

2017

# Strategies Needed for Small Business Sustainability: A Case Study of Thai Restaurants

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Vanida Sirilarbanan

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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the review committee have been made.

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2017

Abstract

Strategies Needed for Small Business Sustainability: A Case Study of Thai Restaurants

by

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MS, California State University, 1976

BS, Thammasat University, 1974

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

January 2017

## Abstract

According to U.S. Small Business Association, the failure rates for small businesses in 2014 were as high as 50% to 80% within the first 5 years of establishment. Failure rates were especially high among restaurant businesses. The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that small business owners needed to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years. Guided by entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework, a case study was conducted with semistructured interviews of 3 successful Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah. Member checking and methodological triangulation with field notes, interview data, company websites, customer comments, and government documents help ensure theoretical saturation and trustworthiness of interpretations. Using precoded themes for the data analysis, the 7 themes from this study were entrepreneur characteristics, education and management skills, marketing strategies and competitive advantages, social networks and human relationships, technology and innovation, government supports and social responsibility, and financial planning. Two key results indicated the strategies that were needed for small business owners were entrepreneur management skills and government support for small businesses. These findings may influence positive social change by improving small business owner efficiency and sustainability, increasing higher business income, providing a better quality of living for employees and the well-being of the community, and benefiting the U.S. economy.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this success to my parents in heaven: Anan and Chinda Sirilarbanan. I am so grateful what they had given me. Without their support since the day I was born, I would not be able to achieve this doctoral degree and make them proud of me. I also would like to dedicate this study to my four children: Monnida, Varaporn, Vorarudee and Patsapong for their love, inspiration, and encouragement. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this success to other family members, relatives, and friends: Sawin, Pipat, Evarin, Pathorn, Kamchorn, Chantana, Nuntana, Sunee, Montchai, Chatchaya, Rungtiwa, and many others.

## Acknowledgments

The success of my doctoral journey would not have been possible without the guidance, mentoring, and tremendous support from my chair: Dr. Patricia Fusch. I also want to thank my committee members: Dr. Janet Booker and Dr. Patsy Kasen, for helping me completed this doctoral study. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Freda Turner for her support through this process.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	v
Section 1: Foundation of the Study.....	1
Background of the Problem .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Purpose Statement.....	2
Nature of the Study .....	3
Research Question .....	4
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Operational Definitions.....	6
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations.....	6
Assumptions.....	7
Limitations .....	7
Delimitations.....	7
Significance of the Study .....	8
Contribution to Business Practice.....	8
Implications for Social Change.....	9
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	9
Entrepreneurship Theory .....	10
Small Business Success and Sustainability.....	12
Personal Characteristics and Small Business Owner Entrepreneurship .....	13
Education, Management Training, and Small Business Entrepreneurship.....	16



Financial Planning and Small Business Entrepreneurship.....	18
Marketing Strategies, Competition, and Small Business Entrepreneurship .....	24
Social Networks and Small Business Entrepreneurship .....	29
Innovation, Technology, and Small Business Entrepreneurship .....	32
Ethics, Social Responsibility, and Small Business Entrepreneurship.....	36
Government Support and Small Business Entrepreneurship .....	39
Restaurant Business Ownership.....	42
Thai Restaurants.....	45
Transition .....	46
Section 2: The Project.....	48
Purpose Statement.....	48
Role of the Researcher .....	49
Participants.....	50
Research Method and Design .....	52
Research Method .....	52
Research Design.....	53
Population and Sampling .....	54
Ethical Research.....	55
Data Collection Instruments .....	57
Data Collection Technique .....	58
Data Organization Technique .....	60
Data Analysis .....	61

Reliability and Validity.....	63
Reliability.....	63
Validity .....	64
Transition and Summary.....	66
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change.....	68
Introduction.....	68
Presentation of the Findings.....	69
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants.....	71
Emergent Theme 1: Entrepreneur Characteristics .....	71
Emergent Theme 2: Education and Management Skills.....	74
Emergent Theme 3: Financial Planning.....	77
Emergent Theme 4: Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantages.....	79
Emergent Theme 5: Social Networks and Human Relationships.....	81
Emergent Theme 6: Technology and Innovation.....	84
Emergent Theme 7: Government Support and Social Responsibility .....	87
Applications to Professional Practice .....	89
Implications for Social Change.....	91
Recommendations for Action .....	92
Recommendations for Further Research.....	93
Reflections .....	94
Summary and Study Conclusions .....	95
References.....	97

Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	124
Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in the Study.....	125
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	126

## List of Tables

Table 1. Emergence Nodes/Themes.....	69
Table 2. Node/Theme 1: Entrepreneur Characteristics.....	70
Table 3. Node/Theme 2: Education and Management Skills.....	73
Table 4. Node/Theme 3: Financial Planning.....	76
Table 5. Node/Theme 4: Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantages.....	78
Table 6. Node/Theme 5: Social Networks and Human Relationships.....	80
Table 7. Node/Theme 6: Technology and Innovation.....	83
Table 8. Node/Theme 7: Government Supports and Social Responsibility.....	85

## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses or small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are entities with less than 500 employees (U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2013). These companies include different business sectors in manufacturing and retail businesses such as hardware suppliers, florists, pharmacies, health care providers, and restaurants (SBA, 2013). In 2013, small businesses contributed 51% of the U.S. payroll, 65% of new jobs, and 97.5% of exports from the United States (SBA, 2014). Dahmen and Rodriguez (2014) indicated that the failure rate for small businesses in 2013 was 50% for the first 5 years of establishment. This high failure rate has negatively affected the economy and the employment rate of the country (SBA, 2014). I conducted a case study of three Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City, Utah, United States, to explore strategies and knowledge needed for small business owners to success and sustain in their business beyond the first 5 years of establishment. The implications of this study may improve the sustainability of Thai restaurants and contribute to the business practices and social change for small businesses.

### **Background of the Problem**

Small businesses are essential to a growing economy in every country (SBA, 2014). Despite the creation of more than 63% of new jobs in 2013 in the United States, the failure rate of small businesses was as high as 50% to 80% including Thai restaurants (SBA, 2014). The failure rate varies for different industries (Olaison & Meier Sørensen, 2014). Despite the creation of new jobs, the number of entrepreneurs decreased from 5.78 million in 2008 to 5.31 million in 2013 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Closures

of small business increased unemployment and caused a loss of government tax revenue (SBA, 2014). Other causes of small business failure include the lack of management knowledge and marketing strategies among small business owners (SBA, 2014). Moreover, insufficient funds, overexpansion, high competition, lack of government support, or a changing marketplace can cause failures (SBA, 2014). The survival of small businesses is essential for sustaining employment and maintaining the quality of life for employees, the community, and the country.

### **Problem Statement**

Small businesses are important for all economies in the world because of their contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) growth, job creation, and government revenues (SBA, 2014). Failure results in financial hardship for owners, employees, and the surrounding community (Zinga, Augusto, & Ramos, 2013). In 2013, the failure rate for SMEs was 50% to 80% within the first 5 years of establishment with high failure rates common among restaurants in particular (SBA, 2014). The general business problem that I addressed in this study was that small business owners had insufficient training or preparation to sustain a profitable business. The specific business problem was that some small business owners lacked strategies to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years. The targeted population for this research study consisted of three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake

City, Utah. These Thai restaurant owners, who had survived and succeeded in their businesses for more than 5 years, participated in open-ended semistructured interviews. I also used the official company documents from the Utah Business Search (Utah.gov) for methodological triangulation. These official records showed company details such as the registration date, the owner's name, business status, and the address. The implications for positive social change included the potential to improve small business owner efficiency and performance, which may result in higher business income and a better quality of living for employees and their communities. The implications of the study may also contribute to the government tax base, the national economy, and increased sustainability of small businesses.

### **Nature of the Study**

Research methods consist of qualitative methods, quantitative methods, and mixed methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). A qualitative research method includes open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations, providing insights into the problem, which is appropriate for this research study (Yin, 2014). In a quantitative method, researchers use statistical analysis, which might not be able to provide the understanding of lived experiences and the complexity of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Although a mixed method helps increase the validity, mixed methods require more resources and expertise (Venkatesh et al., 2013).

The designs for a qualitative method include narrative design, phenomenological design, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study design (Yin, 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2016) mentioned that for a description of an individual life story and

chronological experiences, researchers use a narrative design. For the study of the collective life experiences of more than one person, researchers prefer using a phenomenological design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). An ethnographic design provides a framework for a cultural study of specific groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A case study design provides an understanding of a real-life phenomenon in depth, allowing the researcher to ask *how* or *why* question (Cronin, 2014). Case study designs include exploratory design, descriptive design, and explanatory design (Yin, 2014). I explored the strategies that small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years; answering to how and why questions helped me understand real-life phenomenon and behaviors. With all these considerations, an exploratory case study design was the right choice for my research study.

### **Research Question**

The central question for this study was: What strategies do small business owners need to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years? The interview questions were as follows:

1. Why did you choose to invest in a restaurant business?
2. What is your educational background?
3. Where do you get the training for management skills?
4. What are your short-term and long-term financial plans?
5. What are your competitive advantages?
6. How do you use networking to promote your business?
7. How have you used technologies and innovation to sustain your company?



8. What government support have you used?
9. What else would you like to share about your experiences as a small business owner?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Researchers conduct studies based on theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the existing body of knowledge regarding the research topic (Bula, 2012). The application of the knowledge will help create an understanding of the exploration of the phenomena and behaviors (Bula, 2012). I used entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework for this qualitative research study.

Entrepreneurship includes multiple functions correlated to personal responsibility and competence, which related to psychological, sociological, anthropological, and economic theory (Bula, 2012). Entrepreneurship implies the quality of leadership, initiative, and innovation in business (Bula, 2012). Cantillon (1755) considered entrepreneurs as risk takers, who allocate resources to maximize financial return and to equilibrate supply and demand in the economy. Cantillon's research was the foundation for many studies concerning entrepreneurship theories. Many other researchers, such as McClelland, Winter, Schumpeter, Casson, and Say have refined Cantillon's theory of entrepreneurship (Bula, 2012). McClelland and Winter (1971) believed that entrepreneurs are people who make a decision in times of uncertainty for achievement and power.

Schumpeter (1983) suggested that an entrepreneur should convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. Entrepreneurs must be able to fulfill different functions such as allocating resources, be able to adapt personal strengths and

weaknesses, and handle threats and opportunities in a changing environment (Schumpeter, 1983). Casson (2003) analyzed Schumpeter's concepts and stated that the primary function of entrepreneurs is decision making. Say (1855) emphasized that entrepreneurs should have competence and management skills in creating innovation, creating a productive workplace culture, and identifying new opportunities for coordination. Based on these entrepreneurship concepts, I explored the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years.

### **Operational Definitions**

The definition of terms clarified the meaning of the words used in this study. The following definitions were the terms and phrases that appeared in this study.

*Entrepreneurship*: Entrepreneurship is the practice of starting, organizing, operating, and developing a business or businesses by taking the risk and opportunity to gain profit (Parilla, 2013). For the purpose of this study, an entrepreneur was a small business owner.

*Passion*: Passion is the influence of love, enthusiasm, or pride that induces a person to make a choice or decision (Roth, Purvis, & Bobko, 2012).

*Sustainability*: Sustainability is the ability to maintain the level to survive and remain profitable in business (Lourenço, Jones, & Jayawarna, 2013).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The deficiencies of a research study include the availability of resources, nature of reporting, use of instruments, sample size, and time constraints (Yin, 2014). Researchers need to describe the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of their research studies

to communicate with their readers regarding the potential effect of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). These descriptions provide more understanding of the parameters of the research study.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are facts that are assumed as true without verification, and they can contain risks (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I assumed that the chosen Thai restaurant owners would truthfully answer the interview questions and that an exploratory case study was an appropriate research design for this study. I also assumed that the sample size (three Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City, Utah) was adequate for the study.

### **Limitations**

Limitations refer to the potential weaknesses of the study that are uncontrollable (Zivkovic, 2012). I believed that participants would answer the interview questions frankly; however, some small business owners might tend to keep a portion of their data private, particularly financial information. Other may have been unwilling to share some of their business information or did not want to discuss their failures.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to the bounds or scope of the study. Delimitations are choices made by the researcher including the research questions, the theoretical perspective adopted, and the geographic region covered (Ridder, 2012). The study of three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah, might not represent the larger population of all the small businesses in the United States.

### **Significance of the Study**

Small businesses consist of farm businesses and nonfarm businesses (SBA, 2013). Nonfarm businesses include manufacturing and retail companies such as grocery stores, hardware suppliers, healthcare providers, and restaurants (SBA, 2013). The nonfarm business sector's productivity decreased 1.8% in 2013, and the restaurant industry is a nonfarm business (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2014). U.S. restaurants served millions of people per day in 990,000 locations, providing \$683.4 billion of sales or 4% of U.S. GDP in 2013 (National Restaurant Association [NRA], 2014). Shifting demographics and changing lifestyles have driven the surge in food service industry (NRA, 2014). Approximately 50% of SMEs, including restaurant businesses, failed within the first 5 years (SBA, 2014). The failure rate can have a significant effect on the contribution of business practice and social change.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The failure of small businesses within the first 5 years occurred because entrepreneurs lack direction and planning for running their business, have insufficient management skills, or have inadequate capital and resources for the survival of the firm (SBA, 2013). Some entrepreneurs start a business because they have a passion for it (SBA, 2013). In this study, I explored the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of establishment, providing knowledge for the type of niche market, management skills, financial planning, and marketing strategies for an efficient entrepreneur. The contribution of the study could be the

increasing of the employment rate, improvement of the country economy, and the tax revenues for the government.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Small businesses created 63% of new jobs in 2013 (SBA, 2014). Providing education to small business owners may improve their skills, strategies, and knowledge, which can positively affect the outcomes for their businesses, their employees, and the community (SBA, 2014). New technologies and networking give small business owners feedback from their customers and the society, which enable entrepreneurs to improve their services and to create innovation (SBA, 2013). The knowledge of management and human relationships for small business owners can help increase employee productivity and customer satisfaction (SBA, 2013). An excellent restaurant can be an important local attraction that increases revenue for the community and enhances the wellbeing of the population (NRA, 2014). Thus, this study may contribute to social change for small business.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Small businesses are vital to the U.S. economy (SBA, 2013). Despite their significant roles, approximately 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of existence (SBA, 2014). To explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years, I conducted a qualitative exploratory case study framed by entrepreneurship theories.

Researchers explore literature reviews as sources of knowledge for their studies (Yin, 2014). I used the academic literature peer-reviewed databases from ABI/INFORM

Complete, Business Sources Complete, ProQuest, EBSCO Primary, Sage Premier, Science Direct, government reports and websites, books, and Google Scholar. The keywords I used were *small business sustainability, qualitative case studies, entrepreneurship theory, personal characteristics and entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial education and training, financial planning, entrepreneurial marketing strategies, social networks, innovation and entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial ethics and social responsibility, government supports, restaurant businesses, and Thai restaurants.*

Student researchers must have at least 85% literature reviewed sources with the minimum of 60 peer-reviewed for their doctoral research according to the Walden University DBA Rubric. The publication of the 85% peer-reviews must be within 5 years from the student's anticipated graduation date. For the entire study, I cited 196 references with 15 of them more than 5 years from my anticipated graduation date; thus, 92.35% of the reference sources I used, were less than 5 years old. For the literature review, I have 177 peer-reviewed articles with six of them more than 5 years from the anticipated graduation date (96.61%). The following sections included a critical analysis of the literature reviews based on entrepreneurship theory concepts.

