient amount of loans, participants narrated that they faced difficulties in applying and obtaining funding. Participant PP16 found, "the requirements of these banks are directed to not granting me the loan."

From all the 20 participants involved in this study, 10 applied for a loan from banks and financial institutions to finance personal businesses. Two participants were not granted the loan, seven participants received an insufficient and only one participant, PP19 had a sufficient loan to finance the business startup. PP19 recognized, "At this time, things were very good, I went to the bank, and applied for a loan, which I was granted in few days. They gave me enough money to start my business." Although the amount received from the bank was sufficient to fund the business, PP19 made a comment that clarifies the perception of banks regarding financing immigrant-owned businesses,

> At that time bank still trusted immigrants, to grant them good loans. Later on, when immigrants took consistent loans from banks to go to their countries and not come back. Nowadays, banks are very careful now granting a little to zero loans to immigrants now.

The perception of Participant PP19 on the reason why it is hard for immigrant business owners to obtain loans from banks and financial institutions, is congruent with the standpoint of Participant PP20, who stated, "Banks used to finance immigrants' businesses, but in the past years some immigrants defaulted in payments and others vanished without paying back oans. For this reason, banks are no longer eager to finance immigrants' business."

Even participants who have not considered financing their business through loans from banks or other financial institutions pointed out the hardship of obtaining funds. Participant PP3, for example, noted, "I have the money ready…I did not have to beg banks for loans or anybody else I was the luckiest one".

All the participants involved in this study, except PP19, asserted having used other sources to finance partially or totally for personal businesses ventures, to overcome financial hardship from banks and financial institutions. This alternative source of funding ranged from personal savings to tontines, described by Participant PP17,

> I participated in a community financial system called Tontine or Soussou, depending on the countries, what it is simple. You have a group of a minimum 10 up to 30 people and decide on the amount to be contributed and the frequency: weekly, biweekly or monthly according to the member financial capability. For

example, $200 biweekly with 20 members for a total of $4000. The money goes to the first member to use for whatever financial situation they are in.

Eleven participants from among the 20 participants in the study recognized using exclusively other sources than loans from banks and eight business owners completed the insufficient loans from banks. It comes out from the participants' story that the most used alternative source of funding is the business owner personal money, and 15 participants funded personal businesses in this way. For example, Participant PP3 stated, "To finance my business, I have the money ready; I mean the money I won at the lottery." Participant PP7 used "some personal savings and some money pulled from my IRA." Other participants such as PP4, PP5, and PP8 were more specific using the phrase "personal savings" or "personal saving account."

The second most used source of financing used by Togolese immigrant business owners is money from friends and family members. Six participants received funds from friends and family to start their venture. Participant PP2, for example, stated, "…I asked my family members back home to lend me some money". PP14 recognized, "Hitting up family and friends is the most common way to finance a start-up in Africa." Three participants PP20, PP5, and PP4 mentioned the use of "---credit cards…" Two participants have used the tontine, a rotating community-based credit system, which should be an avenue to explore in funding immigrant-owned businesses.

I triangulated participants' views against reports from the SBA and the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA). A review of SBA (2012) and MBDA (2014) indicated that in the United States, foreign- born individuals are more likely to use personal or family savings to fund businesses ventures. According to SBA (2012), and MBDA (2014), approximatively two third of immigrant entrepreneurs, finance business startups with personal or family savings. The interviews and data analysis revealed that 19 participants funded business startups with personal or family savings, among whom 13 utilized exclusively personal or family money to start businesses. The perceptions of the participants were, therefore, congruent with the data from the SBA and MBDA.

Theme 3- The Use Information Technologies

The use of information technologies was another major theme that emerged from the data analysis in term of frequency of occurrence as shown in Figure 4.

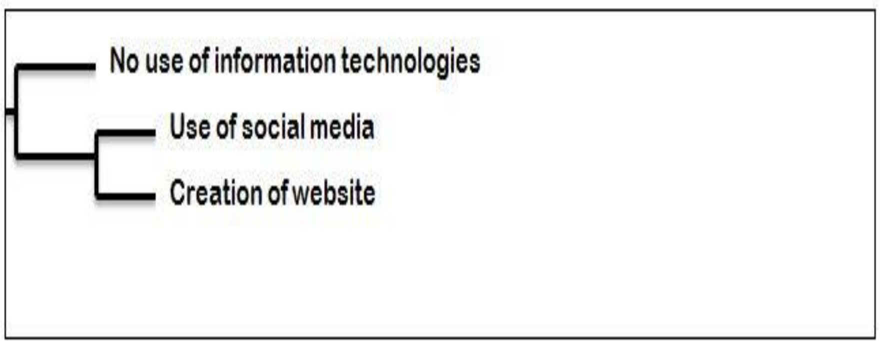

Figure 4. Word clustering depicting the major views of participants on the use of information technologies.

