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Innovation Strategies of Independently Owned, Nonfranchise Restaurants

Kurt W. Winter
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Kurt Winter

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Review Committee

Dr. Jaime Klein, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Jamie Patterson, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Neil Mathur, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University

2017

Abstract

Innovation Strategies of Independently Owned, Nonfranchise Restaurants

by

Kurt Winter

MBA, Columbia Southern University, 2010

BSBA, Columbia Southern University, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2017

Abstract

The restaurant industry is the second largest employee workforce in the United States. However, less than 35% of independently owned restaurants succeed beyond the first three years of operation. Some restaurant managers do not use innovation strategies to succeed beyond three years. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies that some independent nonfranchise restaurant owners in Omaha, Nebraska used to succeed beyond 3 years. The conceptual framework utilized in this study was dynamic capabilities. Dynamic capabilities create avenues of innovation to restaurant owners who do not have quick access to resources, such as an innovation team or a (R&D) department. The restaurant owners have to collaborate with their employees, suppliers, and consumers to be members of their innovation team to determine the innovation strategies needed to sustain competitive advantage as they apply to dynamic capabilities. Formal semistructured interviews were conducted with 4 independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners. Triangulation linked the transcribed interviews with secondary and tertiary data to gather enough information to saturate the key themes discovered in the research described by the dynamic capabilities framework. Secondary data included atmospherics, service innovations, menus, social media, and websites. Tertiary data comprised newspaper and magazine articles. The 3 themes were marketing innovations, restaurant innovations, and innovation measurement. The implications for positive social change include the potential to boost the local community's economy by encouraging more independent nonfranchise restaurant owners to enter the market that may increase the employees' wellbeing, strengthen their family economics, and benefit the independently owned nonfranchise restaurant market in Omaha, Nebraska.

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Dedication

I dedicate this process, in its entirety, to my children, Keegan, Noah, and Austin, without whom life would be hollow. Always a part of my heart and soul, I will forever be in my God's debt for their existence.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The restaurant industry is the second largest employee workforce in the United States with annual sales of nearly half-trillion dollars (Frazer, 2012). Despite that, a large percentage of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants fail within the first year of operation (Self, Jones, & Botief, 2015). Some determining factors that can lead to restaurant failure include economics, competition, poor organizational planning, and poor management practices (Self et al., 2015). By adopting innovation strategies that adjust to the demands of the clients, a restaurant owner can create value and achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Arlbjorn & Paulraj, 2013).

Background of the Problem

Implementing innovation strategies to enhance a customer's restaurant experience is the responsibility of restaurant owners and managers. The basic element for independently owned restaurants to sustain competitive advantage is the regular introduction of new products and services through innovation (Lee, Hallak, & Sardeshmukh, 2016a). Small to medium enterprises (SMEs) encounter roadblocks to innovation. In some instances, SMEs collaborate with external forces using open innovation (OI) to overcome internal barriers (Spithoven, Vanhaverbeke, & Roijackers, 2013) and to sustain competitive advantage.

Innovations in the food service industry are not typical of other industries because most of them are intangible (Bettencourt, Brown, & Sirianni, 2013). Service innovations in a restaurant add to the consumer experience, which creates customer loyalty (Horng,

Chou, Liu, & Tsai, 2013; Jin, Goh, Huffman, & Yuan, 2015; Piqueras-Fiszman, Varela, & Fiszman, 2013; Risbo, Mourtinsen, Frost, Evans, & Reade, 2013; Ruiz, Calvaro, Sanchez del Pulgar, & Roldan, 2013; Stierand, Drofler, & MacBryde, 2014). Restaurant innovations include atmosphere, marketing, management, and food innovations.

Independently owned, nonfranchise restaurant owners and managers do not have the benefit of a large budget to fund and create new ideas (Sok & O’Cass, 2015; Zaraychenko et al., 2016). Large firms maintain research and development (R&D) departments to sustain competitive advantage. Owners and managers of independently owned, nonfranchise restaurants should implement innovation strategies to help them succeed with the means they have available.

Problem Statement

Restaurant managers use innovation strategies to maintain sustainable competitive advantage by reducing imitation and duplicability of their resources (Lee, Lee, Chua, & Han, 2016). Less than 35% of independently owned restaurants succeed beyond the first three years of operation (Self et al., 2015). The general business problem is that small restaurant owners may not have new offerings for customers to sustain competitive advantage without innovation strategies. The specific business problem is that some restaurant managers do not use innovation strategies to succeed beyond three years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies that some restaurant managers used to succeed beyond three years. The

targeted population comprised of the owners of four independently owned, nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska who succeeded beyond three years. The implications for social change included the potential to increase the quality of life of the employees and managers through income and steady employment. The social implications may affect the local community's economy by encouraging more independent nonfranchise restaurant owners to enter the market that may increase the employees' wellbeing, strengthen their family economics, and benefit the independently owned nonfranchise restaurant market in Omaha, Nebraska. (Baker & Mehmood, 2015).

Nature of the Study

A qualitative researcher explores a phenomenon to gain insights through reliable, valid, and subjective personal stories (Kemperaj & Chavan, 2013). A researcher using quantitative research employs statistics to explain the differences or relationships among two or more variables (Yilmaz, 2013). A researcher using mixed methods research produces the best-suited approaches of quantitative and qualitative research to optimize the results of their study (Heyvaert, Maes, & Onghea, 2013; Morse & Cheek, 2015). Therefore, quantitative and mixed methods research methods were not appropriate for this study.

There are several design options when conducting research using a qualitative method. I used a multiple case study design. Researchers use multiple case study design to gain a better understanding of the business problem through a subject's personal involvement and insights (Baskarada, 2014; Yin, 2014). Researchers who use the

phenomenological design study shared experiences of the participants, and the meanings the participants attribute to their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). A researcher who uses the narrative design applies a biographical account of a single person's view of a phenomenon, which allows the participants the opportunities to reflect and describe the phenomenon through stories (Hickson, 2016). An ethnographic researcher's study spans over time as cultural changes evolve (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Jerolmack & Khan, 2014). Researchers who use grounded theory design develop a theory to match the research rather than write a study for addressing the applicability of a predefined theory (Wall-Emerson, 2016). Therefore, the case study design was most appropriate for my study.

Research Question

What innovation strategies do some leaders of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska use to succeed beyond three years?

Interview Questions

1. What innovation strategies do you use in your restaurant to achieve sustainable competitive advantage?
2. What innovation strategies do you think work best to achieve sustainable competitive advantage?
3. How do you measure the success of your innovation strategies?
4. What else can you share about the implementation of innovation strategies that we have not already discussed?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was dynamic capabilities (DC) (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). The concept of dynamic capabilities stems from Schumpeter's (2004) theory of economic development and Eisenhardt and Martin's (2000) resource-based view (RBV). Schumpeter (2004) addressed the need to define the differences between RBV and DC. RBV is a concept that explains how larger, franchised restaurants have resources to implement innovations on premise for more radical innovations.

In alignment with dynamic capabilities, Peteraf, Di Stefano, and Verona (2013) discussed dynamic capabilities in the context of sustainability of competitive advantage in independently owned nonfranchise. DC is critical to fast-paced companies that do not have access to available internal resources that would sustain competitive advantage in innovation-based competition (Teece et al., 1997). The advantage of DC was discussed by Teece et al. (1997) as a means for restaurant owners to network and collaborate with external agents, such as suppliers, consumers, and other hospitality related companies, as part of their innovation team (Rodriguez, Williams, & Hall, 2013; Zaraychenko et al., 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Researchers believe that assumptions are true. However, doing so does not change the likelihood that the assumptions are true (Fan, 2013; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). I assumed the qualitative research method was pertinent. There are three types of

research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. A qualitative researcher explores a phenomenon to gain insights through reliable, valid, and subjective personal stories (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). A researcher using the quantitative research method employs statistics to explain the differences or relationships among two or more variables (Yilmaz, 2013).

I assumed that my sample size was acceptable. A qualitative researcher uses techniques to gain in-depth information from a small sample of people (Baskarada, 2014; Macfarlane et al., 2015). Unlike qualitative researchers who use smaller samples and gather content-based data, a quantitative researcher uses large samples with predetermined questions to gather concrete data (Baskarada, 2014; Westerman, 2014). A researcher using mixed methods research produces the best-suited approaches of quantitative and qualitative research to optimize the results of their study (Morse & Cheek, 2015).

Limitations

Limitations are possible shortcomings in research that affect credibility and validity in a study (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013; Connelly, 2013; Fan, 2013). There could have been restrictions on the number of participants based on their availability and geography. Omaha, Nebraska is home to a moderate number of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants. In some cases, the executive chef is also the owner of the restaurant.

Nonfranchise restaurants have a greater chance of failure than franchise restaurants affecting population size (Self et al., 2015). Independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners have limited access to resources that would help them remain competitive. The final limitation is the size of the participant pool required for a multiple case study because interviewing the owners of four nonfranchise restaurants may not provide enough information to be relevant to the study (Baskarada, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Delimitations

Delimitations are purposeful omissions in the research study by the researcher (Brutus et al., 2013). The first delimitation was franchise restaurants because it was problematic to attain permission from executives of franchise restaurants. The second delimitation was the area outside of Omaha, Nebraska because the sample area was too broad for a multiple case study.

Significance of the Study

My findings from completing this study may enable leaders in the restaurant industry in Omaha, Nebraska to identify and incorporate innovation strategies that could increase restaurants' sustainable competitive advantage and extend their operation beyond three years (Im, Montoya, & Monteiro, 2013). The use of the concept of DC encourages restaurant owners and executive chefs to collaborate with entities outside of the restaurant, such as suppliers and clients to spur innovation in order to sustain competitive advantage (Gambardella & Panico, 2014; Grimaldi Quinto, & Rippa, 2013;

Jin, Line, & Goh, 2015; Kearney et al., 2014). The success of using innovation strategies could improve the quality of life of the employees and managers through income and steady employment.

In turn, the employees' increased income can contribute to social change by improving the community's economy for the potential benefit of all community members (Baker & Mehmood, 2015). The study findings could improve the local community's economy by encouraging more independent restaurant owners to enter the market and sustain competitive advantage through innovation.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation management strategies of some owners of locally owned, nonfranchise restaurants to succeed longer than three years. I explored innovation theories and concepts regarding the sustainable competitive advantage of locally owned nonfranchise restaurants. In this literature review, 93% of 84 references are peer reviewed and published within the last 5 years of expected chief academic officer (CAO) approval. The types of resources in the literature review are 78 peer reviewed, scholarly journal articles (93%), 5 seminal articles (6%), and 1 nonscholarly article (1%).

This literature review starts with the concept of dynamic capabilities, followed by theories and concepts of principles of innovation management strategies, consumer behavior, customer relationship management, brand engagement, brand equity, consumer loyalty, culinary innovations, service innovations, and competitive advantage. I searched

for professional literature using EBSCO databases that included Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, Sage Premier, and Hospitality & Tourism Complete. I used Google, Google Scholar, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search as part of this research.