### **Entrepreneurship Theory**

Entrepreneurs create changes in the economy by taking risks, leveraging opportunities, and making decisions for achievement and power (Cantillon, 1755; Knight, 1921; McClelland & Winter, 1971). An entrepreneur should have competence and management skills in creating innovation, productivity, and opportunity for jobs (Say, 1855). Innovation creation is an essential role for entrepreneurs (Drucker, 1994).

Business owners, as entrepreneurs, should have knowledge of consumer behavior, resource allocation, the creation of innovation, and adaptation to a changing business environment (Schumpeter, 1983).

Researchers applied the relationship of entrepreneur responsibility and competence with psychological, sociological, anthropological, and economic theory (Bula, 2012). From psychological studies, personality traits for achievement and locus of control are associated with entrepreneurship inclination (Rotten, 1966). Personal characteristics are inborn qualities or potentials of the individual (Coon, 2004). Entrepreneurs are likely to have some significant personality traits such as risk-taking, innovativeness, and tolerance for ambiguity (Coon, 2004). Rotten (1966) defined a *locus of control* as a belief in whether the outcomes of one's actions are the results of one's ability (internal locus of control) or the results of something outside one's control such as luck, chance, or fate (externals locus of control). Business owners who have an internal locus of control believe that they can determine their future by the choices they make (Rauch & Frese, 2000).

By nature, human beings need to accomplish, achieve, and succeed in their endeavors (McClelland & Winter, 1971). In creating a new and successful venture, business owners require motivation for their achievements (Shaver & Scott, 1991). Based on sociological theories, the experiences of people could influence their thoughts and actions (Reynolds, 1991). Political systems, government legislation, workforce skills and availability, and competition are examples of factors that can affect the success or failure of businesses (Reynolds, 1991). Reynolds (1991) stated that the social background of a

person in a social network could indicate the possibility of becoming a successful entrepreneur. Anthropology is the study of culture, which reflects ethnic and social values (Baskerville, 2003). Cultural environments can produce different attitudes and behaviors of entrepreneurs that may be significant for their success (Baskerville, 2003). Within economic theory, entrepreneurs distribute goods in a competitive marketplace using land, capital, and labor to make products and produce services (Say, 1855). Entrepreneurs are the drivers of the market-based system and the key to small business success through creation and innovation (Schumpeter, 1983).

### **Small Business Success and Sustainability**

Entrepreneurs should have characteristics such as management capability, leadership, creativity, and risk-taking (Cantillon, 1755; Say, 1855; Schumpeter, 1983). Management knowledge and strategic ability are significant for the success of small business ownership (Frid, 2015). Management of a small business startup can be challenging, especially when one lacks business experience and knowledge (Frid, 2015). Based on entrepreneurship theory, an entrepreneur's personal characteristics, skills, and capabilities can affect the success and sustainability of their business (Frid, 2015). Small business owners can avoid failures by learning from other people's mistakes and obtain the requisite perception and knowledge to sustain their companies (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011).

Some small businesses fail because the proprietor overestimated demand (Lafuente, Lafuente, Guzman-Perra, & Lafuente, 2013). Before launching a venture, small business owners as entrepreneurs should have marketing awareness of the 4Ps:



product, price, place, and promotion (Lafuente, et al., 2013). Undercapitalization is another reason for business failure; small business owners should have financial and accounting knowledge to avoid this obstacle (Lafuente et al., 2013). They should have management knowledge regarding decision-making and should consider personal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to succeed in competitive markets (Lafuente et al., 2013). Ethics, social responsibility, and government supports are also other important factors for business sustainability (Wells & Graafland, 2012).

### **Personal Characteristics and Small Business Owner Entrepreneurship**

Small business owners need a combination of factors to succeed, including recognition of opportunity, risk-taking ability, leadership, and dedication to the company (Robinson & Stubberud, 2015). Small business owners may need to make decisions regarding borrowing money, selling the existing business, launching a new product, or acquiring another company (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011). Entrepreneurs who tend to overestimate the possibility of failure may not be able to make rational risk choices (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011). Small business owners must realize that every failure and mistake contributes to a learning experience; furthermore, people learn from failure, become stronger, and have more talent to solve their problems (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011). Refusing to take a risk can sabotage potential successes (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011).

Executives such as Steve Jobs (Apple), Bill Gates (Microsoft), and Jeff Bezos (Amazon) experienced failures and were able to take control and drive their businesses toward profitability and success (Hetrick, 2014). Small business owners should take a

risk when they know that a positive result could be better than a current situation and be aware that adopting a personal risk is entirely different from taking risks at the expense of other stakeholders (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011). Small business owners should communicate with any involved stakeholders to discuss risk/benefit effects (Goldman & Bounds, 2015).

Motivations for people to become small business owners include two types: intrinsic and extrinsic (Martínez-Román & Isidoro, 2013). An intrinsic motivation implies passion or pleasure to do the activity, which comes from inside of a person. For example, individuals who love to cook might want to open a restaurant business (Martínez-Román & Isidoro, 2013). Extrinsic motivation might refer to the necessity to take action in some situations such as unemployment or dissatisfaction with previous jobs (Martínez-Román & Isidoro, 2013). Learning more about personal characteristics can assist researchers with the understanding of behaviors of a successful small business owner (Martínez-Román & Isidoro, 2013).

Small business ownership competencies, skills, motives, traits, self-image, leadership ability, specialized knowledge, and social roles enable business owner success and sustainability (Mitchelmore, Rowley, & Shiu, 2014). Small business owners need to learn to generate an idea, recognize personal strengths, take risks, overcome threats and weaknesses, and exploit opportunities (Mitchelmore et al., 2014). Mitchelmore et al. (2014) indicated that small business owner management competencies include business operation skills, financial budgeting skills, and human relationship skills. Human

relationship skills include interpersonal skills, delegation skills, leadership skills, and communication skills (Mitchelmore et al., 2014).

The characteristics of a small business owner are significant for the success of the business, which includes individual personality, personal traits, entrepreneur orientation, and demographic characteristics (Martínez-Román & Isidoro, 2013). Other important characteristics include self-confidence, autonomy, innovativeness, risk-taking, motivation, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness (Martínez-Román & Isidoro, 2013). Martínez-Román and Isidoro (2013) stated that younger people have less experience than older people; therefore, a more experienced executive could make reasoned decisions and address risk management more efficiently than a less experienced manager.

Khan, Hui, Chen, and Hoe (2015) studied personal characteristics of Generation Y's buying behavior of fashion products. Some individual characteristics such as hedonism, lack of control, materialism, mood, and an extrovert personality can influence Generation Y's buying behavior (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2014; Shen & Khalifa, 2012; Yoon, 2013). Khan et al. (2015) used demographic factors for their study including age, gender, education, income, marital status, and occupation. They mentioned that money (including credit card availability), time, pleasant store environments, and social influences might also have the effect on Generation Y's buying behavior (Khan et al., 2015).

### **Education, Management Training, and Small Business Entrepreneurship**

Experiential learning helps generate understanding and knowledge through real-life experience (Huq & Gilbert, 2014). Although small business owners have talent, they need to improve their skills by further education and training in their particular field (Oncioiu, 2012). Both unfruitful and fruitful experiences can enhance management skills and knowledge (Oncioiu, 2012). Oncioiu (2012) stated that a successful small business owner should have the capability to transmit their knowledge and vision to their cohorts. Business owners must be capable of managing their professional and personal lives using time management (Oncioiu, 2012). Small business owners should be able to provide guidance and opinions to others, in addition to having excellent communication skills and human relationships (Oncioiu, 2012).

Small business owners should know their limitations and improve their knowledge and skills via further education or training (Phillips Moos, & Nieman, 2014). In developing countries, especially in some underdeveloped countries, women business owners are significant for increasing the country's economic growth (Phillips et al., 2014). Although the numbers of women in a population are usually greater than the number of men, fewer women business owners are successful in sustaining their companies when compared with men who own small businesses (Phillips et al., 2014). Some of the barriers for women business owners include balancing home and work roles, lack of ability to access resources, poor financial knowledge, insufficient personal development, lack of business management training and experience, no business networks, and social bias influences (Phillips et al., 2014).

A small business owner must have talent, education, and continuous vocational training (Alrhaimi, 2015). Entrepreneurship education promotes personal development for small business owners, which will help them be successful and sustain their businesses (Lourenço et al., 2013). Many governments try to provide educational programs to enhance change by creating small business owner-entrepreneurs for the 21st century with skills and abilities such as problem-solving capability, self-direction and initiative, critical thinking, innovation, adaptability, communication skills, and collaboration skills (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Educating young people to have an entrepreneurial mindset while they are students promotes future entrepreneurship, which is significant for the economy (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Successful small business owners focus on potential business opportunities and learn from failure (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Furthermore, small business owners as entrepreneurs have the desire to achieve, which motivates them to turn their idea into action (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). They seek resources as well as knowledge of critical success factors to help them succeed and sustain their companies (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Small business owners like the challenge of coming up with new solutions, having a vision, and implementing their dreams (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014).

Small business owners make a stronger contribution to the development of the national economy if they have creativity and ability (Ghina, Simatupang, & Gustomo, 2014). Entrepreneurship education is essential for producing capable small business owners who will create jobs and innovation (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Business Dynamics Statistics, 2012). Ghina et al. (2014) indicated that the

business ownership rates for developing countries are low owing to lack of entrepreneurial education. The small business ownership rate in India is 4.9%, 5.2% in Malaysia, 6.7% in the Philippines, 10.4% in Thailand, and 20.4% in Indonesia (Ghina et al., 2014).

Uddin and Bose (2013) listed the knowledge or skills that small business owners should have including management skills, budgeting, human relations, organizational structuring, marketing strategy, and business operating skills. Small business owners should also have knowledge regarding accessing financial resources, technological resources, and government support (Uddin & Bose, 2013). Business owners view the development and growth of their businesses from strategic, structural, financial, and organizational perspectives (Phillips et al., 2014). Market expansion and competitive advantage demonstrate the strategic growth; the increase in income and profit indicate the financial growth; and the corporate culture and attitudes reflect the structure and organizational growth (Phillips et al., 2014). The factors that promote these attributes are the availability of resources, organizational factors, the external environment, and entrepreneurial orientation (Phillips et al., 2014).

### **Financial Planning and Small Business Entrepreneurship**

A successful small business owner must have a business plan that indicates the startup funds that are needed, investment capital required, working capital to obtain, sales forecasts, and funding requirements (Feenstra, 2014). Business owners who do not have enough startup funds may incur fiscal burdens (Feenstra, 2014). If small business owners have enough startup money, they can convince their lenders and investors about their

successful accomplishments when seeking to obtain funds from others (Feenstra, 2014). Having a financial plan assists small business owners to know their cash flow, break-even point, opportunity assessment, strategic development, and profitability prospects (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). Small business owners can use financial data to calculate financial ratios such as gross profit margin, return on investment, and return on owner's equity (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). Information from ratios can tell small business owners about a company's liquidity, operating performance, cash flow, profitability, debt, and investment valuation (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015).

Some joint financing funds for businesses are venture capital and angel investing (Bayar, Karaaslan, & Ozdeveci, 2015). The difference between angels and venture capitalists are sources of money, stage of investment, and size of investment (Bayar et al., 2015). Business angels use their own money for investments, but venture capitalists use funds from other sources such as insurance companies or pension funds (Bayar et al., 2015). Business angels invest in early-stage companies while venture capitalists usually invest in the latter stages (Bayar et al., 2015). The size of the investment for business angels is typical \$5,000 to \$100,000 while venture capitalists invest from \$2 million and more (Bayar et al., 2015). Business angels have financed many well-known companies such as Apple, Amazon, Facebook, and Ford Motor Company (Gregson, 2014). In 2014, business angels funded 73,400 ventures and 316,600 individuals in Europe and the United States (Bayar et al., 2015).

Frid (2015) studied human capital using multinomial logistic regression with five control factors: firm size, industrial effects, entrepreneur's growth intentions, the legal

form of the business, and financial projections. The author found that the owner characteristics such as race, sex, education, and experiences could affect company financing, especially for nascent entrepreneurs (Frid, 2015). Minority nascent small business owners, such as African-American and women business owners have difficulty obtaining a loan because of their experience and educational background (Frid, 2015). These small business owners are unlikely to use credit or an external source of funds and may fear rejection from financial institutions (Frid, 2015). Small business owners have less access to capital markets, creating higher cost, and various additional criteria required for loan acquisitions than those for larger enterprises (Frid, 2015). Startup financing, without personal funds from the beginning, typically results in a cash flow deficit (Frid, 2015). Beyond small business owners savings, obtaining money from others such as friends and family will involve trust and affordability, and may result in management and relationship problems (Frid, 2015). As ventures grow, small business owner-entrepreneurs will move to debt and equity funding and can attract external investment through social networking (Frid, 2015).

Effective financial risk management is essential to the survival of a small business (Rahman, Yaacob, & Radzi, 2015). According to the World Bank Enterprise Survey, obstacles to success for private enterprises in developing countries are the lack of access to finance, unsupportive investment climate, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of skills and training (Rahman et al., 2015). Rahman et al. (2015) conducted a case study in Malaysia where 99% of businesses are small business owners and consisted of three main sectors: services, agriculture, and manufacturing. These firms have many challenges



including weak accounting systems, financial and technology limitations, lack of knowledge and skills, high employee turnover, and insufficient government support (Rahman et al., 2015). The authors focused on three main risks: liquidity, credit, and operation risk (Rahman et al., 2015). Rahman et al. (2015) explained that to handle the threat of risks; entrepreneurs must identify the risk, analyze, evaluate, manage, monitor, and revise the risk strategies regularly. The authors stated that Malaysian small business owners need support from the government for technology, financial accessibility, and entrepreneurial education (Rahman et al., 2015). For example, only 30% of Malaysian small business owners have a website for their business, which is insufficient (Rahman et al., 2015). For small business owners to succeed and sustain their businesses, it is necessary to build a culture of innovation, risk-taking, decision-making, and sound management skills (Rahman et al., 2015). To avoid financial risk, small business owners need an accounting system that is accurate, consistent, timely, and complete (Rahman et al., 2015).

External financing, such as bank loans, is another important factor for the survival and growth of small business (Baradwaj, Dewally, & Shao, 2015). Small business owners encounter barriers to accessing financial loans because they often lack a business plan or a real accounting system, creating difficulty for banks to evaluate corporate capabilities (Baradwaj et al., 2015). Securitization is a helpful tool for obtaining bank loans by transforming nontradable loan assets into tradable fixed-income instruments. Banks use securitization to manage liquidity and credit risk for lending money (Baradwaj et al., 2015). Baradwaj et al. (2015) studied the effect of loan securitization on entrepreneurial

activity in the United States. The authors found that banks favor the use of securitization for real estate market loans, compared to small business loans (Baradwaj et al., 2015). Banks use securitization to facilitate small business owners' entrepreneurial activities through channels such as housing markets and mortgage loans (Baradwaj et al., 2015).