Table 9 represents a depiction of the themes that emerged from the analysis of participants' perceptions, in responding to interview questions 2 and 7, regarding the use of innovative strategies.

Table 9

Leveraging Information Technologies (Interview Questions 2, 7)

Excerpts of Answer to Interview Question #2: What innovative strategies, if any, have contributed to the success of your business? / Interview Question # 7: what are the important strategies you have used to sustain your business past the first 5 years?	Interpretation & Analysis	Emergent Themes
PP6 "…, I opened a Twitter account and created a Facebook profile to connect to the world…" PP14 "New growth strategies continue to appear – ideas for innovating and most importantly reaching out to new customers through social media – Twitter, Facebook, and others." PP17 "… I also used Facebook to get in touch". PP2 **"**My innovative strategy consisted of putting stress on the use of the use of the new information technologies"	Several participants related success to the use of social media for business purposes.	Technologies and computer literacy/ adeptness critical, optimal use of social media.
PP7 "I have created a website that I use for advertising and promoting my business. I use also that website as a bridge with my potential customers in Togo..." PP19 "The innovative strategy I used, is the creation of a website for my business, which helped me a lot for transactions and advertising." PP3 "I have created a website…" PP4 "…. I have created a website where potential customers..."	Participants also consistently perceived the creation of website as key for immigrant business owners to run sustainable businesses.	Presence on the World Wide Web critical to business visibility and recognition.

Fourteen participants, as indicated in Table 10, confirmed that the use of information technologies played a critical role in the success of their respective businesses while six business owners noted not having used any innovative strategy. For example, PP9 stated, "I am just doing business no innovation. I just buy stuff sell them and make the maximum of profits." PP11 opined, "I did not think I have used any innovative strategy, I just follow my gut and thank God it has worked for me till now."

Table 10

Frequency of distribution of Perceived Use of Information Technologies

Use of Information Technologies	*N*	% of Participants
Yes	14	70
No	6	30

Note: *N* = 20

A thematic analysis of responses to interview questions 2 and 7 revealed two sub-themes for the use of the internet to promote one's business. The first sub-theme involves the use social media and the second the creation of a website.

The use of social media was another major theme that emerged from the analysis of participants' responses to the interview question 2. Ten participants related the success of the business to the use of social media. The perception of the participants is congruent with the view of literature on the use of social media to promote businesses. Aral, Dellarocas, and Godes (2013) noted that deploying social media has a positive impact on business outcomes, especially for marketing and advertising while Guesalaga (2015) observed that adopting social media helps to improve sales and sales management. For example, Participant PP14 stated, "New growth strategies continue to appear – ideas for innovating and most importantly reaching out to new customers through social media – Twitter, Facebook, and others." PP17 observed, "I also used Facebook to get in touch with potential clients, friends and family member who in turn shared on their pages."

From the 14 participants who recognized using the internet for the business, Participants PP3, PP4, PP7, PP8, PP17, and PP19, in sharing their perceptions, related the sustainability of their businesses, to the creation a website. For example, PP19 noted, "The innovative strategy I used, is the creation of a website for my business, which helped me a lot for transactions and advertising." Participant PP7 was more explicit, stating, "… I have created a website that I use for advertising and promoting my business. I use also that website as a bridge with my potential customers in Togo, who can even order products through the website." It appears that the creation of a website an effective way to businesses visible in Togo and the United States. Participant PP4 perceived the creation of a website as a good way to conduct business operations stating,

> I have created a website where potential customers can go to see the goods I offer, make their selection, and even order their product and make an electronic payment. Which is a good thing because you have more of your money directly, and have less in the person you trust, because you never know.

Theme 4- The Dual Business Environment: The United States and Togo

The two environment where the international entrepreneurs operate differ significantly in in terms of level of development, political and legal aspects, sociocultural dimension, and technological development (Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2013). A thematic analysis of participants' shared perceptions to interview question 8, on challenges encountered in Togo and the United States respectively, revealed four major themes of corruption, lack of physical presence in Togo, linguistic barriers, and discrimination in the United States. (See Table 11).