My strategies for locating books and journal articles were with keywords and phrases such as *competitiveness, innovation, innovativeness, innovation management, strategic management, innovation strategies, innovation barriers, sustainability, competitive advantage, culinary innovations, foodservice innovations, restaurant innovations, food and beverage innovations, and hospitality innovations.*

Dynamic Capabilities

The concept of dynamic capabilities (DC) is a way to analyze sustainable innovation in the technology industry (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). However, empirical researchers are applying DC to include service and hospitality industries. The definition of DC explains company's means to adapt to changes to stay competitive (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Eriksson, 2014; Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Teece et al., 1997). The concept of DC links to Porter's (1980) five competitive forces and Shapiro's (1989) strategic conflict approach. Teece et al. also found elements of DC explained in Schumpeter's (1934) theory of economic development. The DC concept focuses on the rapidly changing restaurant industry (Eriksson, 2014; Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Teece et al., 1997).

Managers use DC as an efficient way to prepare and address important organizational changes that affect a company's competitive advantage (Eriksson, 2014; Kitenga & Thuo, 2014, Peteraf et al., 2013; Teece et al., 1997). Researchers described DC as a company's ability to adapt to a market that is continually changing. DCs are specific routines that businesses work with to anticipate and capture new ideas, as situations demand them (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Eriksson, 2014; Teece et al., 1997).

Resource-Based View

The resource-based view (RBV) is different from Teece et al. (1997). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) considered the use of a company's assets to sustain competitive advantage (Bockelmann & Braun, 2015; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Peteraf et al., 2013). RBV is a process that a company uses to change its resources into products that are valuable, rare, and inimitable, and nonsubstitutable (VRIN) so they can adapt to a changing market and be competitive. RBV encourages innovation teams, led by strong leaders to problem solve internal situations with practical answers to shifting resources from one area of the company to another and introduce products and services that are VRIN.

Conceptual differences. Researchers agree that the Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) and Teece et al. (1997) concepts center their studies towards the growth and improvement of DC and sustaining competitive advantage (Kitenga & Thuo, 2014; Peteraf et al., 2013). Despite the argument that both studies focused on the growth of DC, some researchers discussed evidence that the studies are not just different, but they also negate

each other (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Kitenga & Thuo, 2014; Peteraf et al., 2013; Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997). Researchers show a growing concern that these two seminal papers, about the same concept, have different views about DC. Researchers have an increasing interest as the gap between the studies becomes more apparent.

Researchers explain three differences in the divide between the two original studies. The differences are over boundary conditions, sustainability, and, competitive advantage (Peteraf et al., 2013). Boundary conditions are those that delineate between the two groups of authors' views of gaining competitive advantage. The view of sustainability exists between RBV's internal conditions and DC's external conditions to sustain competitive advantage by the two competing studies (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Eriksson, 2013; Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997).

Theory of Economic Development

Teece et al. (1997) discussed the external view of competitive advantage and Eisenhardt and Martin's (2000) the internal explanation of competitive advantage. The authors agreed with Schumpeter's five components of innovations (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Schumpeter, 2004; Teece et al., 1997). The five elements are creativity, future orientation, open to change, proactiveness, and risk-taking (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Kearney, Harrington, & Ottenbacher, 2014; Schumpeter, 2004; Teece et al., 1997).

Schumpeter (2004) developed the concept of creative destruction that companies recognize the need to modify their resources to remain competitive. Schumpeter's creative destruction encourages the revival of a company's resources and repurposes

them to innovative new products and services. The framework of economic development through creative destruction discussed five conditions to remain competitive. The five conditions introduce new products, methods, markets, sources, and organizations to sustain competitive advantage (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Eriksson, 2013; Kitenga & Thou, 2014; Schumpeter, 2004; Teece et al., 1997). The DC researchers contended that Schumpeter focused on large firm's use of monopoly power to give them the competitive advantage (Kitenga & Thuo, 2014; Teece et al., 1997).

Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Managers who integrate the RBV of dynamic capabilities explained by Teece et al. (1997), Eisenhardt, and Martin (2000) can quickly restructure their assets to sustain competitive advantage (Kindstrom, Kowalkowski, & Sandberg, 2013). Teece et al. (1997) emphasized a company's use of its external resources as an element towards strong competitive advantage. Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) discussed how RBV gives a company an advantage by creating and possessing assets that are (VRIN). In either case, the researchers agree that sustainable competitive advantage is the result of a company applying DC to their benefit (Grimaldi et al., Rippa, 2013; Li & Lu, 2014; Peteraf et al., 2013; Teece et al., 1997).

Researchers have discussed other factors as keys to sustaining competitive advantage. Factors include organizational size, location, social abilities and overall knowledge as tools of competitive advantage (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Urbancova, 2013).

Companies do not need all the factors to succeed. However, they increase the chances of sustaining competitive advantage and being successful.

Ganter and Hecker (2013) explored how a company's size and location affect their competitiveness. The authors explained that larger companies have more resources that are available to use to be competitive. The author stated that organizational size boosts varying opinions and views that enable the company to be more competitive. Large organizations have greater access to more resources than their smaller counterparts do (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Grimaldi et al., 2013).

In addition to company size, researchers discussed the influence that geography has on competitive advantage (Ganter & Hecker, 2013). The authors concluded that companies who have proximity to external resources tend to be more competitive. Businesses that are involved in their community have better access to resources for innovation and remain competitive. Small businesses have limited options when determining location; however, those companies remain active in their community (Ganter and Hecker, 2013; Grimaldi et al., 2013; Im et al., 2013; Li & Lu, 2014).

Education and knowledge play a part in innovation that gives the company a competitive advantage (Urbancova, 2013). Educated managers and employees have a greater impact on innovation. Managers and staff that are receptive to in-house education and training have the potential to influence innovation. Companies that provide continuing education for its employees increase their ability to remain competitive (Kindstrom et al., 2013; Urbancova, 2013).

Xie, Wang, and Luan, (2014) followed the concept of RBV to discuss the definition of competitive advantage from a psychological perspective to encourage team innovation. The psychology of competitive advantage attempts to understand how companies can increase their bottom line in the competitive restaurant industry. Managerial knowledge, networking skills, and front-line employees comprise the foundation of the subjective definition of competitive advantage (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Kindstrom et al., 2013; Li & Lu, 2014; Peteraf et al., 2013; Teece et al., 1997; Ubancova, 2013).

Principles of Innovation Management

Innovation is a vital part of a restaurant's strategic management policy (Stummer, Kiesling, Gunther, & Vetschera, 2015). The innovation management system should include an innovative workplace with people who observe and report on a restaurant, food, beverage, and culinary trends. Innovation leadership is a model for leaders who use their vision, passion, and resolve to gain support in establishing an innovative workplace (Baker & Mehmood, 2015). Restaurant owners and managers are the key people to implement and maintain the innovation management procedure (Rodriguez et al., 2014; Volberda, Van Den Bosch, & Heij, 2013; Volberda, Van Den Bosch, & Mihalache, 2014).

Innovation managers monitor restaurant trends, observe consumer behavior, and encourage employees to suggest new ideas for innovation (Albors-Garigos, Barreto, Garcia-Segovia, Martinez-Monzo, & Hervas-Oliver, 2013). An innovation manager can

recognize the need for change and can act quickly to introduce the new idea to the customers (Tanev & Frederiksen, 2014). Manager observation, supervision, and recognition are important in the restaurant industry to sustain competitive advantage (Kearny, Harrington, & Kelliher, 2014).

Restaurant owners and managers are aware that they are not capable of initiating all innovations in their establishment. Quality managers make it a practice to use other sources available that help them recognize trends in the restaurant industry (Kearney et al., 2014). Independently owned, nonfranchise restaurant owners are beginning to see the value in their staff, customers, supply chain, and other businesses in the hospitality industry (Arbjorn & Paulraj, 2013; Kearney et al., 2013; Hsieh, Chiu, Wei, Yen, & Cheng, 2013; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015; Pedrosa et al., 2013). Restaurant managers know that being innovative is a key factor to success. Quality management (QM) can affect the flow of innovation to increase company performance (Leavengood, Anderson, & Daim, 2014). Managers determine the products, services, and process that will positively influence customer satisfaction and sustain competitive advantage (Kearny, Harrington, & Kelliher, 2014; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015).

When determining whether to improve products, processes, and services a restaurant owner must be ready to enhance products quickly. Restaurant owners introduce radical innovations when a product or service requires rapid, executive introduction (Leavengood et al., 2014). The restaurant owner determines if the innovation is a core or

peripheral intervention. A core innovation makes a product or service better, whereas a peripheral innovation adds to the existing product or service (Ma et al., 2015).

Innovation Strategies

Innovation is the keystone for restaurant owners. Creating new or improving existing products helps sustain competitive advantage (Arlbjorn & Paularj, 2013; Bockelman & Braun, 2013; Hogan & Coote, 2014; Hsieh et al., 2013; Kearney et al., 2014; Leavengood et al., 2014; Lee, Sardeshmukh, & Hallak, 2016; Wang, 2014). Restaurant owners and managers are the first steps in implementing and encouraging innovation in their company (Bockelmann & Braun, 2013; Wang, 2014). The owners and managers can respond faster in a pressure situation, and they establish their leadership style and practice in the process (Hsieh et al., 2013; Leavengood et al., 2014). Restaurant owners have the potential of increasing competitive advantage when they encourage their managers and employees to be part of a cross-functional innovation team (Kearney et al., 2014; Wang 2014).

A company's owner can foster innovation networks that attract people of similar interests, cultures, rituals, and norms (Kearney et al., 2014). The innovation teams can accomplish company goals and be the basis to gain competitive advantage (Garcia, 2015; Hogan & Coote, 2014; Leavengood et al., 2014; Kearney et al., 2014). Companies that are active in the innovation process can shape loyal customers, dedicated employees, involved communities, and active collaborators (Hsieh et al., 2013; Kearney et al., 2014; Leavengood et al., 2014; Ma, Gill, & Jiang, 2015).

Creativity is an innovative characteristic that owner use to spur new ideas (Wang, 2014). Business owners are proactive and take risks that affect long and short-term advantages that create changes in products and services (Kearney et al., 2014). Innovations are core, peripheral, incremental, and radical (Leavengood et al., 2014; Ma et al., 2015). Core innovations are part of the original product, and peripheral innovations are in addition to the original (Ma et al., 2015). Incremental innovations require planning to introduce a product. Radical innovations are on the spot in emergency decisions (Leavengood et al., 2014).

Innovations are internally or externally controlled (Leavengood et al., 2014). Internal factors are managers and employees who assist with finding answers, improving processes, and creating comfort (Hsieh et al., 2013; Leavengood et al., 2014). Another internal factor is other companies that a business owner has a long-standing business relationship. The few companies that are part of the inner circle collaborate with each other and are valuable sources of diversified information (Hsieh et al., 2013; Kearney et al., 2014; Leavengood et al., 2014). Managers who alter their management style and practice implement managerial innovation (Kearney et al., 2014; Leavengood et al., 2014).

External factors of innovation focus on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hsieh et al., 2013; Leavengood et al., 2014). A closed system allows the best employees, clients, and suppliers to collaborate as part of the company's innovative team (Leavengood et al., 2014). An open system is a business owner's trusted purveyors who can give first-hand

information about new products and recognizable trends in the restaurant industry (Hsieh et al., 2013; Kearney et al., 2014, Leavengood et al., 2014).

Closed innovation. Innovations are at the core of sustaining competitive advantage (Oke et al., 2013; Sok & Cass, 2015). A business owner that supports and motivates its organizational culture is apt to see innovation in action (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Hogan & Coote, 2014). The values and beliefs of a company's owners form the ideology of cultural innovation (Hogan & Coote, 2014; Sarooghi, Libaers, & Burkemper, 2015).