Karadag (2015) pointed out that it is important for small business owners to have financial management skills and financial planning. A business plan will help business owners to calculate their financial targets such as sales made per employee, a strong profit margin, and a good return on investment (Karadag, 2015). In the case of a new business that has no previous data, the small business owner entrepreneur can use published financial statements of existing companies within the same industry (Karadag, 2015). The three important financial statements that a firm should have are the cash flow statement, the income statement, and the balance sheet (Karadag, 2015). The cash flow statement shows the expected cash inflow and outflow of the company within a given timeframe (Karadag, 2015). The income statement summarizes company revenue and expenses (Karadag, 2015). The balance sheet demonstrates company assets and liabilities (Karadag, 2015). Long-term financial planning is an annual 3-year and 5-year projection (Karadag, 2015). Small business owners should have short-term financial planning on a monthly basis for the first year and a quarterly basis for the second year (Karadag, 2015).

Karadag (2015) stated that small business owners are the drivers of socio-economic development in all countries. In 2012 in Europe, small businesses represented 98% of all the enterprises, 20.7 million businesses, and 67% of total employment (Karadag, 2015). In Turkey, they are 99.9% of the companies are SMEs (Karadag, 2015).

Unfortunately, most in Turkey have encountered financial management challenges related to the severe economic crisis of 2008 (Karadag, 2015). Karadag indicated that the causes of the challenges regarding financial management in the Turkish economy included insufficient managerial skills, incapability of accessing funds, limited technological usage, lack of training, and inefficiency in financial management. Karadag (2015) described the distinction between large and small companies regarding experiences, the level of information, social relationships, and ethical values; the author also addressed the industrial environment, strategic decision-making processes, firm culture, and competitive behavior. Small businesses are significant for Turkey's macro economy, so governmental officials take radical steps to support and facilitate the growth of small business to improve their sustainability (Karadag, 2015).

Martinkute-Kauliene (2014) mentioned that modern information technologies had created complex financial markets; for example, the using of a derivative as protection against risks and uncertainty. A *derivative* is a contract between two parties to accept conditions of an agreement such as interest rates, exchange rates, commodity prices, stock prices, and index levels, for a future transaction at a particular point (Martinkute-Kauliene, 2014). Martinkute-Kauliene (2014) conducted a study of risk factors in derivatives markets that use financial instruments such as forward contracts, future contracts, options, and swaps for risk management. *Forward contracts and future contracts* are the processes where both sides agree to buy a commodity or a financial asset at fixed prices on a certain future date (Martinkute-Kauliene, 2014). The difference is the former occurs between two parties while the latter is through an organized and

regulated exchange (Martinkute-Kauliene, 2014). An *option contract* indicates the right to sell an underlying asset by a specified date at a fixed price, provided the buyer pays some premium (Martinkute-Kauliene, 2014). *Swaps* are the agreements between two parties (associated with future cash flows fluctuation) to manage or hedge risks related to volatile interest rates, currency exchange rates, share prices, and commodity prices (Martinkute-Kauliene, 2014). Derivative market management is a way to understand, evaluate, relocate, and manage risk to reduce the volatility of capital requirements, acquire higher capital productivity, and obtain more reliable forecasting (Martinkute-Kauliene, 2014). These are challenges that small business owners face as they attempt to finance company growth and sustainability.

### **Marketing Strategies, Competition, and Small Business Entrepreneurship**

Small business owners often perform different functions for the company, such as allocating resources, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, and handling threats and opportunities in a changing environment (Schumpeter, 1983). Marketing researchers provide information to owner-executives for market strategy planning to manage competitors and customers (Wilson, 2015). Small business owners should be aware of how to create value for their clients and how to differentiate their products and services (Wilson, 2015). Knowledge of channel distribution also helps improve the effectiveness of the value chain (Uddin & Bose, 2013). Uddin and Bose (2013) indicated that owner-executives should have the capability to account for demand forecasting and analyzing, pricing policy and strategy, marketing research information, sales training, and product distribution.

The marketing mix or 4Ps consist of product, price, place or channel, and promotion (Osiri, 2013). Osiri (2013) stated that small business owners must understand the needs and problems of their customers to determine what kind of products or services that companies could offer through creative innovation. After obtaining customer feedback, the next thing that small business owners need to consider is pricing (Osiri, 2013). With a pricing strategy, owner-executives decide on a competitive price for the market, which would then correlate with profit margins (Osiri, 2013). Getting the right price involves examining customer's perceptions, rival products, the cost of manufacturing, as well as cost of management (Osiri, 2013).

The next marketing decision is the method or channel of distribution, which includes transportation, storage, and a retail site (Osiri, 2013). Reaching potential customers and turning them into clients requires a suitable channel of distribution such as wholesalers, retailers, supermarket chains, shopping centers, showrooms, or through online websites (Osiri, 2013). The last marketing mix is promotion, which requires working with tools such as advertising, social media marketing, email marketing, or search engine marketing (Osiri, 2013). *Promotion* is the way to communicate with customers, provide them information, and assist them in making a decision to purchase the product or service (Osiri, 2013). Business owners should continue asking questions and making changes until they have optimized their marketing mix (Osiri, 2013). Small business owners also should review their marketing mix regularly; some elements will need to change as the product or service demand grows when the market matures or adapts to a competitive environment (Osiri, 2013).

The study of small business owners and their marketing concerns have received considerable attention from academic researchers in the early 2000s (Jayawarna, Jones, Lam, & Phua, 2014). Jayawarna et al. (2014) mentioned that new businesses frequently have limited resources; as a result, they concentrate on short-term planning rather than long-term planning (Jayawarna et al., 2014). Some small business owners are too busy with the daily operation of the company, and some of them lack skills for planning and analyzing performance (Jayawarna et al., 2014). Small business owners believe that marketing is more necessary for large enterprises than for small companies (Jayawarna et al., 2014). Jayawarna (2014) indicated that market orientation is essential for small business, and small business owners might not realize they should be using an informal marketing strategy such as sensemaking and social networking.

Jayawarna et al. (2014) suggested three approaches to small businesses marketing: guerrilla, buzz, and viral marketing. Guerrilla marketing uses low cost and high-effect techniques to attract their consumers, buzz marketing is face-to-face communication, and viral marketing facilitates new communication technology to spread information and attract customers' attention (Jayawarna et al., 2014). Jayawarna et al. (2014) indicated some behaviors are essential for small business owners such as creativity, self-responsibility, autonomy, achievement, independence, and risk calculation. It is significant that small business owners know information regarding sociocultural and demographic trends, competitors, customers, and markets to be able to sustain their business (Jayawarna et al., 2014). Manimala (2012) stated that in spite of small business vulnerability to an external environment, strengthening the internal

capabilities of small business owners must include greater priority. Small business owners need the training to develop efficiency and capacity so that they can account for external environments to sustain the business (Manimala, 2012).

Understanding market segmentation is also crucial for market strategy. Nabirasool (2014) studied the relationship between consumer lifestyle and demographic factors to learn more about consumer behavior (Nabirasool, 2014). Factors influencing customer purchase decisions may be age, gender, geography, education, income level, product type, buying patterns, and client needs (Nabirasool, 2014). Knowledge of the various market segments assists small business owners in understanding the nature, lifestyles, and trends of the individual consumer in each market group (Nabirasool, 2014). Each characteristic of the cluster represents changing customer values, attitudes, and behavior patterns (Nabirasool, 2014). For example, a grocery store might note a trend toward Asian foods, spicier foods, or healthier foods (Nabirasool, 2014). Small business owners can then specify essential characteristics of their target markets and then use the appropriate market strategies to appeal to the changing consumer base (Nabirasool, 2014).

*Competitive intelligence* (CI) is the gathering, analyzing, and distributing of information about products, customers, and competitors to support owners, leaders, and managers with decision-making and strategy planning for competitive advantage in the marketplace (Bulley, Baku, & Alan, 2014). Most large firms have departments for gathering competitive intelligence (Bulley et al., 2014). Although small business owners might not be able to afford a high budget CI, they still can access marketing research free

online by utilizing search engines such as Google or Altavista, to obtain a list of Web sites that link to specified company websites (Bulley et al., 2014). One of the better ways to gather competitive intelligence is to speak to customers, employees, suppliers, or competitors (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011). Small businesses can have the advantage over larger enterprises by gathering intelligence more rapidly and at lower cost; however, small-scale owner-entrepreneurs must have sufficient drive and dedication (Amankwah-Amoah, 2011).

Small business owners should do a market analysis to identify direct, indirect, and potential competitors (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). Using market analysis tools will help business owners to know about the market share, pricing, product offers, distribution, and promotion strategies of their competitors (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). Sihite and Simanjuntak (2015) mentioned that customer-centric companies have the advantage of flexibility to change with the demands of the market. The authors suggested some generic strategies based on Porter's five forces models including cost leadership, product differentiation, and targeting of niche markets. Cost leadership provides entry barriers to competitors and increases market share significantly for a long-term strategy (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). Differentiation creates products that are unique such as different design, new technology, or brand image (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). Using these strategies, small business owner-entrepreneurs need to have marketing skills and use innovation strategies to create brand loyalty and reduce substitutes (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015). Small business owners can build on their strengths by concentrating



within niche markets by focusing on a particular customer group and market segment (Sihite & Simanjuntak, 2015).

With globalization, small business owners enhance their advantages through formalization of international relationships, cultural achievements, management methods, new technologies, and easier access to different goods and services (Bettiol, Di Maria, & Finotto, 2012). Conversely, small business owners also face threats such as aggressive competition, financial constraints, and procurement challenges (Bettiol et al., 2012). Bettiol et al. (2012) conducted a study regarding entrepreneurial marketing and entrepreneurial behavior to understand the marketing strategies of small business owners using sensemaking in their marketing efforts (Bettiol et al., 2012). Small business owners sometimes lack marketing planning strategies because of small size, lack of expertise, financial constraints, resource constraints, and difficulty obtaining specialists to assist them (Bettiol et al., 2012). Bettiol et al. (2012) indicated that in spite of the absence of formal marketing strategies, small business owners do apply entrepreneurial marketing for their decision-making. Entrepreneurs use sensemaking as a marketing strategy to access the values of customers and stakeholders concerning product and services offerings (Bettiol et al., 2012).

### **Social Networks and Small Business Entrepreneurship**

Immigrant small business owners have existing social network connections both from overseas and from domestic markets (Qiu & Gupta, 2015). Qiu and Gupta (2015) used the Uppsala model for their study regarding immigrant entrepreneur social networks and market experiences when entering overseas markets. The authors discussed how some

international entrepreneurs leveraged their capabilities and succeeded in a foreign market with limited resources (Qiu & Gupta, 2015). One of the strategies for overseas small business owners to start a business in the United States is to emigrate to a prospective location or a target market near the east coast or west coast such as New York City or California State (Qiu & Gupta, 2015). With this strategy, Chinese and Taiwanese-Americans in Southern California gained a location advantage, creating \$70 billion of revenues and an employment of 440,000 people in 2011 (Qiu & Gupta, 2015).

Co-ethnic networks allow global small business owners to exploit their indigenous knowledge and seek market opportunities abroad (Qiu & Gupta, 2015). Network effects are some of the significant factors that led to their success (Qiu & Gupta, 2015). Qiu and Gupta (2015) also examined the driving forces that encourage immigrant entrepreneurs to start a business overseas. The motivation for these small business owners is to take a risk and seek a good opportunity (Qui & Gupta, 2015). Immigrant small business owners depend a great deal on culturally oriented and specific embedded relationships within their strong social networks (Qiu & Gupta, 2015).

These systems facilitate overseas business owners with reliable suppliers, distributors, and customer bases, which are some of the keys to their success (Qiu & Gupta, 2015). These immigrant businesses also locate close together within individual clusters (Qui & Gupta, 2015). These networks also provide new small business owners with knowledge regarding local regulations, culture, contacts, and competitor information (Qiu & Gupta, 2015). Immigrant small business owners then differentiate their products and services and identify themselves as niche markets (Qui & Gupta, 2015). They also

access and combine resources and technologies from the host country and create innovation through knowledge integration (Qui & Gupta, 2015).

Small business owners build networks and use these linkages to access resources as well as control outcomes (Zhao, 2014). Interpersonal relationships between social networks provide them with support and resources to form alliances (Zhao, 2014). Small business owners might be able to reduce uncertainty and utilize innovation and technology development through extensive external networks (Zhao, 2014). Strategic Alliance (within a social network perspective) requires mutual trust between members because the resultant governance structure forms through informal rules and unwritten codes of conduct (Zhao, 2014).

Social networks provide information that serves as a necessary input for the creative process and for strengthening ties between members (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2015). The significant implications of social networks are opportunity identification and resource mobilization within the geography of small businesses because individual contact networks concentrate within the region in which owners work and live (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2015). Moreover, social networks are pathways for the transmission of private information and resource flows (Song, 2015). These networks reveal the patterns of social connections between individuals, which help owners to adapt capacity and foster innovation (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2015). Small business owners use social networks to access valuable resources such as information, financial capital, skills and knowledge, social legitimacy, skilled labor, reputation, and credibility (Song, 2015). Thus, to succeed

and sustain the business, small business owners need to identify, pursue, and recognize their networks to gain human, financial, and social capital (Song, 2015).

The structure of social networks has changed through online interaction using the Internet (Song, 2015). Small businesses use social networks and blogs to reach their customers and stay competitive in the marketplace (Song, 2015). Small business owners employ social media to get feedback from clients and markets, which can result in change and adaptability in marketing strategies (Song, 2015). By using the Internet and social media, owners can share data and information all over the world in seconds (Song, 2015).

Communication is necessary for business, and active engagement with customers can lead to an improved reputation (Song, 2015). Social media allows brands and users to interact freely and quickly (Song, 2015). Unique profile businesses can give their brands a personality on social networks (Song, 2015). The benefits that companies gain from social media marketing are increased exposure, development of loyal fans, generation of leads, improvement of search ranking, reduced marketing expenses, sales improvement, a growth of business partnerships, and provision of marketplace insight (Song, 2015).

### **Innovation, Technology, and Small Business Entrepreneurship**

Schumpeter (1983) stated that entrepreneurs convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. Small business owners, as entrepreneurs, explore the opportunity and create change (Drucker, 1994). *Creation* is a process of examining and monitoring innovative opportunities (Drucker, 1994). Zhao (2014) stated that some organizations could survive with very limited amounts of innovation by focusing on quality products and improving the products to a level that maintain their competitiveness in the market.

Small business owners apply this same strategy to some products with long lifecycles and few opportunities for innovation (Zhao, 2014).