Table 11

Dual Business Environment

Excerpts of Answers to Interview Question # 8: How do you relate your entrepreneurial endeavor to some challenges you experienced in Togo and / or the United States? How did you address these challenges?	Interpretation & Analysis	Emergent Themes
PP3 "…the business environment is not as regulated as it is in the United States." "…if you don't bribe things will not be easy for you." PP1, PP3, and PP17 "high corruption", PP14, "lot of corruption", PP5," corruption is major". PP4" The challenge in Togo, is that the overall environment is a mess…. The administrative environment is very corrupted"	Participants consistently viewed corruption as the main challenge in the Togolese business environment. Participants' perceptions on business ethics, were congruent with the reports of Transparency International (2015) and Heritage International (2016).	Corruption in Togo is very prevalent, a way of life, and almost unavoidable.
PP2 stated: "The challenge in Togo, is your physical absence there." PP11 "… your asset is at risk because everyone wants to become rich." PP8 "In Togo, the challenge is to have someone trustworthy that will take care of your business." PP13 "my challenge was to have people I can trust and who can run the business in my absence."	Participants also stressed on a lack of physical presence in Togo as significant challenge in maintaining businesses	Lack of physical presence in Togo can present challenges in running the business.
PP11 "The challenge here in the United States is that if you cannot speak American English fluently as they do…" PP12 "… in the United States. being a black man starting a business is very difficult because of discrimination". PP14 "…and the language barrier adds to the woes". PP2 "therefore native entrepreneurs are more favored as compared to us". PP4 "We immigrant most of the time, we have to deal with language and cultural barriers."	The French being the lingua franca of Togo, the American English, presented a challenge to participants in conducting businesses in the United States	Linguistic and cultural barriers in the United States impose challenges for non-native English entrepreneurs.
PP1" the United States is having access to loans as banks and financial institutions are very discriminative PP9 "When they hear our English they know that we are not from here, and then our tribulations start." PP14" In the United States "I am seen as an outsider."	Several participants experienced discrimination in the United States in respect of obtaining financial assistance.	Some degree of discrimination in the United States is an accepted fact.

All participants shared personal views on business with respect to Togo as the home country, and the United States as the host country. Lin and Tao (2012) observed that a significant advantage for immigrant entrepreneurs was the possibility to draw resources from both home and host countries.

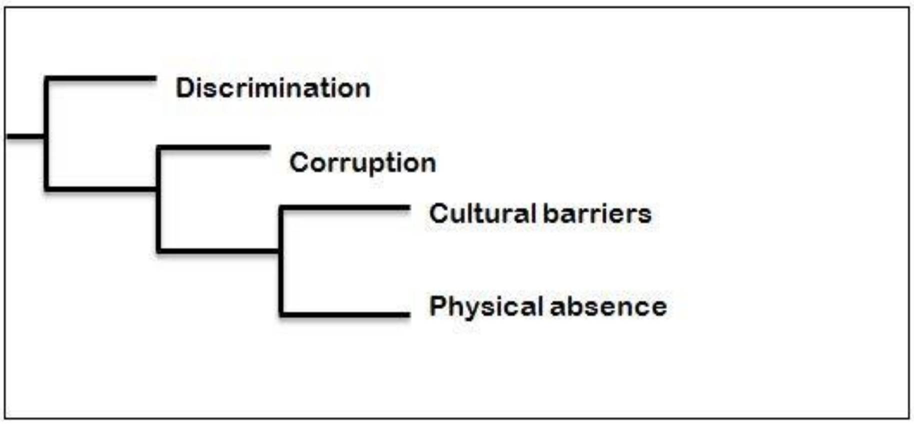

Figure 5. Word clustering depicting the major views participants on challenges experienced in the dual business environment.

In response to question 8 and 9, several participants related their success to overcoming challenges experienced in Togo and the United States. Figure 5 represents the word frequency in participants' responses. The data analysis revealed two core themes namely corruption in the overall business environment and physical absence in Togo; and two themes, discrimination and linguistic barrier in the United States as the host country.

Business environment in Togo.

Corruption. All the participants perceived Togo as an untapped market, eager to purchase goods and service from the United States. For example, Participant PP1 stated," The opportunity in Togo is that there is an untapped market that prefers the high quality of products from the United States as compared to China." PP7 related his success to the Togolese business environment as "… an emerging market with a lot of potential customers." For PP19, "The opportunity in Togo is that there is a large market that respects a lot of products from the United States. Participants observed, however, that the Togolese business environment reflects several challenges to overcome to conduct a sustainable business in Togo. The core themes that emerged from the data analysis were namely: (a) corruption, and (b) physical absence in Togo.