The members of a company's innovation culture influence the adoption innovations if they fit the norms and beliefs of the organization (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Hogan & Coote, 2014; Sarooghi et al., 2015). One role of a manager is to train the employees to become familiar with their job functions and responsibilities. Trained and educated employees are likely to be loyal to their employers and believe they are part of an innovation team (Bockelman & Braun, 2013; Bucharth et al., 2013; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015).

Employee innovations. Employee innovation is a fundamental component of sustaining competitive advantage in small business (Albors-Garigos et al., 2013; Bettencourt et al., 2013; Engen & Magnusson, 2015; Lee, Sardeshmukh, & Hallak, 2016). Restaurant owners and managers collaborate with their employees to maintain the innovation process within the organization or closed innovation environment (CI) (Bockelmann & Braun, 2013; Lee, Sardeshmukh et al., 2016; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres,

2015; Sok & O’Cass, 2015). A restaurant owner’s primary avenue of CI is the employees (Ganter & Hecker, 2013, Lee et al., 2016; Sok & O’Cass, 2015). The service staff engages with the customers by listening to their reactions regarding food quality, food price, and restaurant atmosphere and relaying information to the manager and owner (Engen & Magnusson, 2015).

Employees who feel they are part of the innovative process are more likely to stay with the company (Engen & Magnusson, 2015; Sok & O’Cass, 2015). Education and training of employees notably improve positive feelings they show towards the owners and managers of the business (Lee et al., 2016; Sok & O’Cass, 2015). Informed employees show greater aptitude and feel empowered with the new and valuable knowledge that they can pass onto other employees, their families, friends, and restaurant clients (Engen & Magnusson, 2015; Sok & O’Cass, 2015).

In some independently owned restaurants, the employees take on the roles of creator and innovator. A creative person fosters new ideas, and an innovative person puts the ideas into action. Individuals who are capable of performing both are ambidextrous (Sok, 2015; p. 157). Ambidexterity is necessary to locally owned restaurants when the employee pool is small, and a small business owner’s available budget is limited for R&D like franchise restaurants. An ambidextrous person plays the dual role of creator and innovator (Capdevila, Cohendet, & Simon, 2015; Sarooghi et al., 2015; Sok & O’Cass, 2015; Stierand, et al., 2014).

A customer's job at a restaurant is eating. The restaurant owner and his staff provide their skills to act as advisors to ensure that the consumers are meeting their needs (Bettencourt, et al., 2013; Cheng, Tsai, & Lin, 2015; Costa, 2013; Engen & Magnusson, 2015). As the restaurant owner's staff becomes familiar with returning clients, they will develop relationships with them. When employees build trust with their guests, they become liaisons with restaurant managers and owners (Albors-Garigos et al., 2013; Engen & Magnusson, 2015).

Employees vest themselves in the company when they feel they part of a team. Restaurant owners and managers empower their employees by encouraging them to develop a culture of innovation (Albors-Garigos et al., 2013; Engen & Magnusson, 2015; Kindstrom et al., 2013). As members of the culture acclimate to company norms and values, they begin networking with people who have similar interests (Hogan & Coote, 2014). In addition to informal groups, the employees would also belong to a structured network based on job description, such as server or cook (Albors-Garigos et al., 2013; Engen & Magnusson, 2015; Garcia, 2015; Kindstrom et al., 2013).

Employees who receive training and continuing education through their employer are likely to remain with the company (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Kindstrom et al., 2013). The employees recognize cues from patrons and competitors that can lead to front line innovations that will assist their employer in sustaining competitive advantage (Engen & Magnusson, 2015). Educated employees will tell their family and friends about the

restaurant and the food, which puts them in the role of a marketer for their employer (Lee et al., 2016; Wellton, Jonsson, Walter, & Svingstedt, 2016).

Management innovations. Restaurant owners seek managers that can work independently and can make decisions quickly (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Lee et al., 2016; Stierand et al., 2014). Owners know the value of hiring a manager who understands the highly competitive nature of the restaurant industry (Lee et al., 2016; Volberda et al., 2013; Volberda et al., 2014). The restaurant industry is dynamic, and owners and managers must use all their capabilities to be innovative and remain competitive (Kearney et al., 2013; Volberda et al., 2014).

Managers are the front line of innovation and sustainable competitive advantage for restaurant owners (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Volberda et al., 2013). A responsibility of restaurant managers is to hire people who they believe can be creative and assist with the innovation process (Grissmann et al., 2013; Volberda et al., 2013). The managers should establish and promote creativity and innovation teams with employees to implement their ideas to sustain the competitive advantage of their company (Kearney et al., 2013; Volberda et al., 2013).

One role of a manager is to train the employees to become familiar with their job duties and responsibilities (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Grissmann et al., 2013; Volberda et al., 2013). Trained and educated employees are likely to be loyal to their employers and believe they are part of an innovation team (Bockelman & Braun, 2013; Bucharth et al., 2013; Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2013; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015). Managers

compensate employees who are active participants in the innovation process (Grissmann et al., 2013).

Management innovation occurs when managers improve and develop their style and process to fit the demands of a company (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Grissmann et al., 2013; Kearney & Harrington, 2014; Volberda et al., 2013). After a manager adjusts his style to the organization, he can become more active in leading and influencing his team and collaborative partners (Ganter & Hecker, 2013; Kearney & Harrington, 2014; Leavengood et al., 2014; Oke et al., 2013; Sok & Cass, 2015; Volberda et al., 2013). Managers control the daily operation of a company, and they can adapt daily changes. When managers change their methods and techniques, they can implement organizational changes and be more innovative (Grissmann et al., 2013; Leavengood et al., 2014; Volberda et al., 2013; Volberda et al., 2014).

Restaurant owners and executive chefs should be ambidextrous. An ambidextrous person can play the dual role of creator and innovator. (Capdevila, Cohendet, & Simon, 2015; Sarooghi, Libaers, & Burkemper, 2015; Sok & O’Cass, 2015; Stierand et al., 2014). Business owners should also encourage their employees to be ambidextrous because they will be more inclined to promote new and creative products and ideas (Lee, Sardeshmukh et al., 2016; Sok & O’Cass, 2015). An ambidextrous organization organizes groups working together, as two independent teams or on-demand teams to create and innovate (Sarooghi et al., 2014).

Chefs and kitchen managers are the trendsetters of an individually owned restaurant's innovation team (Bockelman & Braun, 2013; Nieves et al., 2015; Lee, Sardeshmukh et al., 2016). They search for and observe food, preparation, and menu trends. Culinary innovation is improving a meal that a chef has seen in a magazine or cookbook, and adds their professional touches to create new off-menu specials (Bockelman & Braun, 2013; Leavengood et al., 2014; Lichtenthaler & Lichtenthaler, 2010). Chefs see themselves as a central figure in organizational innovation and include the support staff as part of the innovation team (Bockelman & Braun, 2013; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015).

Culinary innovation includes research, science, and cooking processes that chefs use to make their food unique (Albors-Garrigos et al., 2013; Capdevilla et al., 2015; Costa, 2013; Jin, Goh et al., 2015). Molecular gastronomy is a food science that alters the texture of food or combines two or more items to create a different flavor (Albors-Garrigos et al., 2013; Piqueras-Fiszman et al., 2013; Risbo et al., 2013). A chef uses carbon dioxide gas, liquid nitrogen, and other ingredients that can change the appearance and taste of food (Capdevilla et al., 2015; Jin, Goh et al., 2015; Ruiz et al., 2013).

Another aspect of gastronomy is the use of new equipment and techniques about the equipment. Examples are the anti-griddle that freezes food rather than heat it and food dehydrators (Capdevilla et al., 2015; Ruiz et al., 2013). Sous vide cooking implements several cooking techniques and puts the par-cooked food into vacuum-sealed bags (Costa, 2013; Ruiz et al., 2013). The chefs immerse the food bags in a hot water bath to complete

the cooking process. Chefs use these culinary innovations to be unique and create the perception of prestige to sustain competitive advantage (Albors-Garrigos et al., 2013; Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2013; Jin, Goh et al., 2015; Risbo et al., 2013).

Atmospherics are the physical attributes of a restaurant that makes the first impression with customers (Hulten, 2013; Jin, Goh et al., 2015). Restaurant owners strive for physical uniqueness through room design and lighting that cater to the consumers' expectations (Horng et al., 2013; Hulten, 2013). An atmospheric dining environment plays on all the customers' senses to stimulate emotions, behavior, and intellect (Nysveen et al., 2013).

Fair pricing is an important innovation that restaurant owners can use to attract loyal customers (Anselmsson, Bondesson, & Johansson, 2014). Pricing should reflect the overall style of the restaurant to earn consumer trust. Business owners believe that atmospherics can play a role in increasing consumer spending, which sustains competitive advantage (Floh & Madberger, 2013; Hinterhuber & Liozu, 2014). Happy customers are willing to pay a higher price for superior products (Anselmsson et al., 2014).

Owners, chefs, and managers work together to make a diner's experience a positive affair. Innovations occur at all employee levels that include the development of innovation cultures. The implementation of culinary and environmental innovations increases a restaurant owner's chances of sustaining competitive advantage to succeed beyond three years. However, independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners

cannot rely solely on employees; sometimes they have to look outside of the organization for new ideas.

Open innovation. Past research addressed open innovation at the organizational level. However, independently owned nonfranchise restaurants owners have shifted their attention towards individuals and organizations outside of their company (Bockelmann & Braun, 2014; Gambardella & Panico, 2014; Mukerjee, 2013; Lee, Sardeshmukh et al., 2014; Pedrosa et al., 2013; Spithoven et al., 2013). Independently owned, nonfranchise restaurant owners engage in participative innovation to use external agents for their company's innovations (Baker & Mehmood, 2015; Grimaldi et al., 2013; Pedrosa et al., 2013). The leaders apply OI to share information and increase the company's innovations to sustain competitive advantage (Mukerjee, 2013; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015). Restaurant owners use their customers, suppliers, and peers as primary sources of OI (Bockelmann & Braun, 2014; Pedrosa et al., 2013).

OI combines knowledge management, absorptive capacity, desorptive capacity, and dynamic capabilities to sustain competitive advantage (Bockelmann & Braun, 2014; Lichtenthaler & Lichtenthaler, 2013; Spithoven et al., 2013). Absorptive capacity is the acceptance of innovation and introduces it to the company (Pedrosa et al., 2013). Desorptive capacity is a company's strength in using outside resources, such as cookbooks and cooking classes, to bring innovations to their consumers (Bockelmann & Braun, 2013).

Networking is an element of OI that owners and managers use to socialize with similar business people to develop professional relationships. The social aspect gives the organizing company control when collaborating with individuals and businesses outside of their organization space (Gambardella & Panico, 2014; Nieves & Segarra-Cipress, 2015; Zaraychenko et al., 2016). The company that coordinates collaboration makes all final decisions and is not obligated to share the result with the outside associates. Individual participants who share their ideas can take possession of their respective contributions (Gambardella & Panico, 2014; Ganter and Hecker, 2013; Kearney et al., 2014; Nieves & Segarra-Cipres, 2015; Oke et al., 2013). Leaders adopt participative innovation with a broad range of people to act as innovators for a company, such as customers and other external channels (Baker & Mehmood, 2015).