Trends such as globalization and outsourcing have emerged and driven the innovation process (Zhao, 2014). Small business owners require innovative processes and management to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization to survive in competitive markets (Zhao, 2014). Entrepreneurs must recognize and exploit the opportunity to foster innovation (Zhao, 2014). Small business owners should communicate with team members to understand the concept, share the vision, and encourage a contribution to innovation (Zhao, 2014). Although entrepreneurship and innovation development are essential for small business owners to succeed and sustain in a rapidly changing environment, some small business owners seldom consider innovative changes to their products owing to insufficient resources (Zhao, 2014). Small companies might use the strategy of forming technology alliances, to support one another in obtaining needed resources (Zhao, 2014). Small business owners also use strategic alliances for research and development (R&D) to achieve economies of scale and scope (Zhao, 2014). If one is the first to market with a new product, investors can then gain a significant advantage regarding building a strong customer base (Zhao, 2014).

Lorenzen and Carlsson (2014) discussed Maryann Feldman, who received The Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research in 2013. Feldman's research contributed to the field of innovation that is driven by entrepreneurial activity in different industries. Her study also covered industry relations, intellectual property rights, and high-technology entrepreneurship (Lorenzen & Carlsson, 2014). Feldman's research also

provided an understanding of the role and nature of technological spillovers in different industrial clusters (Lorenzen & Carlsson, (2014). Small business owner-entrepreneurs understand new knowledge, recognize its value, and serve as a mechanism for transmitting knowledge spillover (Qian & Acs, 2013).

Innovations move boundaries and stimulate future growth by improving quality, availability, diversity, and quantity of products and services (Ehrenberger, Koudelkova, & Strielkowski, 2015) Creation is significant for the success of business, increased employment, and competitiveness (Ehrenberger et al., 2015). *Innovation* is the creation of new merchandise or services, or the addition of value to existing products and services to foster efficient and sustainability (Crumpton, 2012). Innovations can be the first of its type in the existing product category, or developed from previous technology, or an updated design of an existing product (Ehrenberger et al., 2015). Drucker (1994) referred to these innovations as breakthrough, complementary, additive, and incremental innovation.

Small business owner-entrepreneurs can create changes in response to competition, and thus promote economic growth (Say, 1855; Schumpeter, 1983). Adversely, innovation can also create the challenge of replacing humans with technology in nearly every sector of the economy (Galindo & Méndez-Picazo, 2013). When small business owners innovate new products and services, they may sometimes produce adverse effects on society, employment, and human behavior (Galindo & Méndez-Picazo, 2013). Innovation requires the collaboration between business, financial institutions, research institutions, and government (Galindo & Méndez-Picazo, 2013).

Financial institutions have to supply a robust budget for entrepreneurial research and development to promote innovation (Galindo & Méndez-Picazo, 2013). As a result, small business owners can create new products and services to increase sales and gain competitive advantage and profit (Galindo & Méndez-Picazo, 2013). Galindo and Méndez-Picazo (2013) had doubts whether innovations are necessary or a waste of resources. Nevertheless, some creations have contributed to protecting the world's environment, such as the introduction of products and services without a carbon footprint, which might slow global warming (Peng & Shiang, 2014).

Business leaders have embraced the global online economy in real time with interactive digital communication (Al Badi, 2014). The ability to share and connect with people, groups, and companies around the world makes online learning a significant resource (Al Badi, 2014). Managing expectations and disruptions are critical for the sustainability of businesses (Al Badi, 2014). Al Badi (2014) discussed the advance of technology on the Internet, which provides companies with an efficient system of doing business that includes many advantages such as cutting costs, saving time, and increasing customer satisfaction.

Innovation can be a critical differentiator between market leaders and their rivals (Al Badi, 2014). Small business owners should choose technologies that are flexible and adaptable for their firm's development and resources. Otherwise, technology can be costly and cumbersome to change later (Al Badi, 2014). Some considerations for selecting technology are functions, cost, ease of use, the ability to upgraded or expanded, and information security (Al Badi, 2014). Successful businesses not only respond to

current customers or organizational needs but also anticipate future trends and develop an idea, product, or service that allows the company to meet future demand rapidly and efficiently (Al Badi, 2014).

### **Ethics, Social Responsibility, and Small Business Entrepreneurship**

Adam Smith (1723-1790) is well known for his contributions to management theory and economic concepts regarding research (Wells & Graafland, 2012). Smith connected companies, the local community, and individuals to one another regarding business social responsibility and ethics concerns (Wells & Graafland, 2012). Small business owners should strive for moral correctness along with economic prosperity, and avoid greedy or corrupt behavior (Wells & Graafland, 2012). Wells and Graafland (2012) suggested that successful small business owners should be industrious and intelligent people who conduct their activities following social values and norms.

Gonin (2015) commented that in the contemporary business world, the social context, economics, and management principles are different from Smith's time. With new technologies and globalization, business organizations have changed in legal form, structure, and social environments (Gonin, 2015). Gonin (2015) argued that when Smith conducted research on social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility (CSR), the study concentrated on small business owners in local communities, instead of a more complex society. As an enterprise grows, the person who runs the company might be a manager and not an owner of the business (Gonin, 2015). Shareholders might concentrate on their profits and return on investment, while the hired managers focus on their assignments and performances, ignoring social responsibility, sometimes resulting in



ethical issues (Gonin, 2015). With the development of technology and innovation, it can be increasingly difficult to identify ethical and moral violations (Gonin, 2015).

Conversely, Werhane (1991) described Smith's idea of entrepreneurship as those who have goodwill, prudence, and self-restraint who pursue competition through the foundation of morality, law, and justice. In fact, the sustainability of organizations could correlate positively with the welfare of other stakeholders (Werhane, 1991). In the 21st century, organizational leaders recognize and discuss corporate social responsibility, based on Smith's conceptual framework, as one of the principle factors for the sustainability of the organization (Wells & Graafland, 2012).

Regarding ethical concerns, misuse or insufficient protection of customer data may involve some loss of customer privacy, or threaten individual security (Halaweh, & Massry, 2015). Halaweh and Massry (2015) discussed the use of Big Data computation to collect and process vast amounts of customer behavior information and interactions, which provides a competitive advantage for organizations. Ethical concerns are particularly high regarding customer financial and medical information (Halaweh, & Massry, 2015). Governments, especially in developed countries, have issued regulations and laws to define legal or illegal conditions for using personal consumer data (Halaweh, & Massry, 2015). It is important that customers pay attention to their rights and the security of their personal information (Halaweh, & Massry, 2015).

Small business owners want to maximize their profit, but for the long run, corporations also need to pay attention to social responsibility, which can increase a company's value (Gherghina & Simionescu, 2015). Although small business owners have

to face the challenges of competitive markets, they should not ignore stakeholder satisfaction, which can have an effect on the success and sustainability of the business (Gherghina & Simionescu, 2015). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) enhances brand value, good reputation, competitive advantage, and financial performance (Gherghina & Simionescu, 2015). As a result, most enterprises try to integrate CSR activities into their core business strategies and make CSR a part of their company's brand (Gherghina & Simionescu, 2015). Firms try to review their CSR practices to evolve with the changing of stakeholder's preferences, demands, and trends for products and services (Gherghina & Simionescu, 2015).

Small business owners need to conduct their businesses in an ethical way and to provide a contribution to their communities, which will promote their reputation and sustainability (Goldman & Bounds, 2015). *Ethics* is the moral value that guides business operations and performance to demonstrate fair competition, protection of the natural environment and social welfare, and responsibility to stakeholders (Goldman & Bounds, 2015). Stakeholders include owners (shareholders), customers, managers, employees, suppliers, local communities, media, environmental groups, business partners, trade unions, and government entities (Goldman & Bounds, 2015). With competitive pressures, entrepreneurs might lose their concentration regarding ethical concerns and focus on dishonest short-term benefits (Goldman & Bounds, 2015).

Ethics should involve all individuals in the organization, not only business owners but also managers and employees to ensure that all act morally and ethically (Goldman & Bounds, 2015). Some of the policies that promote the sustainability of the organization

include environmental, social, and governance policies. The policies address carbon emissions reduction policies, green supply-chain policies, water-efficiency strategies, health and safety improvement, and work-life balance (Goldman & Bounds, 2015).

Despite the economic benefit of tourism, hotels, resorts, and restaurants as important industries for a nation, they can also be sources of environmental damage and sustainability (Tibon, 2015). Their operations can create environmental effects such as solid waste, noxious gas emissions, wasted water, and energy consumption (Tibon, 2015). For example, the using of a cooling system and refrigeration of restaurants and hotels that use chlorofluorocarbons could diminish the ozone layer (Tibon, 2015). Tour industries create carbon footprints with their transport operations (Tibon, 2015). Small business owners must have a strategy for protecting the environment and sharing a vision of pollution protection, production stewardship, and sustainable development (Tibon, 2015). Tibon (2015) mentioned some of the strategies for environment protection such as checking and repairing leakages of water and gas, installing a grease trap, adjusting to a lower temperature for cold storage facilities overnight, learning the proper use and disposal of hazardous substances, and using efficient compact daylight bulbs.

### **Government Support and Small Business Entrepreneurship**

The main government supports for small business entrepreneurs are grants, subsidies, loans, tax breaks, innovation funding, and business regulations to facilitate market efficiency (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Although small businesses might think those rules can limit their efforts, the relationships between the value chain, policy makers, researchers, NGOs, and clients can improve small business owner success and

sustainability, as well as achieve a balance of economic, social, and environmental issues (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Small business owners should care about their employees, customers, and the community and work to create positive social change (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). As a result, sustainable enterprises can survive such major shocks as global recessions, worker strikes, executive scandals, and boycotts by environmental activists (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Policy makers believe that society would greatly benefit from a more transparent exchange of information and a clearer distribution of responsibilities (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Education can assist consumers in improving decision-making rather than adding to their confusion (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Collaborative opportunities for small businesses exist not only in knowledge production and corporate skills development but also in fostering innovation as a means to sustainability (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014).

Government support for both financial and non-financial assistance is significant for the success and viability of small businesses (Uddin & Bose, 2013). Small business owners use business-friendly environments and lenient regulations to stimulate new business development, create new employment opportunities, and foster innovation (Phillips et al., 2014). The role of government includes creating jobs and providing entrepreneurial skills training and support, which are significant for the growth of the economy, the welfare of communities, and the sustainability of small businesses (Phillips et al., 2014).

Sihite and Simanjuntak (2015) discussed the issues of global warming, cost efficiencies, and limitations of fossil energy. Government facilities have encouraged

businesses to operate and initiate products or services that are friendly to the global environment (Sihite & Sinanjuntak, 2015). Companies such as Wal-Mart, IKEA, Southwest Airlines, McDonald's, and FedEx have used competitive strategies and technologies to convert their companies to green businesses, providing products and services with social value (Sihite & Sinanjuntak, 2015).

Llyaraja (2015) emphasized that government educational support is necessary for the growth of the economy and higher employment rates. Llyaraja (2015) studied the Indian education system and its effect on small business owner-entrepreneurship. The author noted that when people plan for careers, they start with education selection and specialized training to build a strong foundation for a future occupation or profession (Llyaraja, 2015). During the 2008 financial crisis, the country's economic downturn resulted in increased unemployment among educated workers (Llyaraja, 2015).

Llyaraja (2015) conducted a survey and found that most Indian people prefer to be entrepreneurs if possible. The Indian government has tried to improve various regulations and supports to promote and nurture entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship education (Llyaraja, 2015). The government motivates and facilitates students to obtain a higher education level for the sake of future nation economic development (Llyaraja, 2015).

Some Indian entrepreneurs lack entrepreneurial attitude, training, awareness, experiences, and prospects for becoming successful small business owners. Factors that hinder the emergence of small business owner entrepreneurship are the lack of start-up funds, the difficulty of accessing technology, lack of adequate networks, lack of sufficient information, operational challenges and procedural hurdles, lack of backup

systems, no mentoring support, and the fear of failure (Llyaraja, 2015). Small business owner entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation that requires energy and passion to be able to succeed (Llyaraja, 2015). In fact, entrepreneurial education is necessary for enhancing entrepreneurial behavior and mindset, and building self-confidence and self-efficiency for organizational leadership (Llyaraja, 2015). An entrepreneurial orientation enhances financial skills, marketing strategies, social networks efficiency, the creation of innovation, and the ability to identify opportunities in the marketplace (Llyaraja, 2015).

### **Restaurant Business Ownership**

Restaurants are one of the six major industries in the field of hospitality-tourism (NRA, 2014). To start-up a new restaurant, small business owners should consider many factors such as the type of restaurant, start-up capital and financing, location, hiring and recruiting, the style of foods, competition, and market segmentation (NRA, 2014). One of the most difficult parts might be the running of the company from day to day. Other businesses might close on the weekend, but a restaurant business cannot do that (NRA, 2014). Running a restaurant requires business skills, passion, tolerance, energy, and the ability to balance one's personal and working life (Rehman & Muhammad, 2012).

The National Restaurant Association (2014) indicated that 60% of all new restaurants fail within the first three years in business. Restaurant owners should have strategies and knowledge of business management, which include finance, marketing, human relationships, social media and technology, and government regulations (NRA, 2014). The bigger the scope of the business, the more knowledge and skills entrepreneurs

must have, to be successful (Na SaKolnakorn, 2012). Restaurant owners spend most of their time developing menus, managing personnel, ordering inventories, creating and implementing marketing campaigns, and performing other daily administrative functions (NRA, 2014). They also have to be sure that their operations comply with local, state, and federal regulations (Nixon et al., 2015). Restaurant owners can access information services, networking opportunities, training, and various publications from the National Restaurant Association (NRA, 2014).

Parsa, Self, Gregory, and Dutta (2013) classified restaurants into three categories: quick service, midscale, and upscale that serve different market segmentations. Market segmentation can also be indicated by demographic variables such as age, gender, and education (Parsa et al., 2013). Gurau (2012) used the year of birth to categorize consumers into Generation Y or Millennial (1980-2000), Generation X (1965-1980), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), and Senior (1945 and before). Different generations have different values, characteristics, and buying behaviors (Gurau, 2012). Millennials are still young with low brand loyalty and usually prefer fast food and quick-service items (Gurau, 2012). Generation X members have higher financial status and focus on the relationship with their children; they prefer a midscale restaurant type with a comfortable atmosphere and good value (Gurau, 2012). Baby Boomers make up the largest segment of the U.S. population and have the highest per capita income; they prefer upscale restaurants and a formal dining experience (Abraham & Harrington, 2015). The senior group has fixed incomes and may not be able to afford an upscale restaurant; they prefer

good service, reasonable prices, smaller portions, and healthy foods (Milner & Rosenstreich, 2013).

Restaurant owners must know their customer needs, expectations, and perceived value to gain loyalty and patronage (Parsa et al., 2013). Some factors for dining satisfaction are menu variety, food prices and quality, wait time, quality of service, hospitality, convenience, and a relaxing atmosphere (Parsa et al., 2013). Other classifications for a restaurant are the pizzeria, coffeehouse, bakery, sandwich shop and delicatessen, seafood, steakhouses, family-style restaurants, casual dining restaurants, and ethnic restaurants; all have a different environment, service, and prices (NRA, 2014). A restaurant's concept and classification type indicate to patrons a sense of what to expect regarding food choices and the structure of the operation (NRA, 2014).