Table 12

Frequency of distribution of Perceived Challenges in Togo

Challenges	*N*	% of Participants
Corruption in the business environment	17	85
Physical absence in Togo	9	45

Seventeen participants representing 85% of all participants viewed corruption as the greatest challenge in Togo to overcome to operate successful businesses ventures (See Table 12). The shared perceptions of these participants are congruent with the view of Mogens and Bjørnskov (2014), who argued that individuals in poor African countries, are more likely to experience having to pay bribes to government officials. For example, PP3 comparing the Togolese and the United States stated, "…the business environment is not as regulated as it is in the United States." Participant PP9 describe the situation through commonly used allegory used in Togo to describe the situation, "… you have to put a stone on your file, if not the wind will blow it away... That means if you don't bribe things will not be easy for you." It came out of the data analysis that participants used various words to express the high level of corruption in the country. Participants PP1, PP3, and PP17 used the phrase "high corruption,", PP14, "lot of corruption," PP5," corruption is major," Participant PP4 stated, " The challenge in Togo, is that the overall environment is a mess. Excuse me the term. The administrative environment is very corrupted; I mean from A to Z."

I deployed methodical triangulation to confirm the responses from participants. A comparison of participants' perception of corruption against data from the Global Corruption Report (GRC) by Transparency International, confirmed the level of corruption in Togo. According to Transparency International (2015), Togo is 47th, in ranking among the top 50 most corrupted country in the word. Using another source, Heritage International (2016), Togo had a low score of 29 over 100 in freedom from corruption (0 being totally corrupted, and 100, corruption free). It appears that Togo, as shared by participants, reflects a high level of corruption.

I used also the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1988) to view the responses from the participants. The intent here was not to stereotype the Togolese business environment, rather to confirm participants' perceptions. Togo reflects a high power distance culture, which often means, according to Hofstede (1988), an autocratic government that does not ensure equality of power, the tax system protects the wealthy, and power and inequality are facts. In general, people feel more threatened with a weaker perceived uncertainty avoidance culture. In Togo, there is a low uncertainty avoidance culture. In such a culture, there is less need for written rules, as a less elaborate legal system exists, and hierarchical structures or rules could be broken for pragmatic reasons (Hofstede, 1988). Togo reflects also a low level of individualism, low long-term and high masculinity culture, which explain the perceptions of participants on the Togolese business environment.

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed that, although 85% of all participants claimed that corruption is a great challenge in Togo, there was no core clear solution to address the issue. The responses were diverse and vague. For example, as solution to the corruption PP1 stated, "… I strive my best to do the right thing…meaning doing lawful things", while PP3 thought, "You have to build relationship with people in the government that will be able to help you, you understand, sometimes you have to offer them gifts such as watches, cellphones, computers and others." From the participants' view, there is no clear line between bribing or not Togolese officials. For Participant PP9: "…you have to have strong connections in Togo." PP10 opined, "To address this issue, I always try to balance corruption and righteousness. Because if you don't bribe you will lose a lot, which is harmful for the business."

A review of the Code of Conduct of the Foreign Practice Corruption Act (FPCA) indicated U.S.-based businesses should not use gifts or bribery to obtain favor, and failure to comply with the provisions of the FPCA could imply civil and criminal charges. It appears that U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs who operate in Togo face a dilemma in ensuring sustainability to businesses. In Togo, dealing with corruption is unavoidable to run sustainable businesses while it is prohibited in the United States.

The Physical Absence in Togo. Another core theme that emerged from the data analysis for the participants was the lack of physical presence in Togo. Nine participants out of 20 involved in the study perceived the physical absence in Togo, as a challenge to overcome to conduct sustainable businesses. Participants narrated that residing permanently in the United States is conducive to being absent in Togo to follow the daily activities of one's businesses. For example, Participant PP2 stated, "The challenge in Togo, is your physical absence there." Participant PP8 in his response to interview question 8, explained,

> In Togo, the challenge is to have someone trustworthy that will take care of your business. I say that because if you leave your business in the hands of someone who will not take care of your business in a proper way, you will lose a lot, I mean your business can collapse easily.