Building trust and extending collaborative efforts with outside agents are necessary for independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners to remain competitive (Kuester, Schuhmacher, Gast, & Worgul, 2013; Lichtenthaler, 2013). Working with representatives outside of the company requires patience and the capability to adapt or adopt ideas and suggestions from them (Martinez-Perez, Garcia-Villaverde, & Elche, 2016; Peiro-Signes, Segarra-Ona, Miret-Pastor, & Verma, 2014; Spithoven et al., 2013; Zaraychenko et al., 2016). These innovative clusters should be beneficial to all members of the team (Lichtenthaler & Lichtenthaler, 2010).

OI teams, like closed innovation teams, encourage its members to be ambidextrous. Each member of the collaborative effort conceives ideas and put the ideas

into action (Peiro-Signes et al., 2014; Martinez-Perez et al., 2016; Sarooghi et al., 2015; Sok & O’Cass, 2015). OI teams suggest concepts equally with all members as well as assume the risks involved with innovation management (Spithoven et al., 2013; Zaraychenko et al., 2016).

Consumers as innovators. The restaurant’s customers are the first source of restaurant OI (Bockelman & Braun, 2014; Tanev & Frederiksen, 2014). As consumers become frequent visitors to the restaurants, they develop relationships with owners, managers, and employees and they build trusting relationships (Filep, Whitelaw, & Dominey-Howes, 2014; Jin et al., 2013). The consumer becomes more open to talking about food and service ideas they have seen or experienced in books, magazines, or other restaurants (Costa, 2013; Jin, Line et al., 2015). Educated, entertained, and empowered customers will become loyal who will return regularly (Filep et al., 2014; Lin et al., 2013, Tanev & Frederiksen, 2014).

The customers like variety as much as they desire consistency (Costa, 2013; Ha & Jang, 2013). The restaurant owner increases the triggers that make the client’s experience memorable and creates customer satisfaction (Ha & Jang, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2015; Jin et al., 2013; Teng & Chang, 2013; Yoo & Bai, 2013). The drivers that affect customer satisfaction include the physical environment, interactional staff, and perceptions of food quality (Hwang & Ok, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2015; Jin et al., 2013; Teng & Chang, 2013; Yoo & Bai, 2013).

In some instances, not all customers are satisfied with their experience. With these cases, it is important that restaurant owners and managers react quickly to address the concerns of upset clients (Ha & Jang, 2013; Laukkanen, 2016; Mahr, Lievens, & Blazevic, 2014; Teng & Chang, 2013). Restaurant owners must address the customer's adverse experience by implementing radical innovations that can decrease the effects of the incident (Ha & Jang, 2013; Jin, Goh et al., 2015; Jin, Line et al., 2015; Mahr et al., 2014).

Supply chain as innovators. Independent restaurant owners employ the use of OI through external agents (Arlbjorn & Paulraj, 2013; Grimaldi et al., 2014). External agents include restaurant equipment suppliers, contractors, and food and beverage purveyors who may have information that is useful to a restaurant owner to create competitive advantage (Bockelmann & Braun, 2014; Grimaldi et al., 2014; Pedrosa et al., 2013; Oke et al., 2013). The supply chain observes food, service, and kitchen trends of the restaurant industry (Oke et al., 2013). Restaurant owners develop strong relationships with the people in his supply chain to garner the most reliable information (Gambardella & Panico, 2013; Grimaldi et al., 2013; Oke et al., 2013; Spithoven et al., 2013). The supply chain is the second largest outside principal for restaurant owners and managers. Developing a strong network of OI requires time to build trust between the restaurant owner and the agents. The restaurant owner must have an understanding that the people he does business with also work with the competitors (Bockelmann & Braun, 2014). To

determine the level of trust with a broker, a restaurant owner will engage in smaller, incremental innovations (Arbjorn & Paulraj, 2013; Gambardella & Panico, 2013).

Hospitality clusters are other external agents that independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners consider as part of the innovation team. The groups can include hotels, entertainment venues, and transportation companies (Grimaldi et al., 2014; Kuester et al., 2013; Martinez-Perez et al., 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2014).

Hospitality clusters can be beneficial during times of high tourism activities such as sporting and music events (Peiro-Signes et al., 2014). Independent nonfranchise restaurant owners collaborate with other companies to attract more people the members of the cluster to sustain competitive advantage.

Barriers to Innovation

A restaurant owner can expect resistance despite their efforts to create cohesive innovation teams (Cornescu & Adam, 2013). Employees, suppliers, consumers, and managers create some barriers that owners observe. The barriers exhibited can be overwhelming and insurmountable which may lead to innovation failure and loss of competitive advantage (Heidenreich, Kramer, & Handrich; 2016; Cornescu & Adam, 2013). An educated owner that has the tools to quell barriers to innovation can help the people they work with to adapt to changes without defiance.

Internal barriers to innovation. Owners and managers of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants should be aware of the employees' emotional resistance to OI (Bockelman and Braun, 2013; Bucharth et al., 2013; Kearney et al., 2014). When

employees are not aware that the restaurant owner is collaborating with agents outside of the restaurant, they may become opposed to the idea. Employees may feel a sense of betrayal or insecurity when the owner introduces an unfamiliar person or company to the innovation team (Burcharth, Knudsen, & Sondergaard, 2014).

Employees become resistant to open innovations if the product, process or, procedure was not implemented by the restaurant's innovation team (Burcharth et al., 2013). When an external agent develops a product, the restaurant employees display agitation with the owner because they collaborated outside of the team. Employees express dissatisfaction when the restaurant owner is selling or sharing their ideas with external agents (Burcharth et al., 2013).

Restaurant owner's face barriers to innovation when employees do not feel they are active participants in an innovative environment (Rodriguez et al., 2014). Another barrier to innovation for the restaurant owner is realizing the expense of developing new ideas for the restaurant's innovations (Albors-Garriegos et al., 2013; Heidenreich & Spieth, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2014; Lee, Sardeshmukh et al., 2016; Spithoven et al., 2013). In addition to limited finances, a restaurant owner also lacks other resources that include human capital, time, equipment, and raw materials (Albors-Garriegos et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2014; Zaraychenko et al., 2016).

External barriers to innovation. Independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners are at a disadvantage when administering innovation strategies. The owners do not have access to the resources that big businesses have readily available (Lee,

Sardeshmukh et al., 2016; Spithoven et al., 2013). The owner will have to initiate his company's dynamic capabilities to pursue and recruit assistance outside of the confines of the organization (Cornescu & Adam, 2013; Spithoven et al., 2013).

Consumers are the primary external determinants of innovation adoption or rejection (Bin Mohtar, Abbas, & Baig, 2015; Cornescu & Adam, 2013; Laukkanen, 2016; Spithoven et al., 2013). Consumers exhibit innovation resistance passively or actively. Passive innovation is situational resistance before product introduction (Bin Mohtar et al., 2015; Heidenreich et al., 2016; Heidenreich & Spieth, 2013; Laukkanen, 2016). Consumers who exhibit active resistance focus on a particular product or service before its introduction to the public (Bin Mohtar et al., 2015; Heidenreich et al., 2016; Heidenreich & Spieth, 2013; Laukkanen, 2016).

Consumers are key figures when determining the acceptance of innovation (Cornescu & Adam, 2013). Consumer barriers of use, value, risk, and tradition determine if consumers will accept or reject restaurant innovations (Laukkanen, 2016). A consumer manifests the usage barrier when pricing or menu innovations are not easy to understand. A customer's value barriers include barriers towards a restaurant's atmosphere, service, price, menu, and food quality (Albors-Garigos et al., 2013; Anselmsson et al., 2014; Bockelmann & Braun, 2015; Capdevila et al., 2015; Cheng et al., 2015; Floh & Madberger, 2013; Hogan & Coote, 2014; Piqueras-Fixzman et al., 2013; Risbo et al., 2013).

Restaurant customers exhibit risk barriers because they want to feel like they are getting a good return on their investment (Filep et al., 2014; Ha & Jang, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2013; Jin, Line et al., 2013; Teng & Chang, 2013; Yoo & Bai, 2013). Restaurant owners and their employees perform their jobs to their best ability, but if innovations in décor, food, price, and service do not match then a customer's shows a barrier to tradition (Bin Mohtar et al., 2015; Heidenreich et al., 2016). Consumers like consistency in their experience, however if they feel the décor or atmosphere are not compatible with their experience, however, they can present an image barrier (Floh & Madberger, 2013; Hogan & Coote, 2014; Hwang & Ok, 2013; Jin, Goh et al., 2015; Nysveen et al, 2013).

Consumer Behavior

A measure of maintaining sustainable competitive advantage is through positive consumer satisfaction, experiences, and loyalty (Filep et al., 2014; Hyun & Park, 2015; Jin, Line, & Goh, 2013). Restaurant owners, managers, and employees should have the social skills to be engaging and knowledgeable to entertain and educate their customers. If their customers are happy and satisfied, they will become loyal clients who return on a regular basis (Filep et al., 2014; Jin et al., 2013).

A customer's satisfaction drives perceived value created by the restaurant owner through increasing triggers that make the client's experience memorable (Ha & Jang, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2015; Jin et al., 2013; Teng & Chang, 2013; Yoo & Bai, 2013). The drivers that affect customer satisfaction include the physical environment, interactional

staff, and perceptions of food quality (Hwang & Ok, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2015; Jin et al., 2013; Teng & Chang, 2013; Yoo & Bai, 2013).

Consumer impulse buying behavior exhibits that food is not only for health and comfort but also for personal pleasure (Miao & Mattila, 2013). Customers who dine out based on need are utilitarian because it is their fundamental motivation (Ha & Jang, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2015). Utilitarian diners go to restaurants for social interaction and menu variety (Hwang & Ok, 2013).

Eudemonic and hedonic diners exhibit emotionally driven behaviors that are unplanned and bring happiness to the customers. Eudemonic consumer's actions display unexpected purchasing decisions defined by their level of functioning (Filep et al., 2014; Io, 2016). Eudemonic behaviors should bring happiness to the customer after meeting their demand (Filep et al., 2014). Eudemonic people satisfy their needs by developing relationships with restaurant staff (Filep et al., 2014; Jin, Line, & Merkebu, 2015; Hwang & Ok, 2013) and breaking routines (Filep et al., 2014; Jin, Line et al., 2015). However, some research indicated possible adverse reactions as some consumers prefer daily practices (Jin, Line et al., 2015).

Hedonism is a widely researched behavior that restaurant owners crave from their customers. Hedonic consumers are highly emotional people motivated by impulsive behavior and purchasing decisions (Aruna & Santhi, 2015; Floh & Madlberger, 2013; Jin, Line et al., 2015; Io, 2016). Hedonists anticipate pleasurable experiences that are new,

educational, and innovative (Filep et al., 2014; Floh & Madberger, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2015).

The impulsive behaviors of hedonic consumers seek restaurants that they perceive as being trendy and innovative with exceptional food quality and employee service, attitude, and competence (Filep et al., 2014; Floh & Madberger 2013; Hwang & Ok, 2013; Hyun & Park, 2015; Miao & Mattila, 2013). Hedonic consumers seek situations that give them positive attitudes, (Io, 2016), and a feeling of escaping reality, (Filep et al., 2014; Jin, Line et al., 2015; Miao & Mattila, 2013).

All purchasing behaviors, whether from necessity or pleasure, increase consumer's attitudes and moods towards a restaurant (Miao & Mattila, 2013) and increase the probability of loyal customers (Filep et al., 2014). A restaurant's dynamic capabilities in innovation can create loyal customers who return consistently and refer friends, which enhance sustainable competitive advantage and restaurant success (Filep et al., 2014).