Restaurant investors choose to invest in the type of restaurants that correlate with their passion and personal characteristics (Na SaKolnakorn, 2012). To prevent failure, before starting a restaurant business, small business owners should work for a few years in the type of restaurant that they want to open, to obtain the skills and experiences that they will need to operate their own company (Na SaKolnakorn, 2012). Some of the factors that can affect the success of a restaurant business are an excellent location with customer parking facilities, background melodious songs, and a pleasing ambiance (Soh, Jayaraman, Choo, & Kiumarsi, 2015). Other factors are rental rates, a term of the lease, layouts, competitors, potential customers, restrictive ordinances (such as limitations on the hours of the day that trucks can legally load or unload), and local planning for future development (Nixon et al., 2015). Entrepreneurs must pay attention to safety regulations



for customers, employees, and the community; a violation might cause authorities to shut down the operation or subject the company to fines (Nixon et al., 2015).

### **Thai Restaurants**

Thailand is a nation of 65 million people, located on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia (Prasartkul & Vapattanawong, 2012). Thai foods have become well known ethnic foods in North America and Britain since 1970 (Kwaengsopha, 2016). There are more than 30 Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City, Utah (Utah.gov). Thai foods are spicy, tasty, and are usually consumed with rice (jasmine rice or sticky rice), followed by a Thai sweet dessert or fresh fruits (Kanchanakunjara, Chantachon, Koseyayothin, & Kuljanabhagavad, 2015).

Thai dishes usually include coconut milk and curry with meat, vegetables, spices (chili, galangal, lemongrass, basil, turmeric, cumin, and kaffir lime leave), and various herbs (Kanchanakunjara et al., 2015). Thai foods are healthy and contain little fat or sugar, so they do not contribute to obesity or diabetes (Kanchanakunjara et al., 2015). There are three types of Thai curry: green curry, red curry, and yellow curry, which depends on the chilies used as ingredients (Kanchanakunjara et al., 2015). Thai foods are usually nicely decorated, colorful, and nutritious (Kwaengsopha, 2016). Lunch is usually a single-dish meal, and the main meal is at dinnertime (Siri, Josiam, Kennon, & Spears, 2012). Thais do not use chopsticks but rather use a flat-bottomed spoon (with a fork to help push food onto the spoon), and a knife is not needed because foods come in bite-sized pieces (Siri et al., 2012).

In July 1999, the Thai Office of the National Culture Commission announced Thai dishes to be one of the top ten favorable foods for foreigners. Tom Yam Kung (spicy shrimp soup), Kaeng Khiao Wan Kai (green curry chicken), Phat Thai (fried noodles of Thai style), Phat Kaphrao (meat or seafood fried with sweet basil), and Massaman curry are some famous Thai dishes (Kanchanakunjara et al., 2015). Thai fish sauce (or Nam pla) is always the essential ingredient in Thai foods (Kanchanakunjara et al., 2015). Fish sauce is famous in many countries in Southeast Asia but is called by many different names such as ngan-pya-ye in Myanmar, tuk Trey in Cambodia, nuoc mam in Vietnam, and baka sang in Indonesia (Kanchanakunjara et al., 2015). Kapi is a typically fermented shrimp paste, which is one of the essential ingredients for many Thai foods (Kanchanakunjara et al., 2015).

### **Transition**

The overarching research question for this study is: What strategies do small business owners need to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years? This doctoral study contains three main sections: Section 1, 2, and 3. Section 1 includes an introduction, background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, and research question. It also includes the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions/limitations/delimitations, significance of the study, and review of the professional and academic literature. In Section 1, I analyzed and discussed the key elements for small businesses success and sustainability, including the strategies and knowledge gained from relevant literature reviews that is based on the conceptual framework of the study.

Section 2 includes a restated purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method, research design, population and sampling, and ethical issue to consider. Section 2 also includes data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, and study validity. Section 3 consists of the presentation of findings, applications to professional practice, and the implications for social change. It also includes recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and the study conclusions.

## Section 2: The Project

During my literature review, I found many studies of small business sustainability, but I found no studies regarding the sustainability of Thai restaurant businesses. Based on the entrepreneurship theories and the knowledge contained in the literature, I conducted a qualitative case study among Thai restaurants owners to explore the strategies they used to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years of establishment. The following section includes information on the purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical research. The section also consists of information on data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years. The targeted population for this research study consisted of three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah. These Thai restaurant owners, who had survived and succeeded in their businesses for more than 5 years, participated in open-ended semistructured interviews. I also used the official company documents from the Utah Business Search (Utah.gov) for methodological triangulation. These official records showed company details such as the registration date, the owner's name, business status, and the address. The implications for positive social change included the potential to improve small business owner efficiency and performance, which may result in higher business income and a better quality of

living for employees and their communities. The implications of the study may also contribute to the government tax base, the national economy, and increased sustainability of small businesses.

### **Role of the Researcher**

A researcher of a qualitative study is the primary data collection instrument who collects, organizes, and analyzes the data (Collins & Cooper, 2014). In a qualitative case study, the role of the researcher is important (Yin, 2014). One of the critical pitfalls occurs when researchers include their worldviews (cultures, background, or experiences) in their studies, which may create bias in the study results (Bernard, 2012). Before conducting a study, researchers must analyze and recognize their worldviews that can affect the interpretation of the study results (Bernard, 2012). To mitigate my personal bias, I used methods such as an interview protocol, data saturation, sensemaking, and member checking as discussed by Bughardt et al. (2012). An interview protocol (see Appendix A) served as a guideline and standard for the interview process (Yin, 2014).

I conducted a qualitative case study to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years. A restaurant business was quite familiar to me as I used to be a consultant for Thai restaurants. A neutral mindset is necessary to mitigate personal bias (Bernard, 2012); therefore, the chosen Thai restaurants were not those restaurants that I had worked with previously. For the purpose of my study, I chose restaurant owners located in different areas of Salt Lake City, Utah, with whom I had not previously consulted.

Triangulation is essential for the validity and reliability of a qualitative case study (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). I conducted a case study using open-ended semistructured interviews with sub-questions, follow-up questions, and probing questions related to the research question (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I reviewed official documents of these Thai restaurants from the company website to demonstrate methodological triangulation (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). Before I conducted the interviews and proceeded to the research results, I obtained the approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). To maintain ethical standards, I used the Belmont Report principles as a guideline throughout the study (Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, & Khodyakov, 2015). Moreover, I interpreted and analyzed the collected data using NVivo software. Last, as a researcher, I realized that one of my important roles was to provide a contribution to the body of the knowledge of research (Yin, 2014).

### **Participants**

Researchers use eligibility criteria as a guideline for choosing participants (Walden University, 2014). Eligibility criteria describe the characteristics shared by all participants, which help researchers obtain the meaningful results from the study (Crisuolo, Martin, Overman, & VanReenen, 2012). My research study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years. Focusing on the research topic and using the Utah's official registration website, I chose three Thai restaurants located in Salt Lake City, Utah, that fit the eligibility criteria for my case study. My knowledge of Thai culture and language facilitated the cooperation and communication with these Thai restaurant owners.

Before I invited these participants for my research study, I had obtained approval from the IRB. I attached the approval statement to the IRB application in the review processes (Walden University, 2014). I also prepared the following forms: consent form, interview protocol, and an invitation to participate in the study; I attached the forms to my research proposal as required by the IRB. After I had obtained IRB approval, I sent an invitation letter to the chosen Thai restaurant owners asking them to participate in my research study and the signing of the consent form once they agreed to be a participant.

A consent form included the purpose of the study, participation requirements, research personnel, potential risk/discomfort, anonymity/confidentiality of the participants, potential benefits, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). The letter of invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix B) provides the details, activities, the purpose of the study, and the request for permissions and cooperation from the study participants. I obtained permission signatures from the owners of the restaurant as recommended by Michelmore and Rowley (2013). I performed the study with ethical concern by following the protocols of the Belmont Report, as indicated by Bromley et al. (2015). I also ensured that my participants had a full understanding of their rights and their role in the study. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) served as a guideline so that I would interview every participant with the same standards regarding reliability and validity, as discussed by Jacob and Furgerson (2012). Interview protocols guide researchers to use open-ended questions, avoid leading questions, and probe the issue in depth (Burgess & Wake, 2013).

## **Research Method and Design**

A researcher will choose a method and design that is appropriate for the research objective, to account for affordable resources, and to answer the research question (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The other factor that determines the research method and design for researchers is their worldview (Bednar & Welch, 2012). Bednar and Welch (2012) stated that people perceive and make decisions based on their points of view.

### **Research Method**

Research methods consist of quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and mixed methods (Venkatesh et al., 2013). A quantitative method is a formal, objective, and systematic process using a large number of participants (selected randomly), to represent a population of interest (Yilmaz, 2013). In a quantitative method, researchers test hypotheses and provide a statistical analysis using experimental or non-experimental designs such as surveys (Allwood, 2012). I explored the strategies that small business owners needed to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years; therefore, a quantitative method might not be able to provide me with an understanding of lived experience and the complexity of the phenomenon because one cannot describe a feeling with figures (Yin, 2014).

The mixed method study is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The advantage of this method is that researchers can use one approach to inform the other, which enhances the validity of the study results (Terrell, 2012). Mixed methods require more resources and expertise because researchers will conduct research with both methods, which can be time-consuming and may require



more expense (Venkatesh et al., 2013). A qualitative method research is a systematic subjective approach, offering insights into the problem, exploring the depth and the complexity of the phenomenon, and gaining the understanding of lived experiences (Yin, 2014). A qualitative research method also gathers information, not in a numerical form, but using face-to-face communication and interaction such as open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations (Yilmaz, 2013). I would be able to ask questions related to the problem, exploring the feelings and perceptions of the participants. With all of these considerations, I chose a qualitative method for my research study.

### **Research Design**

The study designs for a qualitative method include narrative design, grounded theory, phenomenological design, ethnography, and case study (Yin, 2014). When describing an individual life story and experience, chronologically, a researcher will use a narrative design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In the case of studying the reactions, perceptions, and lived experiences of many individuals, researchers will use a phenomenological design (Watkins, 2012). An ethnographic design provides a framework for culture studies of specific groups through direct field observation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). My research study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years, which was not concerned with an individual life story, did not explore individuals lived experiences, and was not a cultural study of specific groups. As a result, all the designs mentioned above were not suitable for my research study.

A qualitative case study design, researcher provides an understanding of a real-life phenomenon in depth, allowing the researcher to ask *how*, *what*, or *why* questions (Cronin, 2014). Case study design includes descriptive design, explanatory design, and exploratory design (Yin, 2014). Researchers use the descriptive case study design to describe an intervention as it occurred and use an explanatory case study for providing explanations for the casual links related to the intervention (Yin, 2014). Researchers use an exploratory case study design to explore situations that have no single clear set of outcomes from the intervention under evaluation (Yin, 2014). Exploratory research also includes interpretations of information gathered during investigations, which consist of unstructured interviews, semistructured interviews, and structured interviews (Yin, 2014). My research study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years, which needed the answers for *how*, *what*, and *why* questions to understand the real-life phenomenon and behaviors. With all these considerations, an exploratory case study was appropriate for my research study.

### **Population and Sampling**

Researchers use a sample of the population for their studies because it is impossible and costly to test an entire population (Khan, 2014). Khan (2014) suggested that researchers use a sample size that aligns with the research questions as well as the purpose statement. Furthermore, a sample size will depend on the nature and method of a research study (Khan, 2014). The sample size for qualitative studies is usually smaller than the sample size for quantitative research (Dworkin, 2012). There is no minimum

amount of participants for a case study as long as the researcher can ensure data saturation and validation of the study results (Murakami, 2013).

The eligibility criteria for my research participants were three Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City, Utah, that succeeded and sustained in their businesses beyond the first 5 years. With a purposive sampling method, researchers select participants based on the purpose of the study (Suen, Huang, & Lee, 2014); I used purposive sampling for my study. I expected each participant to provide rich and valuable information for the study. Using a qualitative case study, I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. To ensure data saturation, I used follow-up and probe questions until there was no available new information or relevant themes and coding, as noted by Rooddehghan, ParsaYekta, and Nasrabadi (2015). After I have conducted the interviews, I transcribed the interview responses. I coded and developed the transcribed data and the secondary data of the company documents, reviewed using the predetermined themes with NVivo program. I also conducted member checking to ensure that I captured the meaning of what was said, and then compared the extracted codes and themes with the collected data to ensure accuracy and validity, as presented by Harper and Cole (2012). For the interview setting, I consulted the interviewees to choose a convenient and comfortable place for the interview, which should not last more than 60 minutes.

### **Ethical Research**

Professional associations, government agencies, and universities have adopted specific codes, rules, and policies to guarantee observance of human rights during research studies (Jedynak, 2014). Before conducting a research study, Walden doctoral

students have to obtain IRB approval; the approval lasts for one year (Walden University, 2014). All Walden University research must comply with the university's ethical standards, U.S. federal regulations, and any applicable international guidelines (Walden University, 2014). After I had obtained IRB approval for my study, I acquired signed consent forms from my participants. The consent form should include background information, procedures, voluntary nature of the study, compensation, risks and benefits of being in the study, and confidentiality. It also included the researcher and university contacts, Walden IRB approval number, and statement of consent.

In the consent form, I introduced myself and informed the participants of the purpose of my study, the study topic, and the process of my research study. I made sure that the participants understood this study before deciding to take part. Furthermore, I explained how this study contributes to business practice and social change for small business. I informed my participants that the study was voluntary; I would treat them with respect, as discussed by Bromley et al. (2015). The participants could withdraw from the study at anytime by calling a researcher or by written notice, and there was no penalty, as noted by Jedynak (2014). If a participant declines to be a part of my study, I would secure the collected data and destroy it. I would give a thank you gift to each participant at the end of the research study. It is Thai culture to show courtesy to people for their cooperation. The value of the gift would not be more than twenty dollars.

My research focused on exploring the lived experiences and the perceptions of small business owners, who are not minors or members of any vulnerable populations, so there was no known risk of participating in my study (Walden University, 2014).

Moreover, I used confidentiality standards to guarantee the privacy and protection of identity by using passwords for all the data. I would not use any personal information or identity for any purposes outside of this research. I addressed my participants as P1, P2, and P3 and also the company names as C1, C2, and C3. For ethical concerns, I followed the protocols of the Belmont Report, as discussed by Bromley et al. (2015). I will destroy the data after it has been kept in a secure place for 5 years, as required by Walden University (2014).

I provided the participants my phone number and email address. They also had the Walden University representative contact number and email address that they could contact them for questions or concerns. The consent form also included the Walden IRB approval number (07-11-16- 0251128) for the study. At the end of the consent form, the participant signed the document for approval of participating. They also had a copy to keep for their records.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The research question for this study was: What strategies do small business owners need to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years? I used a qualitative case study to explore the depth and complexity of the phenomenon, as pointed out by Venkatesh et al. (2013). Conducting a qualitative case study, I could use a small sample size. Following appropriate protocols that related to the research question, the research method, and the research design, I conducted a semistructured interview as the data collection technique. As the person who performed the interviews for the studies, I was the primary data collection instrument.