Participant PP11 shared the same view as PP8 stating, "…in Togo, is that there is a high level of poverty, for this reason, your asset is at risk because everyone wants to become rich." From the data analysis, it appears that all the nine participants who indexed physical absence as a challenge, proposed to visit Togo at least twice a year and/or finding a trustworthy person in Togo as the solution. For example, Participant PP11 stated, "The solution to this problem is to have a trustworthy person in Togo, and you have to travel often to Togo."

The business environment in the United States. Eleven participants (Table 13) viewed discrimination as a great challenge experienced in the United States. The linguistic barrier and hardship in speaking and /or understanding the American English, was another emergent theme from the data analysis. Immigrant individual confront new beliefs, norms and behaviors in the institutional business environment of the country of settlement (Riddle & Brinkerhoff, 2011).

Table 13

The frequency of distribution of Perceived Challenges in the United States.

Challenges	*N*	% of Participants
Discrimination	11	65
Linguistic barriers	9	45

Discrimination. The findings in Table 13 indicated that 65% of participants perceived discrimination as a great challenge they faced in the United States. Most of the participants, such as PP3 and PP4, talking about discrimination, regarded themselves as “immigrant, foreign-born” as compared to native-born individuals. For example, PP3 stated, “In the United States, as a foreign-born individual we immigrant, we are subject to any kind of discrimination with people you will have to meet in your business journey.” Participants PP17 and PP18 referred to themselves as “African,” PP17 and PP18 as “minority”. PP12 claimed a discrimination based on the race, “Here in the United States being a black man starting a business is very difficult because of discrimination. Sometimes, people just treat you as you come from another planet; they just see horns on your head.”

Several participants made suggestions to overcome the discrimination in order to conduct sustainable businesses ventures. Participant PP20 shared, “I tried to integrate the

American society." PP19 and PP18 also used the word "integration." PP11 suggested, "To address this challenge, you have to show them you are worth it. I try to be effective in everything I do for my business." Participant PP20 mentioned networking as a way of overcoming discrimination in the United States also, Participants PP2, PP8, PP11, PP15, and PP16, in response to the interview question 10, on concluding remarks, pointed out the creation of a Togolese network to support peers. For example, Participant PP16 stated,

> The information I would like to point out is the importance of the creation of a Togolese network that can provide support to nascent Togolese entrepreneurs to be successful. For example, I got my financial support from an Indian network, why not such a structure for us, people from Togo. I would really like to see this as a recommendation of your research.

Linguistic barrier. The linguistic barrier is another core theme in the frequency of occurrence. Nine participants, as shown in Table 13, related their success in overcoming the linguistic challenge that immigrant business owners experience in the United States business environment. Participant PP11 opined, "The challenge here in the United States is that if you cannot speak American English fluently as they do, I mean if you speak with what they call accent, business partners, banks, and other don't take you serious." Participant PP10 observed, "The language also has been a roadblock for me, or don't understand them, or they don't understand me, that was tough." PP9 in the same vein, stated, "When they hear our English they know that we are not from here, and then our tribulations start."

To overcome the linguistic barrier, PP3 suggested, “Nevertheless, you have to stay strong and prove wrong anyone who tries to underestimate you,” while PP4 shared his perception, “A good strategy to overcome these challenges is always to try to be best in what you are doing.” Regarding solutions to the linguistic barriers, PP10 remarked, “But now we understand each other very well as took some business and English classes.”

Applications to Professional Practice

In the United States, although immigrants are more likely to start a business, immigrant-owned ventures are more likely to fail as compared to others (SBA, 2012). The main purpose of this study was to explore the strategies needed for U.S.-based Togolese business owners, engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo, to conduct sustainable businesses ventures. The findings of this research indicated that business owners must display motivation, and some entrepreneurial characteristics or attributes, to overcome financial hardships and other challenges. The strategies to overcome these challenges may include using information technologies and other innovative approaches to addressing some of the major challenges faced by these entrepreneurs in the United States and Togo. The findings of this study may apply to Togolese entrepreneurs living in the Washington DC Metropolitan area, and could be of value for all Togolese business owners in the United States.

The discoveries from this research can be useful to Togolese individuals who are contemplating to start new business ventures. The findings can also be useful to Togolese entrepreneurs who are struggling for business survival, to be successful. This qualitative research involved a smaller sample size; therefore, the study findings may not be generalizable to the entire population of Togolese entrepreneurs in the United States, as would be more likely for a quantitative study with a large sample size. However, the findings can be useful to immigrant entrepreneurs of some West African coastal countries such as Benin and the Ivory Coast. These countries reflect similar business environments as Togo, with a high level of poverty, unemployment, and corruption; immigrant business owners from these countries also show similar immigration propensities in seeking a better quality of life by immigrating to North America to improve personal standards of living.