Transition

Section 1 of this study introduced the problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions that were the foundations of this study. Section 1 included the conceptual framework, significance of the study and a literature review used to support the problem, the purpose, and the questions. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies some restaurant managers used to succeed beyond three years. The targeted population comprised of the owners of four

independently owned, nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska who succeeded beyond three years. Section 2 will provide more information regarding the role of the research, participants, and significance of this study. Section 3 could present the findings of the research, areas for future research, and reflection on the methods and outcomes of the research.

Section 2: The Project

Lee et al. (2016) explained that restaurant managers use innovation strategies to maintain sustainable competitive advantage by reducing imitation and duplicability of their resources. Section 2 will describe the role of the researcher and the features that provide clarity, confidentiality, and the integrity of the study. I used the processes of member checking, triangulation, and audit trail to ensure reliability and validity of the research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies some restaurant managers used to succeed beyond three years. The targeted population comprised of the leaders of four independently owned, nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska who succeeded beyond three years. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase the quality of life for the employees and managers through income and steady employment. The implications may improve the local community's economy for the potential benefit of all community members (Baker & Mehmood, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

I acted as the sole research agent for this qualitative, multiple case study. It was my task to collect reliable and valid information through the data collection process (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Gioia et al., 2013; Kemparaj, 2013). I explained the purpose of the study to all the participants and reduced the possibility of analyzing data incorrectly

because of vague interpretation of questions by the participants (Baskarada, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). As a graduate of the local culinary school and time spent in restaurants as an executive chef, my study aligned with my professional affiliations with independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners in Omaha where I work and live. I collected information that may have contributed to innovation strategies for business success by sustaining competitive advantage.

The researcher who uses a qualitative multiple case study may merit better information that may result in notable analyses and conclusions (Baskarada, 2014; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014; Yin, 2014). My research consisted of six semistructured in-person interviews with four restaurant owners in conjunction with observing their restaurants, menu, social media, website, and other historical information as part of their innovation strategy. Researchers create a document trail to curtail restaurant owner bias and boost the validity of the research (Baskarda, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). I informed the restaurant owners of the study, in advance, to gain member trust.

I reviewed the Belmont Protocol Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979), and completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) web-based training course (Appendix A), to ensure compliance with ethical standards and the protection of human research participants (Check, Wolf, Dame, & Beskow, 2014; Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnave, Schochi, & Alie, 2014; Taylor & Land, 2014). I

ensured that the participant's names and places of business remained undisclosed with a signed consent agreement (Appendix B; Check et al., 2014).

Participants

The owners and executive chefs of four independently owned, nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska participated in this study. Participant selection was purposeful based on my professional and networking experiences. The qualifying participants owned or managed their restaurants a minimum of three years, and they understood the primary research question. I made initial contact with prospective participants in person and presented the research questions and consent form. Researchers ask participants to read and sign an informed consent form before their interviews so they know what the study entails to include the purpose of the research, the research questions, assure anonymity, and the time asked to gather information (Appendices B and C; Baskarada, 2014; Check et al., 2014; Kemparaj, 2013).

Research Method and Design

Researchers consider three types of research methods; qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method when administering their research. I made my choice of a research method based on the central research question of the study. A qualitative researcher determines the method that will garner enough credible and valid data to analyze (Baskarada, 2014; Kavam & Bitsani, 2014; Westerman, 2014).

Research Method

I used the qualitative research method for this study to explain innovation strategies that restaurant owners of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants used to sustain competitive advantage. A qualitative researcher explores a phenomenon to gain insights through reliable, valid, and subjective personal stories (Kemperaj & Chavan, 2013). A qualitative researcher uses techniques to gain in-depth information from a small sample of people (Baskarada, 2014; Macfarlane et al., 2015). The qualitative researcher's goal is to identify emerging concepts through personal interaction and observation (Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014).

A researcher using the quantitative research method employs statistics to explain the differences or relationships among two or more variables (Yilmaz, 2013). Unlike qualitative researchers who use smaller samples and gather content-based data, a quantitative researcher uses large samples with predetermined questions to gather concrete data (Baskarada, 2014; Westerman, 2014). A researcher using mixed methods research produces the best-suited approaches of quantitative and qualitative research to optimize the results of their study (Morse & Cheek, 2015). For the purpose of this study, I researched innovation strategies that do not involve comparing variables that quantitative research demanded (Baskarada, 2014).

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study explored innovation strategies some restaurant owners in Omaha, Nebraska used to succeed beyond three years.

Researchers discussed focusing on a particular business problem to gain a better understanding of the business problem through the subject's personal involvement and insights (Baskarada, 2014). Case study researchers utilize several types of data to understand and explore a business problem. The case study design allows a researcher to collect detailed information about a problem from the first-hand experience of participants through exploration, transformation, and exploitation (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Yin, 2014). However, some researchers fail to determine evidence in case study research and do not focus enough on the foundation of case studies (Baskarada, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Innovation strategies do not involve comparing variables that quantitative research demands (Baskarada, 2014).

Researchers who use the phenomenological design study variations in participant experiences, and the meanings the participants attribute to their experiences (Gill, 2014; Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2013). A phenomenologist translates the findings objectively and interprets the experience as their own (Gill, 2014; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). Case study researchers gain information by interviewing and observing the participants based on a central research question (Baskarada, 2014; Pedrosa et al., 2013; Yin, 2014).

A researcher who uses the narrative design applies a biographical account of a single person's view of a phenomenon, which allows the participant's opportunities to reflect and describe the event through stories (Gill, 2014; Hickson, 2016). A narrative research focuses on storytelling and accepting it as how a subject lives his life (Gill, 2014). A case study researcher asks questions, transcribes answers, observes the subject's

nonverbal cues, and analyzes the data by identifying themes in the transcripts (Baskarada, 2014; Pedrosa et al., 2013)

An ethnographic researcher's study spans over time as cultural changes evolve or change (Gill, 2014; Rodham, Fox, & Doran, 2013). An ethnographic researcher observes and interviews participants in a culture and analyzes the collected data objectively (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). A case study researcher investigates why experiences happen and if the event is pertinent to the research (Baskarada, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

Researchers who use grounded theory design develop a theory to match the research rather than write a study for addressing the applicability of predefined theory (Wall-Emerson, 2016). I used the case study because I filled gaps in research from a previous conceptual framework. Whereas a grounded theory researcher collects data from people who have lived a similar experience to develop a theory or framework around the research (Baskarada, 2014).

Researchers' opinions vary regarding the number of cases needed to acquire data saturation in qualitative multiple case studies (Baskarada, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Grimaldi et al., 2013; Kindstrom et al., 2013; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). However, Yin (2014) stated that two to three cases would garner enough information to ensure data saturation. Case study design requires rigorous and extensive methods of data collection to acquire sufficient information for data saturation (Baskarada, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013).

I ensured data saturation by choosing a local population of four independent, nonfranchised restaurant owners, and managers. This small population provided more quality, in-depth data from participants who understood the specific business problem. I addressed gaps in information by return visits with current participants, collected information from new members, as needed. I observed their restaurant's menu, social media, website, and other historical, nonfinancial information as part of the innovation strategy (De Massis et al., 2014; Marshall et al., 2013; Perez, Nie, Ardern, Radhu, & Ritvo, 2013).

Population and Sampling

The population for this qualitative multiple case study consisted of owners of four independently owned nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska. The restaurants' owners do not pay a franchise fee to operate the restaurant. The smaller population provided quality data from participants who understood the specific business problem of the study.

Case study researchers design rigorous and extensive methods of data collection to acquire enough information for data saturation (Baskarada, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). A case study researcher uses purposeful sampling in which the participants share a common experience (Gill, 2015; Kavoura et al., 2014). Case study researchers continue to interview participants until all themes, and other commonalities are exhausted (Marshall et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2013). A researcher arranges several visits with the participants to clarify their information and address all points of research.

In some instances, researchers may employ polar sampling in which the researcher selects participants with varying perspectives to gain a clear understanding of the problem (De Massis et al., 2014).

Researchers' opinions vary regarding the number of cases needed to acquire data saturation in qualitative multiple case studies (Baskarada, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Grimaldi et al., 2013; Kindstrom et al., 2013; Marshall et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2013). Some researchers have suggested using no less than 15 cases, and others have used one case to gain sufficient data (Baskarda, 2014; Capdevila et al., 2015). However, Yin (2014) stated that two to three cases would garner enough information to ensure data saturation. I ensured data saturation by choosing a population of the owners of four independent, nonfranchise restaurant owners, and managers.

Ethical Research

Participants voluntarily engaged in the research after agreeing to the informed consent process (Baskarada, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). The informed consent form outlined the voluntary nature of participation, explained the risks of participating, the right to privacy statement, and my contact information (Check et al., 2014; Sanjari et al., 2014; Taylor & Land, 2014; Appendix C). I complied with the standards of ethical research in regards to human research subjects to provide integrity, assistance, and respect. I informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

The participants did not receive an incentive for their voluntary participation in the study. The opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge with the potential for assisting new restaurant owners with their career decisions served as an incentive to participate in the study. I made certain that the participants' identity and lived experiences remained confidential (Taylor & Land, 2014).

I used an alphanumeric system to denote each restaurant's confidentiality and privacy of each entity early in data collection. I designated the restaurants, which were part of the case, with the letter "R." For example, the designator for the first restaurant in the case was R1.

As directed by the Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB), I will secure all documents for 5 years. I will protect the documents in a password-secured electronic file and inside a locked strong box. At the end of 5 years, I will shred all physical documents and delete electronic records. The final manuscript included the Walden University IRB approval number.

Data Collection Instruments

I acted as the sole research agent for this qualitative multiple case study. I conducted face-to-face interviewing which gave me the opportunity to observe nonverbal cues that lead to further probing questions (Harvey, 2015). I interviewed the participants in familiar and comfortable surroundings to put them at ease and to gather as much rich data as possible. A researcher's site visits give the owners a place to provide private information about a company's innovation policies and procedures (Cruz &

Higginbottom, 2013; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Marshall et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2013).

I used a formal semistructured interview with independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners to collect data for the case study research. I used the interview protocol described by Yin (2014) as a guide during the interviews. Yin's guidance for questions is to be specific, treat every case as an individual, find patterns in the questions, and use probing questions to make the case study more specific.

Researchers use member checking to ask participants to review their transcribed interviews, observations, and notes to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected (Baskarda, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). The advantage of member checking is to provide the participants an opportunity to verify information and to fill gaps that may exist during previous visits. However, participants may embellish information to appease the interviewer (Harvey, 2015). By using the member checking technique, researchers stay engaged with participants as a means with which to gain rich data (Baskarada, 2014; Harvey, 2015; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013).

If achieving data saturation is not possible with the selected cases for the study, a researcher may ask the participants for referrals to other sources of information. This practice works in a snowball effect until data saturation is accomplished (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). The researcher asks participants to review the researcher's transcribed interviews, observations, and notes to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected (Baskarda, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014).

Data Collection Technique

I used informal semistructured interviews and observation to collect data for the case study research. I used an interview protocol described by Yin (2014) as a guide during the interviews. Yin stated that questions should be specific, treat every case as an individual, finding patterns in the questions, be probing questions to make the case study more specific. I used the interview questions listed in Appendix D and the informed consent form in Appendix B.