I conducted open-ended semistructured interviews with three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah. I had nine interview questions that related to the research question and the conceptual framework of the study. To keep the same standard for every participant, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A). An interview protocol helps to guide the interview process, providing standardization and consistency (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I conducted member checking to improve the accuracy, credibility, reliability, and validity of the study, as discussed by Harper and Cole (2012). For methodological triangulation, I searched public information regarding the participant businesses on government or company websites. The official documents contain the details of business registrations including the name of the owner, address, and the registration date. From the company websites, I read their customers' reviews and comments, which provided me some information regarding company management capacity, performance, and reputation.

### **Data Collection Technique**

With a qualitative approach, researchers gather information by describing a phenomenon in a profound and comprehensive manner (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). Some of the data collection techniques are questionnaires, interviews, focus group, direct observations, and participant observations (Adjei & Kyei, 2013). Interviews are the primary source of data for a qualitative case study (Yin, 2014). There are three types of interviews: structured, semistructured, and unstructured (Yin, 2014). A structured interview was not suitable for my study because it contained a set of predefined questions similar to surveys (Rowley, 2012), which were not flexible for the nature of my study. I

used semistructured face-to-face interviews as my data collection technique, which I believed might serve better than unstructured interviews. Using unstructured interviews might not have the standard of sequencing and wording of interview questions. The interview questions should be open-ended questions so that interviewees could provide answers to how, what, or why questions (Yin, 2014). There are six sources of evidence: interviews, observation, participant observation, documentations, archival records, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2014). I used official documentation and archival records in addition to semistructured interviews for methodological triangulation. I did not conduct a pilot study.

The structuring of good interview questions was essential; I used interview questions that focus on gaining insight and understanding of the phenomenon, as described by Anyan (2013). In a face-to-face interview, the communication skills of the interviewer and the concentration of listening such as when to pause, probe, or prompt appropriately are necessary for a qualitative study (Knight, 2012). The ability to encourage the interviewees to talk freely makes it easy to respond. Other interpersonal skills such as the capacity to establish rapport with humor, fostering trust, and demonstrating mutual respect are also important (Anyan, 2013). I created personal relationships with my participants through communicating, commenting, and sharing the interest in the subject matter. The advantage of using open-ended questions is to allow participants to share their thoughts and experiences (Honan, 2014).

Some of the challenges or threats to the validity of the study results include the use of leading questions or the influence of the researcher's preconceived ideas (Anyan,

2013). The appearance of the interviewer (sex, age, ethnic origins) can also affect an interviewee's answer; interviewees might try to please the interviewer and distort the truth (Anyan, 2013). To mitigate this effect, I used member checking to improve the accuracy of the collected data as noted by Harper and Cole (2012). From the beginning, I clearly explained to the participant the purpose of the research and the critical of the information that was of interest from the interview. I also used transcript review to validate the accuracy of the interview results. Whenever the question was not clear, I conducted member checking by asking the participant to confirm the accuracy of my interpretations to ensure that I had captured the meaning of what was said.

#### **Data Organization Technique**

Qualitative methodology depends on the efforts of the researcher for data collection, storage, and analysis (Chen, Mao, & Liu, 2014). I used Zotero to organize the articles found in my literature review. I searched the literature through the Walden Library and Google Scholar, then downloaded and saved them in Zotero. Zotero pulled up all the metadata in PDF form such as the title of the journal article, year, author names, the number of volume and page, and Doi number.

For data collection from participant responses, I conducted a semistructured interview, which generated a lot of text data that may create challenges for data organization. There are many computer technology programs and software to help organize the collected data efficiently (Davidson, 2012). NVivo is one of the software packages that assist in organizing and analyzing data generated from qualitative research such as transcripts from an interview (Kirby, Broom, Adams, Sibbritt, & Refshauge,



2014). Data organization is one of the key steps in an analytical process that aids the researcher to recognize the associations among interviewee responses to research questions (Condie, 2012) and to organize the data from document review and analysis. High quality and well-organized data facilitate data analysis.

Before starting data collection, researchers need to identify key evaluation questions and code themes to match data analysis strategies (Sinnott, Guinane, Whelton, & Byrne, 2013). Through my interview protocol, I used audio recorders and used reflective journaling to keep track of data. Then I imported the interview files into NVivo for transcription, coding of themes, and analysis. While conducting the interviews, I used sensemaking and member checking to enhance the validity and accuracy of the responses. *Sensemaking* is a pattern to diagnosis anomalous data that can lead to deeper data interpretation (Kouokou, Boiral, & Gendron, 2013). Researchers use member checking in a qualitative study to verify the accuracy, creditability, and validity of the interview responses (Harper & Cole, 2012). In a qualitative study, confidential and ethical concerns for data collection are essential (Kim, 2012). All data files in my computer were password protected. I will keep the backup files on a USB memory stick and lock in a fireproof safe for 5 years before destruction.

### **Data Analysis**

I used some predetermined codes to guide data analysis and interpretation; the first important step in data analysis was the immersion into the data to comprehend its entire meaning (Sinnott et al., 2013). Understanding the scope, context, and relationship of the key experiences provides the researcher with a clear picture for analysis (Sinnott et

al., 2013). I used the coding of themes to organize and link the concepts and experiences described in the data. A clear and comprehensive code structure will provide a high-quality data set for subsequent analysis (Sinnotte et al., 2013).

*Themes* are the recurrent unifying concepts or statements about the subject of inquiry (Yin, 2014). After importing documents from Zotero, I used NVivo 11 for Mac to code the materials using the predetermined themes (referred to as *nodes* in NVivo). As I reviewed the data line by line, I might need to code a particular theme as an emerging concept, which can be very easy by using NVivo programs. I could import data, document, audio, or video files, and convert to transcriptions by using NVivo programs without difficulty.

The precoded main themes are *decision-making, innovation, education and training, management skills, financial planning, marketing strategies, social networks, ethics, and government supports*. Coding for new themes might be necessary during the process if new information occurs (Dworkin, 2012). I used follow-up and probe questions for member checking, transcript reviewing, and saturating the data. I imported my audio interviews into NVivo for transcription. After reading through the transcripts, I conducted the coding through NVivo. Finally, I used NVivo for analysis using a matrix-coding query to compare code material among themes as described by Kirby et al. (2014). The analysis of these themes helped me understand what strategies that entrepreneurs or small business owners need to sustain and succeed in their business beyond the first 5 years. Kim (2012) emphasized that dependability, creditability, confirmability, and transferability are essential for a qualitative case study. To improve the accuracy,

reliability, and validity, I triangulated from multiple sources of evidence. *Methodological triangulation* is the use of more than one kind of data collection method to study a phenomenon, for improving validity and reliability of the research results (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). I used methodological triangulation by comparing the information from interviews with official documents from government websites, the company websites, and the customer comments.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Qualitative methods are subjective and researchers are concerned about people's beliefs, experience, and perspective while quantitative methods use statistic analysis and empirical calculation (Denzin, 2012). Researchers using quantitative and qualitative research methods may differ regarding the definitions of reliability and validity (Mangioni & Mckerchar, 2013). Quantitative researchers use internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Mangioni & Mckerchar, 2013). Qualitative researchers prefer to use the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to refer to the reliability and validity of their study results (Street & Ward, 2012).

#### **Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with the ability of the data collection process to demonstrate consistency and repeatable results when using the same procedures (Grossoehme, 2014). In qualitative research, reliability refers to dependability and transferability (Street & Ward, 2012)). Investigators might have doubts whether qualitative research findings and conclusions can apply to other situations and

populations (Grossoehme, 2014). To demonstrate dependability, I reported the processes within the study thoroughly to enable future researchers to repeat the work (Street & Ward, 2012); transferability is always left up to the reader to decide (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). I described the research design and its implementation, the operational detail of data gathering, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the process of the study. If practitioners believe their situations to be similar to that described in the study, they may relate or transfer the findings to their own research (Street & Ward, 2012).

### **Validity**

The validity of a research study is about its accuracy and trustworthiness (Yin, 2014). The validity of a quantitative study refers to internal validity and external validity (Yin, 2014). In a qualitative study, validity refers to creditability and confirmability (Mangioni & Mckerchar, 2013). Researcher bias and competence could affect the creditability and confirmability of qualitative research findings and analysis (Yin, 2014). In qualitative research, sample selection is based on the ability of the participants to provide data relevant to the research question (Suen et al., 2014). To mitigate bias, I triangulated the data to enhance the validity of the research study results. There are four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2012). I used methodological triangulation for my research study. In addition to triangulation, member checking of data interpretation, participant transcription review, and reaching data saturation could increase creditability and confirmability of a qualitative study (Harper & Cole, 2012).

As the primary data collection instrument, I must be aware of the possibility of introducing my bias into the research process. I presented my methods and procedures clearly, precisely, and thoroughly; and described all strategies used in collecting the data. Moreover, I carefully documented my field notes in the context of any observation to enable fellow researchers to form a valid judgment. These methods provided the dependability and transferability of my research study.

Some other factors that might affect reliability and validity of the study results can be the types of participants, the situation or social context, and the method of data collection and analysis (Mangioni & Mckerchar, 2013). I used eligibility criteria for the purposeful sampling when choosing my participants to make the interview responses more meaningful. For my participants to become accustomed to my presence, I visited my participants a few times before starting my data collection. Forming relationships and gaining trust also helped eliminate the tendency of participants to withhold or distort of information, which could affect the creditability and confirmability of the collected data.

Information bias can also occur through other factors such as the poor timing of interviews when the participants are too busy, fatigued, in a bad mood, in pain, or a poor state of health (Mangioni & Mckerchar, 2013). Recognizing these concerns, I considered the right timing and the proper location for conducting the interviews. To enhance the reliability and validity of the collected data, I began by clearly explaining the topic, purpose, participants' role, and the process of the interview to my participants. I also used an interview protocol as a guideline and standard for every interview. Using an interview protocol increased the consistency and reliability of the process (Jacob & Furgerson,

2012). Whenever a participant indicated that the interview question was not clear, I used follow-up and probing questions to ensure data saturation, accuracy, creditability, dependability, and validity of the study results.

Researchers use data saturation as a criterion to evidence the quality of qualitative research for its transparency and creditability (Rooddehghan et al., 2015). The data is saturated when there are no more new themes or essential information, and any further data collection will result in diminishing returns (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). For methodological triangulation, I conducted semistructured interviews together with the collection of official documents and archival records. Using NVivo programs, I identified, compared, and analyzed themes from different data sources, which assisted improving the creditability, reliability, and validity of the collected data and ensured that the data was saturated.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, I restated my purpose statement, described the role of the researcher, and the relationship with participants. I also described how to mitigate researcher bias, discussed standardize interviews by using appropriate protocols, and wrote about the use of eligibility criteria to choose the participants suitable for my research question. I explained why I chose a qualitative case study as my research method and design and discussed the ethical concerns for a research study. Moreover, I had described the data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization technique, and data analysis and noted how dependability, transferability, creditability, and confirmability ensured the reliability and validity of qualitative research.

In Section 3, I presented my findings relevant to the research question: what strategies do small business owners need to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years? After I conducted my interviews and analyzed documents, I transcribed and coded themes to compare the findings with literature reviews, other sources of data, and the conceptual framework. I expressed how the results could affect social change and behaviors. I also recommended any further action or research needed to improve practice in business and alleviate the limitations. Before the conclusion of the study, I included a reflection on my experience for the DBA Doctoral Study Process and then discussed my personal biases, ideas, or values that I might have about the study, which could affect the participants or the situation.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years. Small business owners have generated significant economic growth and job creation in the United States (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). The failure rate of small businesses was as high as 50% to 70% according to a U.S. SBA study in 2014 (SBA, 2015). Finding strategies for small businesses to sustain in their business beyond the first 5 years made this study significant. I conducted semistructured interviews with three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah, for the data collection. I performed data triangulation from my analysis of document reviews.

Based on the entrepreneurship theory conceptual framework, literature reviews, and data collections, I found seven coding themes that related to the strategies needed for a sustainable small business. These themes were (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education background and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (e) social networks and human relationships (f) technology and innovation, and (g) government supports and social responsibility. I performed member checking and methodological triangulation to ensure data saturation, reliability, and validity of the study results. My findings may help small business owners improve their competencies and sustainability. Although this case study of three Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City, Utah, might not represent for all the small businesses in



every industry, I provide some critical thinking and ideas for the further study of the problem.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question for this research study was: What strategies do small business owners need to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years? For the research method and design, I used a qualitative exploratory case study, which could provide insight information for my research question as described by (Baškarada, 2014). For data collection, I conducted semistructured interviews, which included nine open-ended questions (see Appendix C), among three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, I addressed my participants as P1, P2, and P3 and their companies as C1, C2, and C3 in my data collection and analysis. A case study design (using interview data) enabled me to understand the phenomena, the participant experiences, and the participant viewpoints as described by Dasgupta (2015).

One of the important factor concerns using a qualitative case study is the researcher's bias. To mitigate my bias, I used an interview protocol, sensemaking, and member checking in the collecting data process (Harvey, 2015). Member checking helped clarify the meaning of what was said by the participants (Koelsch, 2013). Researchers use sensemaking to diagnose and explain phenomena and use it as an analysis and interpretation tool (Paull, Boudville, & Sitlington, 2013). I used methodological triangulation for validity and reliability in the process of data analysis. These triangulation data sources included field notes, company websites, customer

comments, and government official documents besides the interview data as described by Houghton et al. (2013).

I entered all the collected data into NVivo 11 for Mac to identify nodes or themes for analysis. I found seven emerging themes from the content analysis process as shown in Table 1. The themes indicated strategies needed for a small business owners to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years, which consist of (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (f) technology and innovation, (g) social networks and human relationships, and (h) government supports and social responsibility. Data saturation helps enhance trustworthiness and validity (Robinson, 2014). The data were saturated when there was no new information or themes appeared, and the data became repetitive as described by Fusch and Ness (2013). I used member checking for clarification until no new information existed.

Table 1

*Emergent Nodes/Themes*

<i>Nodes/themes</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Entrepreneur characteristics	5	45
Education and management skills	5	47
Financial planning	4	21
Marketing strategies and competitive advantages	5	78
Technology and innovation	4	18
Social networks and human relationships	5	22
Government supports and social responsibility	3	8

The initial codes and themes came from the transcribed interviews and other collected data, which related to the research question, the conceptual framework, and the existing body of knowledge from literature reviews. The findings indicate the strategies needed for small business owners to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years.

### **Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

The three Thai restaurant owners met the criteria of being the successful entrepreneurs who have sustained in their business more than five years. Their businesses are located in Salt Lake City, Utah. I entered the data from interviews, field notes, member checking, customer comments, and government documents into NVivo and found the following seven themes.

### **Emergent Theme One: Entrepreneur Characteristics**

The characteristics of an entrepreneur, according to the entrepreneurship theory concept are a risk taker, a decision maker, a leader, and a creator who allocates resources with motives, traits, self-efficacy, and competencies (Cantillon, 1755; Say, 1855; Schumpeter, 1983). McClelland and Winter (1971) believed that entrepreneurs are people who make a decision in times of uncertainty for achievement. I had analyzed the data from interviews, field notes, member checking, customer comments, and government documents of P1, P2, and P3 and coded as theme 1 (Table 2), which showed 45 references related to entrepreneur characteristics.