Implications for Social Change

The primary goal of this research was to provide an enlightened view of strategies required for U.S.-based Togolese small business owners to be successful beyond the first five years. This study may be of significance for several reasons. The research may contribute to positive social change as the findings could help U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs to be successful. From the data analysis, it appeared that unemployment/job dissatisfaction, and improving the standard of living were the two dominant reasons that motivated Togolese entrepreneurs to venture into entrepreneurship. Sustainable Togolese-owned ventures could contribute to address unemployment or job dissatisfaction suffered by immigrants in the United States. Successful business ownership could imply individual and community economic empowerment that can help entrepreneurs of Togolese origin to improve the standard of living that was the was the perceived aspiration of the participants.

The SBA (2014) recognized that immigrant-owned businesses play a significant role in the United States. The findings and discoveries of this study may also contribute to social change as sustainable immigrant-owned businesses are an important source of job creation, innovation, and economic growth in the United States (Wang & Liu, 2015). Helping individuals and/or communities back home, was another perceived key motivation shared by participants. Also, Vaaler (2013) observed that the diaspora plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of the home country through investments, remittances, and job creation. This research may, therefore, contribute to social change in Togo as successful business owners from the diaspora may send remittances, invest, and create jobs in the home country.

Recommendations for Action

This research may be a wake-up call for U.S.-based Togolese business owners involved in entrepreneurial activities in Togo, to leverage opportunities, and overcome challenges for sustainable businesses. The shared perceptions revealed that Togolese immigrant owners should: (a) display motivation and entrepreneurial characteristics, (b) strive to overcome financial hardship, (c) leverage information technologies, and (d) address challenges in the United States and Togo respectively.

The following represent the recommendations formulated from the analysis of the participants' perceptions on strategies needed to run sustainable businesses ventures. The first recommendation is that U.S.-based Togolese business owners must be motivated and entrepreneurial in outlook.

Bijaoui (2012) observed that motivation is the backbone of any entrepreneurial endeavor, and is interdependent with other characteristics. The findings of the study indicated that to be successful business owners must reflect attributes such as risk propensity, vision, self-confidence, leadership, and entrepreneurial education. Togolese business owners should strive to have a formal business education. Fourteen participants representing 70% related sustainability of their businesses to a formal business education, which is compliments the view of Zakic et al. (2012), who argued that individuals are not born entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurial education is a critical factor that makes entrepreneurs.

The second recommendation is that Togolese individuals who are thinking to start or are already in business must find alternative funding strategies to overcome the scarcity of loans from banks and other financial institutions. For example, in this study, Participant PP16 shared the difficulty in securing the necessary funding to start a business, and was fortunate to secure a loan from an Indian business network through a friend. Togolese business owners should create an ethnic network that would provide support to the members and potential entrepreneurs as recommended by five participants in the concluding remarks.

The third recommendation involves the use of information technologies by Togolese business owners to promote businesses. Dellarocas and Godes (2013) suggested that deploying social media has a positive impact on business outcomes. As shared by participants, the creation of a website and/or using social media were critical for business sustainability.

The fourth recommendation is that U.S.-based Togolese business owners are conducting entrepreneurial activities in Togo should strive to address the major challenges in the home and host countries. To address the lack of physical absence in Togo, business owners should strive to travel often back home to control business activities. Regarding the high level of corruption in Togo, U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs must try their best to avoid subversive activities, as the non-compliance with the FPCA may be subject to civil or criminal sentences or/ and fines. In the United States, Togo immigrant business owners have to break the linguistic and cultural barriers, by seeking for a better integration of the U.S. society. In respect of the discrimination suffered in the United States, creating an ethnic network and striving for excellence are key to overcome setbacks.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study involved gaining insight into critical success factors of U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs engaged in commerce in Togo. The findings indicated critical factors that are conducive to sustainable businesses. Neville et al. (2014) suggested that research on various immigrant groups, on business ownership could advance knowledge on factors critical to operate sustainable enterprises. The first recommendation would be to replicate this research for other immigrant business owners from other West African countries such as Benin, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and the Ivory Coast. This qualitative research involved studying a smaller sample size as compared to a quantitative and the findings of this study cannot be generalizable. The second recommendation would be for researchers to conduct quantitative studies to examine the critical factors needed for sustainable Togolese-owned business in the United States, which involves a larger sample and is conducive to generalizability.