I interviewed the participants in familiar and comfortable surroundings to put them at ease and gathered as much rich data as possible. My site visits gave the owners and managers a place to provide private information about company policies regarding their innovations (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Marshall et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2013). Face-to-face interviewing of owners on-site can make people nervous and give exaggerated information (Harvey, 2015).

I observed the participants' menu, social media, website, and other historical, nonfinancial information as part of their innovation strategy to gain a larger audience that would sustain competitive advantage. Observation is another means to collect information that will make the data valid and reliable. I used observation to triangulate with the on-site interviews to increase data saturation in the research and analysis (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

I developed an audit trail. Researchers described the audit trail as a guide to enhance the credibility of useful data (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013;

Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). Researchers use member checking to provide the participants an opportunity to verify information and to fill gaps that may exist during previous visits. However, participants may embellish information to appease the interviewer (Harvey, 2015). By using the member checking technique, researchers stay engaged with the participants to gather more rich data (Baskarada, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Harvey, 2015; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013).

Data Organization Technique

I assured the participants of confidentiality concerning their identity and lived experiences. As directed by the Walden University's IRB, I will secure all documents for 5 years. I will protect documents in a password secured electronic file and inside a locked strong box. At the end of 5 years, I will shred all physical documents and delete electronic records. The final manuscript will include the Walden University IRB approval number.

I recorded participant interviews with a Zoom Q3 digital audio recorder, took notes with pen and paper, and transcribed the interviews with Dragon Naturally Speaking software. I used an alphanumeric system to denote each restaurant owner's confidentiality and privacy early in data collection. I used reflective journaling as part of notetaking to interpret and manage my data collection and analysis (Cowan, 2014; Noble & Smith, 2015; Roessger, 2014).

I identified themes and patterns from data collection and input them into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS; Baskarada, 2104; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013) MAXQDA. The key themes that this study identified with the dynamic capabilities framework were strategic management, innovation management, consumer behavior, and competitive advantage.

Data Analysis

I used triangulation to ensure that my data was reliable and valid. The four types of triangulation are data, investigator, theory, and method (Yin, 2014). Triangulation helps researchers confirm that the information they have gathered is reliable and using several sources confirms the validity of the data (Houghton et al., 2013). I used several sources of information that included interviewing restaurant owners as well as observing their restaurants, menus, social media, website and other historical, nonfinancial information as part of the innovation strategy.

I identified themes and patterns from data collection and input them into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS; Baskarada, 2104; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013) MAXQDA. I used an alphanumeric system to denote each restaurant to ensure confidentiality and privacy of each entity early in data collection. I designated the restaurants, which are part of the case, with the letter “R” followed by sequential numbers to represent them.

Case study researchers often use CAQDAS, such as MAXQDA, to help increase productivity by assisting researchers in finding common themes and concepts

(Baskarada, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). A researcher can use CAQDAS as a means of storage and review information, as well as manage research (Baskarada, 2104; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). Researchers use CAQDAS as means of developing an audit trail that steers researchers away from trivial information that is not important to research which enhances the credibility of useful data (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). Some researchers have the perception the CAQDAS are an entirely automated system (Baskarada, 2014). However, researchers will exhibit drawbacks as they learn to operate the system and learn coding strategies (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Even when using CAQDAS, researchers have to identify themes and patterns and input them manually them into the CAQDAS (Baskarada, 2104; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013).

The key themes that this study identified with the dynamic capabilities conceptual framework of the participant pool of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants were strategic management, innovation management, consumer behavior, and competitive advantage. The selected themes of this study were congruent with the present literature review. The concept of applying dynamic capabilities to restaurants offered new views in understanding the fast-paced environment of the restaurant industry.

Reliability and Validity

My qualitative multiple case study relied on rigorous research and quality information to ensure the reliability and validity of the results of the study (Baskarada, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Gringeri, Barusch, & Cambron, 2013). A qualitative

researcher ensures reliability in research that is ethically consistent, accurate, and dependable. A researcher establishes validity in his research by displaying credibility, transferability, and confirmability of a study's research, data, and analysis.

Researchers stay engaged with participants by implementing member checking to verify their information, gain more rich data, and establish validity (Baskarada, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Harvey, 2015; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). The advantage of member checking is providing the participants an opportunity to fill gaps that may exist during previous visits (Harvey, 2015). By using the member checking technique, researchers stay engaged with participants to verify their information as a means with which to gain more rich data (Baskarada, 2014; Harvey, 2015; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013).

I used triangulation to ensure that my data is reliable and valid by collecting information from several participants in one study. The four types of triangulation are data, investigator, theory, and method (Yin, 2014). Triangulation helps researchers verify the information they have gathered is reliable by using several sources to confirm the validity of the data (Houghton et al., 2013; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). For the purpose of my case study, I used information from restaurant owners and observing their restaurants, menu, social media, website and other historical, nonfinancial information as part of the innovation strategy.

A quantitative researcher's objective is to explain social behaviors with statistical analysis whereas qualitative researchers explore information-gathering processes by a

general and subjective means (Yilmaz, 2013). The qualitative equivalent of research reliability and validity are instead four rigorous criteria of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Houghton et al., 2013; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013).

Dependability

Researchers implement member checking to verify the participant's information, gain more rich data, and establish validity (Baskarada, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Harvey, 2015; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). I developed an audit trail. Researchers describe an audit trail as a guide to enhance the validity of useful data (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). Researchers' opinions vary regarding the number of cases needed to acquire data saturation in qualitative multiple case studies (Baskarada, 2014; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Grimaldi et al., 2013; Kindstrom et al., 2013; Marshall et al., 2013; Perez et al., 2013). Some researchers have suggested using no less than 15 cases, and others have used one case to gain sufficient data (Baskarda, 2014; Capdevila et al., 2015).

Credibility

Researchers spend a vast amount of time and resources conducting qualitative research. It is important that the researcher's study is believable, the findings are valuable, and the research is valid (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). A researcher that meets the above criteria increases the validity of the research (Houghton et al., 2013). I used member checking to establish research validity. Researchers use member checking with participants to review transcribed interviews to establish the

validity of their data (Baskarda, 2014; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). I developed an audit trail. Researchers described the audit trail as a guide to enhance the credibility of useful data (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013). Triangulation helps researchers confirm that the information they have gathered is valid by using several sources to confirm the data (Houghton et al., 2013; Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013).

Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to the objectivity and auditability of a researcher's data and analysis (Anney, 2014; El Hussein, Jakubec, & Osuji, 2015). Researchers use triangulation and journaling so that other researchers can audit the data to establish that is fact-based and congruent with the research (Anney, 2014; Baskarada, 2014; El Hussein et al., 2015; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013). Researchers use several sources of information as a means to make sure the information and analysis are clear and applicable to similar circumstances in different settings (Anney, 2014; El Hussein et al., 2015; Kemparaj & Chavan, 2014).

Transferability

Transferability is increasing the validity of data using thick descriptions that when repeated will garner the same results in a similar circumstance (Gioia et al., 2013; Houghton et al., 2013). I achieved transferability by limiting my geographical location to a specific and small area. I described, in detail, the area of my research allowing for

further research and other theaters (Burchett, Mayhew, Lavis, & Debrow, 2013; Gioia et al., 2013).

Transferability is a qualitative measure for valid research that applies to different situations and participants (Anney, 2014; Baskarada, 2014; El Hussein et al., 2015, Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013; Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Qualitative researchers apply transferability to different situations to determine if the research is general in nature. Researchers use transferability to attempt to develop a connection between current research and other research in similar circumstances (Burchette et al., 2013; Kihn & Ihantola, 2015).

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included details about the research design, reliability, and validity of this study. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies some restaurant managers used to succeed beyond three years. The focal point of the study was innovation management in sustaining competitive advantage for independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners.

I described my role as a researcher, the selection of participants, and ensured reliability and validity of the study. I supported the decisions by detailing confidentiality, ethics, and assessment procedures. Member checking, audit trail, and triangulation provided an assurance of reliability and validity of the research.

In Section 3, I will present my research findings and describe how the information in the research applies to the restaurant owner's innovation strategies. I will include areas

of further research, how the study will encourage social change, and reflect on my research experience. The anticipated results created a more innovative restaurant that creates and sustains competitive advantage for independently owned nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies that some restaurant managers used to succeed beyond 3 years. The targeted population comprised of the owners and executive chefs of four independently owned, nonfranchised restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska who succeeded beyond 3 years. The restaurant industry is the second largest employee workforce in the United States, with annual sales of nearly half-trillion dollars (Frazer, 2012).

My findings came from restaurant owner interviews, observing the menu and off-menu specials, and evaluating their websites and social network (Facebook) marketing to determine the success of four owners of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants. Using dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007, Teece et al., 1997), I researched innovation strategies that restaurant owners used to sustain competitive advantage.

Presentation of the Findings

The fundamental question of this study was: What innovation strategies do some leaders of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska, used to succeed beyond 3 years? Innovation is essential to the success of independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners to succeed more than 3 years (Lee et al., 2016b). I used codes R1-R4 to designate the four owners of independent nonfranchise restaurants.

After I achieved data saturation, I then synthesized and summarized the interviews along with participant confirmation; I put the information into the CAQDAS,

MAXQDA. Three themes emerged from the information I gathered, interpreted, and analyzed due to similarities in the participant's answers and secondary data observations. The three emerging themes of innovation strategies were (a) marketing innovations, (b) restaurant innovations, and (c) innovation measurement.

The first emergent theme was marketing innovations that related to social marketing on Facebook. Internet marketing includes website design and the processes that are available for consumer use from the website. Internet marketing included the availability of menu availability, pricing, process, and product innovations. The second theme related to restaurant innovations that owners used to enhance the dining experience of the restaurant. This theme included discussions and observations of the menus, atmospherics, management, the dining experience, and open innovation. The third theme pertained to measuring innovation that included statements by the restaurant owners such as foot traffic, customer feedback, and profit and loss sheets.

Emergent Theme 1: Marketing Innovations

Internet marketing strategies were the most discussed innovation strategy by the participants. Of particular value to R1 was establishing a Facebook page for the restaurant. R1 placed the daily specials on a chalkboard outside the door in front of the restaurant. However, customers told R1 that a Facebook page would help grow the business. R1 stated, "Business picked up shortly after establishing a Facebook account." R1 used Facebook daily and stated, "Customers visit the restaurant based on what the special was on Facebook." The restaurant owners should use internet marketing

innovations as a means to merge social networking with their dynamic capabilities to improve the company's customer relationship management and sustain competitive advantage (Alves, Barbieux, Richert, Tello-Gamarra, & Zawislak, 2017; Wang & Kim, 2017).

The remaining participants have Facebook pages, but they showed little or no activity. R3 and R4 use Facebook only to announce special events at their restaurants. R2 said, "We use Facebook to update lunch and dinner specials, and special events."

However, the use of social marketing is inconsistent by the participants but familiarizes the consumers with information the restaurant owners feel is necessary (Gagic, 2016). R3 stated the use of online discount services such as Groupon increases foot traffic to their restaurant by discounting lunch, dinner, and special items.