Table 2

*Node/Theme 1: Entrepreneur Characteristics*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Entrepreneur characteristics	5	45

From my literature reviews, I found that entrepreneurs have some common personality traits such as curiosity, decision making, innovative, self-disciplined, and self-motivated which allows them to tolerate stress as noted by Pawęta (2015). One of the participants said that every small business owners had to confront with stress such as stress from competition, human resource management, and financial management (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16). The week before I could interview P2, the restaurant had to close the business for three days; P2's wife (who is the main chef) had to stay in the hospital for muscle stress because of hard work (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; customer comments, 09-18-16). Small business owners must be able to live with uncertainty and push through a crucible of obstacles for years (Pawęta, 2015). P2 said that before they became successful, they had failed so many times, but the most important thing was that they did not give up (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16).

Entrepreneurs must have the characteristics, from tenacity to the ability to tolerate risks with an entrepreneurial orientation, which are crucial to a successful venture (Pawęta, 2015).

Entrepreneurs are driven by a passion for their product or service, willing to take a reasonable risk, and have the ability to set goals for a better life (Money & Odibo,

2015). P3 mentioned that as an investor, you could hardly avoid risk but when you have the passion and the goal, you will have the opportunity for success (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). This was confirmed by the study of Cardon and Kirk (2013) who found that the relationship between the passion of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial self-efficacy drives persistence. The motivations for becoming an entrepreneur are personal satisfaction, to fulfill their passion, and the need for financial independence (Ahmad & Arif, 2016). P2 paid out the loan ten years ago, and they have possessed another two buildings next to their restaurant for increased usage and parking lot (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; government documents, 09-18-16).

All three participants have a passion for cooking Thai foods (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). P1 and the other family members had been working in other restaurants for four years before they started their own business twelve years ago (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16). They gained experience and saved \$40,000 to use as their startup fund (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; member checking, 09-17-16). P2 mentioned that the recognition of opportunity in making profit influenced their decision-making to have a restaurant business (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16). P2 and his wife worked in a restaurant for a couple of years to get some experiences and to learn how to run a restaurant business before they had their own restaurant (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; member checking, 09-20-2016). P3 was convinced that having self-confidence, autonomy, and self-efficacy led to having his own business and to be his own boss (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16; member checking, 09-

24-16). With the passion and experiences of cooking, he and his wife decided to open a Thai restaurant in 2008 (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16).

Entrepreneurs need the ability to withstand the fear of uncertainty and potential failure and to make a conscious decision by looking at the situation, pushing through the fear, and having control over the outcome (Pawęta, 2015). Self-confidence is a key entrepreneurial trait, which is a belief that turns the risk proposition around by conducting enough research and has enough confidence to ameliorate the risk and get the job done (Pawęta, 2015). For small businesses, the period of 1-5 years are the stages of discovery, making mistakes and learning from failures, gaining experiences, overcoming failures, and retaining sustainability (Amurao & Panlilio, 2016). The emergent theme of entrepreneur characteristics aligned with the entrepreneurship theory conceptual framework and the body of knowledge from the literature review in this study.

### **Emergent Theme Two: Education and Management Skills**

According to my entrepreneurship conceptual framework, Say (1855) emphasized that entrepreneurs should have competence and managerial skills in creating productivity and opportunity for jobs. Schumpeter (1983) indicated that entrepreneurs should have knowledge of consumer behavior, resource allocation, the creation of innovation, and adaptation to a changing business environment. Self-employment is a powerful tool to create work and boost the economy; therefore, it is important to have an efficient education system capable of tapping the critical skills of entrepreneurship to tackle and resolve issues (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). I entered the data into NVivo for coding theme 2:

education and management skills. Using five data sources, I found 47 references supported this theme as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Node/Theme 2: Education and Management Skills*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Education and management skills	5	47

Entrepreneurial skill and experience affect the propensity of individuals to become entrepreneurs and the likelihood of their success (Hietanen & Jarvi, 2015). A successful entrepreneur learns from failure and experience and has the flexibility to adjust or change to fit the market condition (Hietanen & Jarvi, 2015). A suitable educational program helps develop entrepreneur management competencies and increases the chances of success and sustainability for small businesses (Qureshi, Saeed, & Wasti, 2016). Skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, risk bearing, working in a team, and self-reliance are not only natural gifts, but they can be learned, which requires vision and a wise strategy for staff recruitment and training (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014).

P1 showed her diplomas of two bachelor degrees related to food science and agriculture (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; document review, 09-15-16). P2 has a master degree in electrical engineer (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16). P2 had been working as the department manager in one company for many years before he started his restaurant business; therefore, he has the management skills, knowledge, and experiences required to operate a successful business (P2, personal communication, 09-

18-16; member checking, 09-20-2016). Small business owners seldom employ specialists and often use their own resources (Franco, Santos, Ramalho, & Nunes, 2014). P2 has an electric engineer background; therefore, he always takes care of the maintenance of his restaurant, which saves him a lot of money (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; field notes, 09-18-16). P2 mentioned that his wife had been working as a second chef in one of the Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City, Utah for many years before they started their own business. He said his wife loves cooking and she has made her dream come true: as the owner of a well-known Thai restaurant in Salt Lake City in the state of Utah (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; member checking, 09-20-2016).

P3 was educated in crafts before becoming a property manager and a Thai restaurant owner; he thought that a degree was not necessary to run a small business like his restaurant (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). P3 said he did not have a degree, but he has the management skills, which come from many years of work experiences as a property manager (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). P3 mentioned that his wife has a bachelor degree in housing and food service management (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). He thought her cooking is outstanding and is one attraction and reason for their successful restaurant patronage (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16; field notes, 09-24-16). P3 seemed to have a different idea about education when he said that a degree was not necessary. He indicated that learning from experience is considered a way of education for small business owners. Theme 2 aligns with the existing body of knowledge from literature reviews and the conceptual framework of this study.



### **Emergent Theme Three: Financial Planning**

In the entrepreneurship theory concept, Cantillon (1755) indicated that entrepreneurs allocate resources to maximize financial return and to equilibrate supply and demand in the economy. Financial planning is important because it establishes the financial goals of the company (Albuquerque, Filho, Nagano, & Philippsen, 2016). A forecast plan demonstrates the startup money that small business owners need. The forecast plan also shows where a shortfall will occur so that entrepreneurs can adjust the revenue and expense projection to avoid the issue or make sure to have other funds available, such as their savings or a loan to cover any cash deficit (Albuquerque et al., 2016).

A financial plan includes a projected profit-and-loss statement for the next three to five years with a break-even analysis, a cash flow statement, and a balance sheet (Albuquerque et al., 2016). Investors and lenders request to see the entrepreneur's business plan, including the financial plan with projections and assumptions behind the forecasts (Xiang & Worthington, 2015). If the financial plan is unrealistic, the loan or investment will not be forthcoming (Xiang & Worthington, 2015). Table 4 represents theme 3, showing the coding data analysis from four sources with 21 references for financial planning.

Table 4

#### *Node/Theme 3: Financial Planning*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Financial planning	4	21

In 2015, ethnic small businesses such as Thai restaurants were growing very fast in the USA (Bewaji, Yang, & Han, 2015). When small business owners start a business, they assume it will be successful, but many entrepreneurs find out after launching the company that success can be elusive (Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawata, 2015). Creating a business plan with the accompanying financial plan is a feasibility study of what it takes to be successful and profitable (Hayes et al., 2015). The financial plan helps small business owners know whether the resources are out of their reach or the market is too unstable for the investment (Verstina, Akimova, Kisel, Chibisova, & Lukinov, 2015).

P1, P2, and P3 prepared their financial plans before started their business (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). P2 used an official financial plan to apply for a small business loan through a business advisor after running his business for one year (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; government document review, 09-20-2016). P3 used his financial plan to acquire an angel loan as part of his startup fund (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). With a financial plan, entrepreneurs would be able to analyze whether their prices or manufacturing costs are too high to earn a profit or not when comparing to those of their competitors (Verstina et al., 2015).

P1 said cost control is critical because she uses a low price policy as a differentiated strategy (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16). According to P2, before he started his business he had his financial plan as a guideline for the timeframe in deciding when was the right time to start his business and when he should expand (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16). Monitoring the actual results against the budget in

the financial plan gives small business owners the opportunity to take necessary steps to get back on track (Verstina et al., 2015). Overall, theme 3 aligned with the existing body of knowledge regarding the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

#### **Emergent Theme Four: Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantages**

From entrepreneurship theory, Schumpeter (1983) described an entrepreneur as a person who allocates resources with the capability to adapt personal strengths and weaknesses and handle threats and opportunities in a changing environment. For small businesses, marketing planning is informal in structure, implementation, and evolution (Franco et al., 2014). Marketing plans help analyze a succinct overview of a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to gain competitive advantages (Brooks, Heffner, & Henderson, 2014). Strengths and weaknesses refer to characteristics that exist within the business such as superior products and services, while opportunities and threats refer to outside factors such as the effect of competitors, the structure of the industries, and government regulations (Albuquerque et al., 2016)). I used marketing strategies and competitive advantages as theme 4 (Table 5) for the data analysis, which showed 78 references from five sources.

Table 5

*Node/Theme 4: Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantages*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Marketing strategies and competitive advantages	5	78

Small business owners should have a marketing plan as an indicator of growth potential and an essential tool for their survival (Franco et al., 2014). Marketing strategies are the result of market analysis, which enables entrepreneurs to become familiar with the aspects of the market to define the target market, to establish pricing, distribution, and promotional strategies within a competitive environment (Osiri, 2013). Small business owners use pricing as one of the marketing strategies by controlling the cost of goods sold to enable a lower competitive price and to gain higher market shares and profits (Felzensztein & Gimmon, 2014).

P1 explained the using of a lower price strategy as her competitive advantage, her customers always post on the restaurant website and comment on the recommendation of a place to dine with authentic taste and a reasonable price (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; customer comments, 09-15-16). P1 mentioned that being in business for so many years, she could be able to predict the trend for the prices of raw materials that she uses for cooking (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; member checking, 09-17-16). P1 showed her storage and said that she keeps stock of raw materials when there is a trend that the prices will go up, to maintain lower costs, and to enable lower selling prices (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16, field notes, 09-15-16). Many kinds of fresh vegetables are quite cheap in summer but very expensive in winter owing to rarity such as herbs and spices (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). Before an out of season period, P1, P2, and P3 will buy materials in bigger lots and freeze them for using in the winter. Frozen herbs might not taste as good as fresh ones, but it is better than not having the

ingredient, which is a crucial matter for preparing and cooking Thai foods (P1, member checking, 09-17-16; P2, member checking, 09-20-16; P3, member checking, 09-24-16).

P2 showed the prices in his menu comparing with the prices of P1's menu from P1's website that P2 uses a different pricing policy from P1, by setting up higher prices on the menu and providing a larger plate of food (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16, documents review, 09-18-16). P2 said that this is the better way to promote sales and return on investment (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; member checking, 09-20-2016). P3 prefers using an average price to cover more segments of the market (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16; field notes, 09-22-16). Some other challenges for addressing competition are resource constraints in personnel and capital, to be able to exploit an opportunity (Lamine, Mian, & Fayolle, 2014). Small business owners must be able to identify their opportunities by considering ways to allocate their limited resources or obtain other supports to exploit the opportunity (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). The findings from theme 4 aligned with the existing body of knowledge and the conceptual framework for this study.

#### **Emergent Theme Five: Social Networks and Human Relationships**

Entrepreneurship theory relates to social networks and human relationships, according to Say (1855); a successful entrepreneur should be able to identify new opportunities for coordination. Small business entrepreneurs use communication skills to motivate and lead other people to follow their vision (Omri & Frikha, 2015). Social media and networking gives individuals the power to connect and interact with each other from different geographical locations and plays a necessary role in fostering business

growth and personal relationships (Omri & Frikha, 2015). I coded theme 5 as social networks and human relationships (Table 6) for my data analysis, the results showing 22 references from five sources.

Table 6

*Node/Theme 5: Social Networks and Human Relationships*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Social networks and human relationships	5	22

A social network is a network of social relations that entrepreneurs use to connect to other people such as friends, family members, business associations, and other people to build relationships (Kabir et al., 2014). A successful small business owner should be competent in building relationships with other people such as team, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and investors using social networks (Song, 2015).

P1 showed her personal Facebook communication page on her mobile phone and said that social networking is crucial for her; it helps her to connect with suppliers and customers (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; document review, 09-15-16). In the summertime, farmers will bring their crops to the farmer market where sellers and buyers will meet and acquaint with each other (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16). P1 will buy vegetables and many other products from these farmers for her cooking in her restaurant every year, and at the same time, these suppliers will become her customers, which grows the volume of patronage for her restaurant (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; member checking, 09-17-16). P1 said social networking helps build relationships and trust between her and her customers; she pointed at the messages wrote

by her customers on the dining walls showing their appreciation (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; document review, 09-15-16). P1 mentioned that besides the company website, she also use social medias such as Facebook and Line in their daily communications to obtain every kind of information such as the trend of product prices, new government regulations, or new entry of competitors (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16). She also uses social media to send information, promotions, and communication with her clients (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; field notes, 09-15-16).

P2 explained how social media and social networks work for them; their restaurant has a nice ambiance including Thai antique decorations (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; field notes, 09-18-16). P2 said many people came to eat at the restaurant, took photos, and posted on social media; P2 showed the photos that were posted (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; document review, 09-18-16). P2 said that this is better than advertising; it is the power of *word-of-mouth promotion* when they tell their experiences to their friends (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16). P2 added that their customers would also put comments, recommendations, and ratings on his restaurant website (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16). P2 said that although the ratings might not be so accurate; his friend has a much smaller restaurant and is not as busy as he is, but the rating was higher than his. He showed both ratings (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; company websites review, 09-18-16). The secret is that his friend asked many of his relatives and friends to rate his restaurant as a favor (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16). Nevertheless, these comments and ratings can assist

in decision-making for people who are looking for a particular place to have a nice meal (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16).

P3 described social media and social networks as tools that provide information for the industry (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16; member checking, 09-24-16). He uses social media such as Facebook and Line to ask for advice from his friends who have been in the restaurant business longer than him (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). He also uses social networks in seeking for an angel loan, as a startup fund (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). When he was short of his workforce, he would post in the community social media; and someone would answer the posts or made helpful recommendations (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16).

Small business owners develop relationships and create strategic alliances to gain benefits and solve the limitation of their resources through their social network and connections (Pawęta, 2015). Social networks help small business owners to access funding and human resources, provide the information of government regulation policies, and marketing intelligence data (Omri & Frikha, 2015). They use the integration, reconfiguration, and relocation of resources to create market opportunities (Pawęta, 2015). The findings of theme 5 aligned with the body of knowledge and the conceptual framework of this study.