The findings of this study revealed that 95% of the participants use personal or family savings to fund businesses. The third recommendation is that further research should address how immigrant business owners could finance personal ventures other than using personal or family savings. Linguistic and cultural barriers was a major theme that emerged in this study. The fourth recommendation is that researchers in future studies should strive help formulate and to uncover strategies needed by Togolese immigrant business owners to make linguistic and cultural barriers irrelevant for sustainable ventures. The findings of this study showed that Togo reflects a high-corrupted business environment, so the fifth recommendation would be to conduct research on how U.S.-based Togolese could overcome corruption in Togo. The final recommendation would be to undertake a search on how to reconcile the United States and Togolese institutional business environments, as the two environments where immigrant business owners operate are sometimes conflicting (Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2013).

Reflections

The reason for conducting this study was that, as part of the Togolese community residing in the United States, I encountered several individual from the same country venturing into businesses; however, only a few are successful. An exploration of existing literature on Togolese immigrant entrepreneurship in the United States yielded very few results. I decided to conduct this research study so that the discoveries from the study may provide knowledge and value to aspiring and established entrepreneurs, while potentially in some small ways also bridging the gap in current literature. The findings of this research may also be of value for business owners from other West African countries residing in the United States. Being of Togolese origin, I used strategies such as bracketing, member checking, and adhering to the interview protocol to mitigate any potential bias.

All 20 U.S.-based Togolese business owners participating in the study were accommodating and enthusiastic, answering to the interview questions with passion, honesty, and knowledge. Most of the participants, welcoming the research initiative, observed that this study was timely, as there was an urgent need to find solutions to the likeliness of failure of Togolese -owned businesses. Responses of the participants provided me with new insight on the critical success factors for conducting business of Togolese immigrant entrepreneurs residing in the United States. This study, therefore, may have changed my thinking on the financial hardships and discrimination suffered by Togolese entrepreneurs in the United States and the high level of corruption in Togo. It was also surprising to learn that entrepreneurial education and the use of the information technologies are such critical factors for the sustainability of Togolese-owned businesses in the United States.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Scholars and practitioners have recognized that immigrant entrepreneurship plays a key role in the U.S. economy (Wang & Liu, 2015). Immigrant-owned businesses, however, face several additional challenges and are more likely to fail as compared to others (SBA, 2012). The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that successful U.S.-based Togolese entrepreneurs, engaged in entrepreneurial activities in Togo, used to remain in business beyond the first five years. The entrepreneurship theory, as developed by Schumpeter (1934) served to underpin this study. Schumpeter (1934) described an entrepreneur as individual seeking monetary rewards who possesses some key attributes and characteristics, uses innovation, uncovers opportunities and addresses barriers related to entrepreneurial activities.

Twenty Togolese entrepreneurs, who have been in business for more than five years, and residing in the Washington DC metropolitan area, participated in the semistructured interviews for this research. The analysis of the participants' responses revealed four key themes, denoting strategies required to operate sustainable businesses, which are motivational and entrepreneurial spirit, abilities to overcome financial hardships, leveraging information technologies, as well as addressing major challenges in the U.S. and Togolese business environments, respectively. The findings of this study may contribute to positive social change in the United States and Togo as the knowledge from it may help U.S.-based Togolese business owners to be successful. Based on the findings, also, undertaking future studies on immigrant-owned businesses in the United States may be of value to foreign-born entrepreneurs, and individuals with entrepreneurial aspirations to conduct sustainable ventures.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

I. Self-introduction to participant(s)

II. Explain the consent form, address all questions and concerns of participant(s).

III. Provide the participant with a copy of consent form.

IV. Tell participant and turn on recording device.

V. Follow procedure to introduce participant(s) with coded identification.

VI. Begin interview with questions, in order from the first to the final one.

VII. Follow up with additional questions if needed.

VIII. End interview session; discuss member checking with participant(s).

IX. Thank the participant(s) for partaking in the study. Reiterate contact numbers for further questions and concerns from participants.

X. End of the protocol.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your motivation for considering being an entrepreneur?