Consumer marketing. Word-of-mouth (WOM), and more recently electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a significant impact on the way that consumers make their dining decisions. Restaurant owners use consumer marketing in conjunction with their dynamic capabilities to use the consumers as part of their innovation strategies (Choi, Mattila, Van Hoof, & Quadri-Felitti, 2016; Wang & Kim, 2017). The participants acknowledged that consumer satisfaction websites such as Yelp, Trip Advisor, and Zomato have some effect on customer dining decisions. However, the participants felt that the internet based consumer satisfaction websites could be more harmful than helpful for their business. R2 and R3 stated that they believe that some of their competitors encourage customers to write bogus reviews. Restaurant owners who utilize consumer

satisfaction websites use consumers as innovators in an open innovation environment using dynamic capabilities (Choi, Mattila, Van Hoof, & Quadri-Felitti, 2016; Spithoven et al., 2013).

All of the participants know the value of an internet presence. The internet can provide the opportunity to give feedback about the restaurant and can assist the restaurant owner in determining areas of improvement and consumer satisfaction (Choi et al., 2016; Kim, Li, & Brymer, 2016; Wu, Matilla, Want, & Hanks, 2016; Yang, 2017). With the open conversation format of Facebook, the restaurant owner can manage the risk of negative reviews by using dynamic capabilities to deflect the information before uncertain results occur (Filep et al., 2014; Semerdova & Nemeckova-Vavrova, 2016; Teece, 2007; Teece & Leih, 2016, Teece et al., 1997).

Website. A company's website is part of the internet marketing mix. The website gives a business identity (Gagic, 2016). R1 incorporates video to the website that gives the viewer a glimpse at the food served. Additionally, it gives the feel as though the consumer can grab a bite as well. R2 has a basic landing page that shows a photo of the business that occupied the spot before them. This detail shows innovation regarding the history of the building. The R3 website is bold and big, much like the facility it represents. The R3 website has a large logo with a brief history of the company where visitors can see them at the top of the page. The landing page of the R4 website offers the visitor two options to visit; the first is the restaurant and the second is an online store of some of their house-made food items.

Companies such as Wordpress and Wix provide restaurant owners an opportunity to design their websites and to use dynamic capabilities to modify the sites as needed. This plug-and-play style of designing websites allows the restaurant owners to develop pages on their sites that they feel project the image of their restaurant. All of the websites have common pages that direct the website visitors to find more information about the restaurant they want to visit (Bettencourt et al., 2013; Jin, Goh et al., 2015; Kindstrom & Thuo, 2014; Semeradova & Nemeckova-Vavroya, 2016; Wang & Kim, 2016).

All of the participants' websites have common pages that include "About Us" and "Contact Us." R1, R2, and R4 had hyperlinks to their Facebook pages. All of the participants included "Menu" pages, however, R1, R2, and R4 menus were in portable document format (PDF), and R3 had the menu integrated as part of the website. I observed other notable process innovations used by the participants. R3 provided an online ordering and delivery service. R2 – R4 had online table reservations through Open Table.

In most instances, Internet marketing was inconsistent for the participants. Some aspects were more widely used such as points of interest on the websites that included videos, photos, and menus. R1 stated, "Facebook is the only means of marketing used." The remaining participants rely on WOM, eWom, and consumer satisfaction websites to measure the success of the innovations that may sustain competitive advantage.

Emergent Theme 2: Restaurant Innovations

R1- R4 are all nonfranchise restaurant owners and therefore do not have an extended chain of command to regulate and authorize innovations. R4 stated, “holding operations meetings with managers and employees on a regular basis helps generate new ideas.” Business owners use collaboration and brainstorming as part of internal dynamic capabilities for innovation (Sok & O’Cass, 2015; Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007; Teece & Leih, 2016; 2015; Wang, 2014). When the owners work with managers and employees to gather ideas, it is less likely that employees will resist innovations (Bucharth et al., 2014; Engen & Magnusson, 2015). The participants all agreed that restaurant innovations were indicators of sustaining competitive advantage. The restaurant owners agreed that offering better menu items, using local markets and farms, and collaborating with third parties, such as food purveyors and hotel managers, attracted new customers and encouraged return visits.

Menu design. The menu design is the mark of participants and the identity of their restaurants. Menu items, such as signature entrees and sandwiches, offered by the participants add to the customers’ dining experience. The participants use locally grown and fed food with farmers using their dynamic capabilities to create competitive advantage and succeed beyond three years. R2 – R4 had physical menus available to clients whereas R1 had a chalkboard above the ordering area. R1 said, “This is done so that we were able to change the menu as the needed.” R1 changed the menu frequently as old product moved out of circulation and new items were available. R2 – R4 changed

their menus seasonally to keep items fresh and matching the time of year the items with their availability.

All of the participants offer locally grown produce and livestock on their menus. All of the participants sparingly use large supply companies for main menu items; instead, those companies are for staple items such as condiments, spices, and herbs. R2 has space outside where fresh herbs and vegetables grow. R3 offers a large variety of house made beer that they match with each menu item. R4 said, “I introduce exotic produce and proteins along with traditional items to the menu.” All menus offer local, regional, and international menu items. Restaurant owners who can build a network of local farmers use their dynamic capabilities to offer innovative food options for their customers (Gajic, 2016; Kline et al., 2016; Zilberman, Lu, & Reardon, 2017).

An observation of the menus, the products, the dining experience, and service quality, are congruent with fair pricing. When pricing is fair, the customers are likely to become return clients (Anselmsson et al., 2014; Ferguson, Brown, & Johnston, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2014). R2 explained, “The bartenders and service staff add value by being interactive with the clients and creating a true fine dining experience.”

Off -menu specials. In addition to the regular menu items, all of the participants offered off-menu specials. R1 and R3 create new specials daily, and R2 and R4 create weekly specials. R1 stated, “The daily special changes during the day if the first special sells out.” R2 and R4 will have daily meetings to establish the status of their weekly specials and will adjust the amount of product they would need to maintain their weekly

specials menu. R3 explained, “We conduct weekly meetings to determine the schedule of daily specials as well as determining how many special items we will sell before we run out of the product.” All of the participants stated that the employees talk about food and improving offerings throughout the day.

R1 restaurant is in a location with several other restaurants that provide a high amount of competition. R1 did not seem concerned about the level of competition in the area and felt like there was no need to improve the innovation strategies that are already in place. R2 has virtually no competition in its menu price point in the area. The closest competition is a family restaurant directly across the street.

R3 added, “There are over a dozen other restaurants in the area, so competition is high.” Despite this, R3 can maintain their competitive advantage with the availability of a large dining area and bar, game room, catering, and private dining rooms. R4 has a location in a restaurant-rich area where most all of the competition are franchise restaurants. To maintain competitive advantage, R4 explained, “We offer menu items unique to the establishment and provide quality and consistent service.”

All of the participants discussed the value of creating menu items that are popular and appealing to their consumers. The participants were aware that consumers demand menu items that consider special dietary needs, allergies, and intolerances. The participants cannot meet all of the consumers’ needs, but the significant consumer intolerances such as gluten-free, low fat, low sodium, and vegetarian diets, are part of the

participants' menu. Consumers express their desire for more information about offerings that fit their tastes and needs (Fakih, Assaker, Assaf, & Hallak, 2016).

Atmospherics. Atmospherics are innovative designs made by restaurant owners to play on all the customers' senses to stimulate emotions, behavior, and intellect thus increasing the perception of the value of the restaurant (Nysveen et al., 2013). A restaurant owner uses atmospherics to create a full dining experience that may encourage repeat visits by the consumer (Biswas, Szocs, Chacko, & Wansink, 2017; Hulten, 2013; Hwank & Ok, 2013; Jin et al., 2015). Each participant designed their restaurants as part of the innovation strategies to display the taste and style of their restaurant innovativeness.

Upon entering R1, a small ordering station is present with some small tables. There were no physical menus available. R1 displays regular menu items on a board behind the order station. R4 has moderate lighting; however, natural light filters in through the large windows at the entrance of the restaurant. R1 has a small outdoor dining area. R2 greets visitors with a large glass door that has an engraved logo on the door. It is a simple yet elegant dining room with a large bar, adequate lighting, a huge piece of artwork behind the bar, and a large mural of the former business. R2 uses history as part of the atmospherics of the restaurant. The original wood floor stayed intact. R2 added a large bar that serves daily craft cocktails and a private party room to the original floor plan. R2 has an outdoor eating area with fresh herbs growing close to this area.

R3 operates a large facility that boasts a large bar and dining areas. The area of the restaurant dictates the lighting. The bar area has modest lighting with pendant lights over the bars. The location is a two-story facility that has a large dining room, bar area, private party rooms, and game room. R3 is a local microbrewery that has large kettles in both locations brewing house beer. R3 has a competitive advantage because of the volume of business they conduct between the bar, brewery, restaurant, catering, delivery, party rooms, and gaming rooms. R3 has an outdoor dining area.

R4 is a simple and elegant restaurant. The front of R4 faces south and has a line of windows to allow for natural light. At night, the lighting is modest from each table. When one enters R4, the host has a podium at the split between the bar and dining room. There are fresh flower centerpieces on each table to enhance the fine dining experience. R4 has covered the tables with white table clothes with a casual fine dining table setup (napkin, dinner fork, butter knife, water glass). Restricted space did not allow R4 to have an outdoor dining area. The restaurant owners designed the atmospherics to add value to the consumer dining experience and to build consumer commitment that helps sustain competitive advantage (Hogan & Coote, 2014; Jin et al., 2016; Li & Lu, 2014; Shen, Fang, & Hu, 2016).

Open Innovation. The participants discussed OI, but none knew there was a term for a system they had been working with since they began their careers. OI is the keystone of dynamic capabilities (Grimaldi et al., 2013). All participants work with local farmers and growers to supply produce and livestock while large food purveyors supply

items that are for basic use, such as paper, cleaning supplies, and staple food items. The participants stated that working with local produce and livestock farms is important to their standards in dining.

R1 only buys local produce, stating that when tomatoes go out of season, he does not have them on his menu. R1 said, “I also collaborate with other independent nonfranchise restaurant owners when creating new menu items and specials.” When R1 and other owners collaborate, all of the owners will post and tag the each other and the dish they created together on Facebook. R2 and R4 purchase products from local farmers and markets; however, most of their collaborations and innovations are in house. R2 and R4 Managers talk to employees about the meetings and welcome any input they may have. New ideas move from employees and managers to the owners for approval.

R3 discussed one innovation they had with some of the smaller hotels in the area. With these connections, R3 stated, “We gather information about hotel census from hotel managers during a given peak times to make adjustments to inventory and personnel to meet the potential influx of business.” R3 maintains working relationships with several external agents that include purveyors, technicians, hotel managers, and brew masters to stay innovative. By collaborating with local hotel managers, farmers, and suppliers, the participants can sustain competitive advantage using their dynamic capabilities by creating innovation clusters (Garcia-Villaverde, Elche, Martinez-Perez, & Ruiz-Ortega, 2017; Kearney et al., 2014; Lee & Rha, 2016).

Emergent Theme 3: Innovation Measurement

Contradicting the participants' feelings that online customer review sites can be harmful to business, Lee, Sardeshmuck, and Hallack (2016) contended that the review websites could be beneficial to the firm. Tertiary data from customer ratings on Facebook, Yelp, Trip Advisor, and Zomato show an average satisfaction level of 4.3 out of 5 stars. R2 – R4 stated that table reservations by phone or through Open Table were a good measure of success and sustaining competitive advantage. R1 stated that Facebook is one of the tools used to measure innovation.