### **Emergent Theme Six: Technology and Innovation**

Referring to entrepreneurship theory, Schumpeter (1983) suggested that an entrepreneur should convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. Innovation creation is an essential role for entrepreneurs (Drucker, 1994). Entrepreneurs



have a vision for an opportunity to identify overlooked niches and put them at the forefront of innovation (Senyard, Baker, Steffens, & Davidson, 2014). Breakthrough innovation involves transformative, disruptive, uncertainty, and complexity (Ndubisi & Agarwal, 2014). Innovation can improve business growth and is a valuable complement to marketing, finance, IT, and product development (Omri & Frikha, 2015). All live in a technological age and global economy; competition has become knowledge-based, and innovation has been the driver of sustainable competitive advantage for small and medium-sized enterprises (Hayter, 2013). Technological innovation contributes to higher levels of economic output and can deliver new goods and services that change human lives and capabilities (Wang, Kitvorametha, Wang, 2014). I used theme 6 (Table 7) as the coding for technology and innovation data analysis, which showed the result of 18 references from four sources.

Table 7

*Node/Theme 6: Technology and Innovation*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Technology and innovation	4	18

Asking P1 about technology and innovation concern, she said that her innovation might be the including of new menu “Nam Kra Jeap” (healthy drink from Thai fruit) and homemade coconut ice cream, which differentiate her restaurant from another restaurant (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; member checking, 09-17-16). Many Thais and other customers always order this drink because it tastes good and reminds them what

they used to have back in Thailand and could not find in any other restaurant (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16).

P2 said that he used computer programs, which are helpful for accounting and sale analysis (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; member checking, 09-20-2016). P2 also showed many high technology tools in his kitchen that he bought to use for more efficiency and safety (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; field notes, 09-18-16). P2 also created some unique seafood dishes with higher prices for high-end customers as shown in his menu (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; document review of menu, 09-18-2016). P3 showed his special menu for dessert that one could not find anywhere else (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16; document review, 09-22-2016). P3 also mentioned using the innovative funding such as an angle investor (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16).

Technological innovation is inextricably tied to the growth of a country's economy (Abhyankar, 2014). Entrepreneurs bring in opportunities by exploiting and developing new technology to gain more power and development across various sectors and industries (Moghavvemi & Salleh, 2013). Business owners use technology and innovation as advantages over other competitors (Maritz & Donovan, 2015). With extensive market research, entrepreneurs could pinpoint current trends that help develop technology and innovation for their businesses and consumers (Schott & Sedaghat, 2014). Technology and innovation facilitate monetary assistance by fledgling business ventures through various forms of funding with different sources such as angel investors and crowdfunding (Mayer, Harima, & Freilling, 2015). Crowdfunding involves raising

money for ventures by attracting many investors using social media and Internet channels (Quero & Ventura, 2015). I found the findings theme 6 aligned with the body of knowledge and the conceptual framework for this study.

### **Emergent Theme Seven: Government Support and Social Responsibility**

Applying the entrepreneurship theory to entrepreneur social responsibility, Schumpeter (1983) indicated that entrepreneurs drive economic progress and create social value. Entrepreneurial social responsibility is essential for their sustainability (André & Pache, 2016). Small businesses and entrepreneurial startups are critical engines of a country's economy, social growth, and development (Omar, 2014). As a result, the government supports for SMEs' development and financial loans have been a subject of great interest for policy makers (Wonglimpiyarat, 2015). Table 8 showed the coding theme from data analysis related to government support and social responsibility. The result showed only eight references because the participants seldom use the support from the government.

Table 8

#### *Node/Theme 7: Government Support and Social Responsibility*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Government support and social responsibility	3	8

From data collection analysis, P1 indicated that social responsibility is essential for business sustainability (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16). As the organization's leader, she conveyed her vision to her employees with the concept of "always treat your customers the way you want to be treated," and she always leads by example as she

showed the messages on the wall (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; document review, 09-15-16). P1 emphasized that ethics and responsibility are very significant to gain social trust and promote word-of-mouth advertising (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; field notes, 09-15-16). P1 also mentioned that it is everyone's responsibility to protect the environment from waste and pollution and to save energy whenever possible (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16; field notes, 09-15-16). P1 seldom used government support and did not have much information about it (P1, personal communication, 09-15-16)

P2 said providing training for the employees was necessary so that they could work efficiently (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; field notes, 09-18-2016). He motivated his workers to have discipline and responsibility by putting the picture for the outstanding employee on the wall (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; document review, 09-20-2016). P2 reiterated to his employees that they must pay attention to the quality of food and services and take it as a priority (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; field notes, 09-18-2016). He included many healthy dishes in his restaurant's menu (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; document analysis of menu, 09-18-16). P2 said he also provided free lodging for some employees for their hard work and loyalty (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16).

P2 obtained financial support from the government through a small business loan on the SBA website, which was very helpful in their early years of business (P2, personal communication, 09-18-16; member checking, 09-20-2016). On the contrary, P3 disliked discussing government support for small businesses, saying that small businesses could

hardly get the financial assistance from the government because they are too small to get the government's attention (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). P3 was disappointed when he tried to obtain a loan from the government financial support; however, he managed to get his startup fund from an angel investor (P3, personal communication, 09-22-16). Nascent entrepreneurs should look for assistance programs, which guide preparation and affect startup success (Yusuf, 2014). Overall, the findings aligned with the body of knowledge and conceptual framework for this study.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The purpose of this research study was to explore what are the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years, using a qualitative case study with semistructured interviews and document analysis. I conducted the interviews with three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah. I found seven themes using NVivo coding, which consisted of (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (e) social networks and human relationships, (f) innovation and technology, and (g) government supports and social responsibility. Small business owners should build their strategies based on the essential details that contained in these seven themes for their business sustainability.

Based on entrepreneurship theory, the characteristics of an entrepreneur are risk takers who allocate resources to maximize financial return (Cantillon, 1755). A successful entrepreneur must have management skills and competency, problem-solving capability, adaptability, self-direction and initiative, critical thinking, innovative,

communication skills, and collaboration skills (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Entrepreneur characteristics and qualifications indicate the degree of success and sustainability for small business owners (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). Education and training can enhance their capability for strategies planning to succeed and sustain in their businesses (Oncioiu, 2012).

The findings from this study indicate that most Thai restaurant owners started a small business investment from their passion. They took risks and looking for the opportunity to make profits. They have most of the entrepreneur qualifications, which made them success and sustain in their business beyond the first 5 years. Small business owners who started with limited resources and did not have the entrepreneur qualifications might not sustain their businesses. When their companies grew bigger, and they did not have enough experience and resources such as management skills or sufficient fund, scarce resources could force them to go out of business. The biggest problem that small business owners (especially Thai restaurant owners) have is the lack of a business plan; therefore, they could not foresee heading in the right direction.

Small business owners should set aside a certain time for business planning, to revise and analyze their performance instead of just doing the daily routine. Attending seminars and training are necessary for updating knowledge and social networking for small business owners, to empower the creation of business strategies for their success and sustainability (Mitchell, Madill, & Chreim, 2014). The U.S. Small Business Association offers many supporting programs for small business entrepreneurs (SBA, 2015). The important planning strategies that small business owners should have are

managerial planning, financial planning, human resource planning, operation planning, and marketing strategies planning.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Small businesses are essential to a growing economy in every country (SBA, 2014). In 2013, small businesses contributed 51% of the country's payroll, 65% of the new jobs, and 97.5% of the exports from the United States (SBA, 2014). The knowledge garnered from this study is essential for small business owners regarding strategies needed for them to sustain the business beyond the first 5 years. Sustainability reinforces the integrity and legacy of the small business owners as the leaders of their companies, the jobs providers for the employees, the preserver of the environment, the suppliers of product and service for their community, and the driver for the growth of the country economic.

The failure or success of small businesses will have a significant effect or contributions for individuals, communities, organizations, society, and the country (Michell et al., 2014). Michell et al. (2014) mentioned that the combination of social enterprise and social marketing approaches is a powerful tool in the quest for improved social outcomes. Social enterprises are organizations that handle social issues through the application of business practices and principles (Michell et al., 2015). Social enterprises focus on generating social and economic value, value creation, and value dissemination, which rely on organizational marketing capabilities (Michell et al., 2014). Social marketing is primarily utilized by governments such as ministries of health, agriculture, and non-profit organizations with the purpose of social and community wellbeing

improvement and a contribution to positive social change (Michell et al., 2014). The working together between small business owners, social enterprises, and social marketing will accelerate the outcomes for positive social change.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Dahmen and Rodriquez (2014) indicated that from the research study in 2013, the failure rate for small businesses was 50% for the first 5 years. This high failure rate has a negative effect on the economy and the employment rate of the country (SBA, 2014). Business sustainability makes firms resilient, so they will be able to confront a changing environment (Michel et al., 2015). Understanding business sustainability helps create long-term financial value and reduces the negative effect on the environment, employees, and community (Michell et al., 2015).

The knowledge from this study indicates that for small business owners to sustain their business, they need to have the entrepreneur's characteristics, the management skills for strategies planning in finance, human resource, innovation and technology, social networks and social responsibility, and the capability to cooperate with the government. To prevent failures, small business owners who lack these qualifications need to have some further education, training, or attending seminars related to certain fields. Some other alternatives for solving the inability to avoid or mitigate failures might be to obtain external assistance such as professional advisors.

Government supports are significant for the survival of small businesses. Understanding small business development stages are necessary for the government because it allows one to understand the challenges facing entrepreneurs and provides



policies to support them (Gobble, 2016). An optimal business environment, excellent infrastructure, cash grants, low-tax system, lack of bureaucracy, stable legal environment, and an available workforce are some of government supports that small business entrepreneur looking forward to (Holmberg-Wright & Hribar, 2016). As the researcher, I will disseminate the findings of this study to the participants, government sectors such as the U.S. Small Business Association, scholarly journals, business literature reviews, and entrepreneurship conferences.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

A researcher will choose a method and design that is appropriate for the research objective, to account for affordable resources, and to answer the research question (Venkatesh et al., 2013). I used a qualitative case study because it is suitable for the study purpose and the resource constraint. The limitations are the sample size, the research method and design, and the demographic of the participants.

The three Thai restaurant owners might not represent the whole small business industry to explore the strategies need for small business owners to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years. To mitigate researcher and participant bias, I used methodology triangulation, member checking, sense making, and data saturation (Burai & Anderson, 2014; Morse, 2015). With member checking, I asked the follow-up and probing questions to ensure that I captured the meaning of what was said and to ensure data saturation. A larger number of participants might be better for future researchers to improve reliability and validity.

The location for the research study Salt Lake City, Utah, might be too narrow and specific. Future researchers should select some other different areas such as other states in America or other countries for the study. Researchers should consider alternative research methods and designs for further research such as mixed methods. The mixed method study is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The advantage of this method is that researchers can use one approach to inform the other, which enhances the reliability and validity of the study results (Terrell, 2012).

### **Reflections**

My experience during the DBA Doctoral Study process was a great learning experience and a challenge. Standing on the shoulders of other scholar-researchers, I gained incredible knowledge from literature reviews, especially about small businesses. When I read the posts of new colleagues who just enter into the class discussions, I realize how much knowledge and experiences I have gained from this process because I used to be in that position knowing little where everything was new to me concerning my completing a doctoral study program.

I used to have my preconceived ideas, bias, and values. Going through the process, before starting the data collection, as a scholar-practitioner I needed to understand how to identify and mitigate my bias. Before I could obtain the permission for data collection from IRB, I had to understand the requirements, ethics, and the obligations for the researcher. During seeking for potential participants, I experienced various Thai foods from different Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City, Utah. I have visited

many Thai restaurant owners and had the opportunity to meet new friends from the same country, Thailand. I have gained great experience and valuable friendships. I thought I knew a lot of knowledge about business theories from my previous education, and having a lot of business experience from my career. After completing this study, I realized there are still so many things I never knew; one never stops learning.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond the first 5 years, using entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework. The participants for the semistructured interviews were three Thai restaurant owners in Salt Lake City, Utah. I used member checking and methodological triangulation to ensure data saturation and validity (Harvey, 2015; Houghton et al., 2013). Data analysis from multiple sources showed seven coding themes including (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (e) social networks and human relationships, (f) technology and innovation, and (g) government supports and social responsibility. The summary of the analysis linked each emergent theme back to the existing body of knowledge from the literature and the conceptual framework for this study.

In conclusion, the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their business beyond the first 5 years are the possession of the entrepreneur characteristics such as a professional risk taker, a decision maker, and a creator who allocates resources with motive, ambition, adaptability, innovative, perseverance, self-confidence, and self-

efficacy (Maden, 2015). Education and training create entrepreneurial competencies regarding management skills and problem solving, which are significant for the success and sustainability of small businesses (Ahlin, Drnovšek, & Hisrich, 2014). A successful entrepreneur needs management capabilities such as operations management, human resource management, financial management, accounting management, and marketing management to build a sustainable business (Dhochak & Sharma, 2016).

Small business entrepreneurs should include the knowledge of social media, social networks, and social responsibility into their strategy planning for their business sustainability. Finally, one of the essential factors for small business owners in creating the strategies for their businesses sustainability is government supports and policies (Yazdanfar, Sweden, & Brouder, 2015). Government supports such as financial loans, educational and training programs, infrastructure, innovation incentives, legal frameworks, and tax policies have effects and influence small businesses strategies planning (Kulikova et al., 2016). My contribution for this study is to provide small business owners with more information to sustain their success in their business. This study also enclosed some information for governments to provide supports for the sustainability of small businesses, which are a vital component of a healthy economy.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

- I. Introduce self to participant (s).
- II. Present consent form, go over contents, answering questions and concerns of participant(s).
- III. Participant signs consent form.
- IV. Give participant copy of consent form.
- V. Turn on the recording device.
- VI. Follow procedure to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification, note the date and time.
- VII. Begin interview with Question 1, follow through to final question.
- VIII. Follow up with additional questions.
- IX. End interview sequence; discuss member checking with participant(s).
- X. Thank you the participant(s) for their parts in the study. Reiterate contact numbers for follow up questions and concerns from participants.
- XI. End protocol.



## Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in the Study

<Date>

<Address Block>

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Vanida Sirilarbanan. I am a student in Walden University's Doctoral Business Administration (DBA) program. According to the program, the student must conduct a doctoral research to fulfill the requirement. My research topic is to explore the strategies that small business owners need to succeed and sustain in the business beyond the first 5 years by using a case study of three Thai restaurants in Salt Lake City (SLC) in Utah, USA. The contribution for the study is to provide small business owners with more information for their success in their business. This study also gives some information for governments in providing their supports for the sustainability of small businesses.

As a successful Thai restaurant's owner in SLC, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. Please read the enclosed consent form carefully and ask any questions that you may have before accepting the invitation. This interview will include nine open-ended questions (attached with this letter) that you can provide your opinions and suggestions.

I appreciate your valuable time and thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Vanida Sirilarbanan

### Appendix C: Interview Questions

The interview questions are as follows:

1. Why did you choose to invest in a restaurant business?
2. What is your educational background?
3. Where do you get the training for management skills?
4. What are your short-term and long-term financial plans?
5. What are your competitive advantages?
6. How do you use networking to promote your business?
7. How have you used technologies and innovation to sustain your company?
8. What government support have you used?
9. What else would you like to share about your experiences as a small business owner?