2. What innovative strategies, if any, have contributed to the success of your business?

3. How would you describe the way you initially financed your business?

4. What was your perception of the risk you are taking, in the decision to become a business owner?

5. What from your experience are the managerial skills necessary to conduct sustainable businesses?

6. How would you attribute the relevance of your background and education to your business endeavor?

7. What are the important strategies you have used to sustain your business past the first five years?

8. How do you relate your entrepreneurial endeavor to some challenges you experienced in Togo and / or the United States? How did you address these challenges?

9. How would you describe some opportunities from the Togolese and /or the U.S. environment that have contributed to the current state of your business?

10. What information you find pertinent and would like to share in respect of what we have not discussed in this interview?

Appendix C: 26 Factors of Success versus Failure Prediction Model for Small Businesses

by Teng et al.(2011)

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CSFs /Variables	Description	Recent studies
(1) Capital (capt)	Businesses that start undercapitalized have a greater chance of failure than firms that start with adequate capital	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(2) Record keeping and financial control (rkfc)	Businesses that do not keep updated and accurate records and do not use adequate financial controls have a greater chance of failure than firms that do	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(3) Industry experience (inex)	Businesses managed by people without prior industry experience have a greater chance of failure than firms managed by people with prior industry experience	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(4) Management experience (maex)	Businesses managed by people without prior management experience have a greater chance of failure than firms managed by people with prior management experience	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(5) Planning (plan)	Businesses that do not develop specific business plans have a greater chance of failure than firms that do	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(6) Professional advisors (prad)	Businesses that do not use professional advisors have a greater chance of failure than firms using professional advisors do.	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)

	A more recent source of professional advisors is venture capitalists	
(7) Education (Educ)	People without university education who start business have a greater chance of failure than people with one or more years of university education	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(8) Staffing (staff)	Business that cannot attract and retain quality employees have a great chance of failure than firms that can	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(9) Product/service timing (psti)	Businesses that select products/services that are too new or too old have a greater chance of failure than firms that select products/services that are in the growth stage	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(10) Economic timing (ecti)	Businesses that start during a recession have a greater chance of failure than firms that start during expansion periods	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(11) Age (age)	Younger people who start a business have a greater chance of failure than older people starting a business	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(12) Partners (part)	A business started by one person has a greater chance of failure than a firm started by more than one person	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(13) Parents (pent)	Business owners whose parents did not own a business have a greater chance of failure than owners whose parents did own a business	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)

(14) Minority (mior)	Business owners who are ethnic minorities have a greater chance of failure than non-minorities	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(15) Marketing (mrkt)	Business owners without marketing skills have a greater chance of failure than owners with marketing skills	Lussier and Pfeifer (2001)
(16) Good customer relations (rela)	Businesses with not-so-good customers' relations have a higher chance of failure than those with good customer relations	Ghosh et al. (2001), Ghosh and Kwan (1996)
(17) Niches market (Niche)	Businesses without a niche market will have a higher chance of failure than those with a niche market	Ghosh et al. (2001); DeHayes and Haeberle (1990)
(18) High cost of doing business (cost)	Business with high costs of doing business have a higher chance of failure than those with lower costs of doing business	Ghosh and Kwan (1996)
(19) Ability to develop and sustaintechnology edge (tech)	Businesses that have the ability to develop and sustain their technology edge will have a better chance of success than those without the ability	DeHayes and Haeberle (1990)
(20) Competition (Compete)	Businesses with strong competition from competitors will have a higher chance of failure than those without/less competition	Ghosh and Kwan (1996)

(21) Strong top leadership (Lead)	Businesses with strong top leadership will have a higher chance of success than those without strong leadership	Ghosh et al. (2001); DeHayes and Haeberle (1990); Ghosh and Kwan (1996)
(22) Significant "people bonding" in firm (PeoBond)	Businesses with significant "people bonding" will have a higher chance of success than those without "people bond"	DeHayes and Haeberle (1990)
(23) Strong organizational capability (Org Cap)	Businesses with strong organizational capability will have a higher chance of success than those without strong organizational capability	Ghosh et al. (2001)
(24) Access to broad support and resources (Broad Access)	Businesses with good access to a broad range of support and resources will have a higher chance of success than those without good access	Ghosh et al. (2001)
(25) Local knowledge (LKnow)	Businesses with good local knowledge of the local business environment will have a higher chance of success than those without good local knowledge	Yeung and Chew (2001)
(26) Government policy (govt)	Existence of good government policies will increase the chance of businesses succeeding than without good government policies	Ghosh et al. (2001)