The participants rely on their P&L sheets and foot traffic to measure the effects of marketing, process, product, and procedure innovations. Restaurant owners complete P&L sheets on a weekly and monthly basis. The P&L sheets are an accurate representation of the profitability of the company, but they do not give the owners an immediate measurement described by dynamic capabilities. Practicing dynamic capabilities to the owners' fullest potential requires expeditious decision-making skills that will help the company harness its potential (Felin & Powell, 2016; Teece et al., 1997). All of the participants agreed that the P&L sheets were the best measure of profitability. I requested the P&L sheets, as noted in the informed consent (Appendix B). However, all of the participants declined to submit this information.

The owners agreed that foot traffic into the restaurant was the way they measure the success of their innovation strategies. R1, R3, and R4 are in areas saturated with franchise and nonfranchise restaurants, and they stated that aside from normal foot traffic

they also notice overflow from other restaurants in the area. R2 was located near an affluent area where the only other restaurant was a long-standing, family-owned restaurant.

R2 and R4 are fine dining restaurants in which process, procedure, and product innovations are essential in increasing the chances of return clients by adding value to their dining experience (Jin et al., 2016). R2 stated, “Newness and improvement of the process, procedure, and product innovations have the potential of attracting new customers and encourage return visits back to their restaurants.” Dynamic capabilities drive the restaurant owners to sense, shape, and seize opportunities by improving or creating the resources that can help measure online performance and sustain competitive advantage (Davik & Sharma, 2016; Kuo, Lin, & Lu, 2017; Moran & Muzellec, 2017; Salehan & Kim, 2016; Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007; Volberda et al., 2014).

Applications to Professional Practice

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the understanding of innovation strategies used by nonfranchise restaurant owners to sustain competitive advantage and remain successful beyond 3 years. The presentation of findings includes the results of restaurant owner interviews, analyzing secondary data, and an explanation of the results. The findings and results may be the foundation for new restaurant owners to determine the best innovative strategies to be competitive and succeed. The study goes into detail explaining the framework of DC for nonfranchise restaurant owners to

implement different innovation strategies (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007; Teece & Leih, 2016).

This study built on the body of literature for nonfranchise restaurant owners who make fast-paced decisions in a highly competitive market. The design of the DC framework is for nonfranchise restaurant owners who have limited resources to be innovative as efficiently as franchise restaurants (Grimaldi et al., 2013; Kitenga & Thuo, 2014). Nonfranchise restaurant owners' innovation strategies may come from within the restaurant, on the internet, or with the help and collaboration of external agents such as suppliers, farmers, and consumers (Kindstrom et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2016b; Rodriguez et al., 2014; Self et al., 2015).

The results of this study showed that different innovation strategies affect competitive advantage with different restaurant owners. The outcome of the study analysis indicated that nonfranchise restaurant owners who are open to various innovation strategies might enable them to sustain competitive advantage and succeed beyond three years. The analysis pointed out that each participant had distinct innovation strategies that worked for him or her to sustain competitive advantage beyond the three years.

Implications for Social Change

The social implications of this doctoral study contribute to possible innovation strategies that nonfranchise restaurant owners can use to succeed in a competitive environment. Restaurant owner success partly supports the local economy through

success and growth in the nonfranchise restaurant. Restaurant owners that implement the innovation strategies will hire employees who may improve the rate of employment. The social implications may affect the local community's economy by encouraging more independent nonfranchise restaurant owners to enter the market that may increase the employees' wellbeing, strengthen their family economics, and benefit the independently owned nonfranchise restaurant market in Omaha, Nebraska (Baker & Mehmood, 2015).

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies that some restaurant managers used to succeed beyond 3 years. The targeted population comprised of the owners and executive chefs of four independently owned, nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska who succeeded beyond three years. Restaurant owners can use the information from this study to help increase profitability, maintain the restaurant's competitive advantage, and to act as mentors for future restaurant owners.

Of particular interest to current and for future restaurant owners is to focus on (a) innovative internet marketing, (b) restaurant innovations, (c) innovations to improve the dining experience, and (d) innovative management. The results of the study suggest that innovation strategies are not uniform and should be adapted to dynamic capabilities to fit the individual owners. The secondary data confirmed the interview results that an internet presence is a useful innovation to attract customers. The data also showed the value of a positive dining experience with process, product, and procedure innovations.

I will share the findings of this study through business and scholarly journals. I will present the results of the study to the Omaha Restaurant Association, the local culinary school, and business workshops. I will increase the value of the findings with further research.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the innovation strategies that nonfranchise restaurant owners used to succeed beyond three years in Omaha, Nebraska. The data pointed out that some innovation strategies were more valuable than others to succeed in the fast-paced restaurant industry did. The focus of the study was on nonfranchise restaurant owners in Omaha, Nebraska.

There is a concern that there may not be enough nonfranchise restaurant owners to interview and observe. The first limitation focused on one area in Omaha where the highest concentration of restaurants operated. Consideration for further research is to explore beyond the boundaries of this study and expand into franchise restaurants.

A new limitation emerged due to a restaurant owner's availability. In some cases, restaurant owners were also executive chefs. The dual roles made their available time for data collection short and rare. A recommendation for further research would be to conduct several short interviews. A researcher could give more merit to secondary data such as social network presence and a website that a researcher can easily observe and analyze the data.

Finally, gathering past financial information was difficult. Although the consent form stated that all information was anonymous, none of the participants agreed to release the information. Consideration of future research may be to use a more objective approach to acquiring the financial information with a qualitative study. A researcher that gives ranges of profit and loss rather than attempting to gather specific numbers may make a participant more comfortable sharing information about finances.

Reflections

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore innovation strategies of nonfranchise restaurant owners that made them successful and sustain a competitive advantage. Over the last 5 years, I have seen a measurable number of associates and restaurant owners who have closed their businesses due to lack of interest by consumers. I saw this as an opportunity to delve into the reasons why.

I put much thought into the problem, but all of my questions had scholarly answers. After wading through almost a dozen problem statement changes, doctoral study research changes, and a break from researching, I determined that not enough information existed regarding innovation strategies in the restaurant industry.

My associates had closed because their customers lost interest. They were using the same menus since they had started their businesses. They were not trying to be innovative. They were just managing to stay afloat. Some closings were not surprising, yet others nearly made me cry.

The process and experience of researching, writing, interviewing, observing, and analyzing were as rewarding as it was gut-wrenching. When all of my ideas, frameworks, and questions were ready, I was excited and could not wait to hit the streets to find my participants. The reception by the restaurant owners was not as expected, some owners were open and interested, and others were not so exuberant. I finally found four willing participants, but time availability became an issue, so I had to take what information I could get from the owners. One participant made an appointment and then one week later the restaurant closed.

This study was a good exercise in patience. There were times that waiting for reviews felt arduous. This study would not be in place if the restaurant owners I met were not open to the experience and answering the questions. Other than not giving access to their profit and loss sheets, the research and analysis were informative. My hope is that their innovation strategies will be useful to the next generation of independently owned nonfranchise restaurant owners.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovation strategies some leaders of independently owned, nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, Nebraska used to succeed beyond 3 years. I obtained information about innovation strategies through informal, semi-structured interviews and observations of the owners' menus, websites, and social network presence. I used the computer-assisted qualitative

data analysis software, MAXQDA, and Yin's analysis strategies to recognize themes during the research.

The three emerging themes of innovation strategies were (a) marketing innovations, (b) restaurant innovations, and (c) innovation measurement. During analysis, the themes, innovation strategies, and research question answers came from interview transcripts and observation of internet marketing, and other nonfinancial historical data. There were several connections, in the themes, that fit the DC framework.

The restaurant owners' insights and innovation strategies proved to be valuable to the research. My ideas about innovation strategies have changed after finding that no one strategy works the same for every business owner. The differences in strategies are what have helped these business owners sustain competitive advantage and succeed beyond 3 years.

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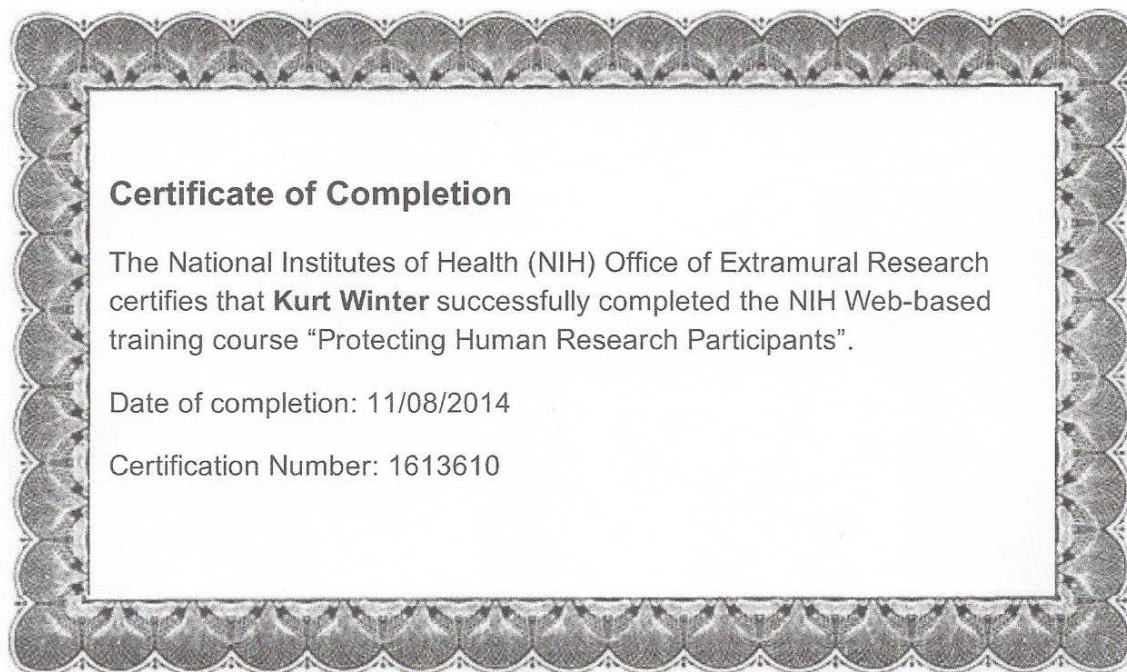
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Appendix A: National Institutes of Health (NIH) Certificate



Appendix B – Interview Questions

1. What innovation strategies do you use in your restaurant to achieve sustainable competitive advantage?
2. What innovation strategies do you think work best to achieve sustainable competitive advantage?
3. How do you measure the success of your innovation strategies?
4. What barriers have you encountered in trying to implement innovative, competitive strategies?
5. What else can you share that we have not already discussed?

Appendix C – Email Recruiting Transcript

Doctoral Study Research Invitation

for

A Study of Innovation Strategies of Independently Owned Nonfranchise Restaurants in
Omaha

Hello, my name is Kurt Winter. I am a student at Walden University in the Doctor of Business Administration program. I am conducting research on innovation strategies of independently owned nonfranchise restaurants in Omaha, and I am inviting you to participate because you are the owner of your restaurant.

Participation in this research is voluntary and will include a recorded interview discussing innovation strategies you use in your restaurant to sustain competitive advantage. The interview, which should be in person at a place of your choosing, will take approximately 30 minutes. I will follow-up with that interview to clarify information will take approximately 15-20 minutes. Your total time commitment will be between 45 minutes to one hour.

Please contact me if you have questions or to participate in the research.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Kurt W. Winter, MBA
Doctoral Candidate in Business Administration
Walden University
TEL: 402-215-3543
EMAIL: kurt.winter@waldenu.edu