


2017

Exploring Strategies of American Small Business Owners in United Arab Emirates

Shelley D. Mosley
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Shelley D Mosley

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Exploring Strategies of American Small Business Owners in United Arab Emirates

by

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MPA, Walden University, 2008

BS, Georgia State University, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2017

Abstract

The International Trade Administration reported that 70% of worldwide revenue for American businesses comes from consumers in emergent markets such as India, the Middle East, and Northern Africa. However, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a country that many American small business owners are not operating in and capitalizing on the financial opportunities that are available. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies American small business owners use in successful international entrepreneurship for increased revenue and operational longevity. The study population consisted of 5 American small business entrepreneurs who had succeeded operating in the UAE for at least 5 years. The resource-based view theory was the conceptual framework that grounded this study. Data collection included semistructured interviews and a review of company documents and government records. Data analysis involved coding, word clustering, and the use of qualitative data analytical software to identify patterns. Member checking of interview responses helped to strengthen the integrity of the findings. The use of methodical triangulation enabled a rich analysis and an enhanced trustworthiness of the results. The 4 key themes that emerged from the data analysis were strategic planning, understanding local culture, building relationships, and using digital platforms. Small business owners could use the key themes for the development of international entrepreneurial strategies. The findings from this study and the knowledge generated may influence positive social change by increasing local employment, improving economic conditions, and promoting the development of international business operations for American entrepreneurs.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my late grandfather, Eugene R. Baker, who constantly encouraged me to never give up. He supported my dedication to scholarship and provided for me partly through this journey. In addition, to the late Mrs. Katherine Starks – Lawrence, who started the same time as I, and eventually became my friend until God called her home before finishing this journey to reap her rewards in heaven.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Some American small business owners have chosen to initiate operations in foreign markets to gain more revenue and increase operational longevity (Baronchelli & Cassia, 2014). Small business entrepreneurs whose intentions are to operate internationally have various labels such as international entrepreneurs (IEs), international new ventures, or born global firms (Covin & Miller, 2014; De Clercq, Sapienza, & Zhou, 2014). Small business entrepreneurs who operate internationally could gain corporate tax breaks as well as have access to more resources such as unsaturated markets and reduced labor costs, which can create competitive advantages and profits (Johnson, Arya, & Mirchandani, 2013). Conversely, many small business owners lack the understanding on how to start and operate an international business (Roudini & Osman, 2012). Some small business owners looking to commence operations in foreign territories ponder whether there are certain entrepreneurial strategies needed to ensure a successful international venture (Roudini & Osman, 2012). Understanding the strategies needed to operate internationally could lead to more business revenue and increase chances of staying in business (Montalbano, Nenci, & Pietrobelli, 2017).

Background of the Problem

International business scholars have long debated the advantages and disadvantages of globalization (Davidson, Heyman, Matusz, Sjöholm, & Zhu, 2014; Qin & Ndiege, 2013) and how it has changed the way small business owners compete in a turbulent economy (Cheng, Filzah, & Hoe, 2011). To gain revenue and competitive advantages, an increasing number of U.S. business owners are expanding horizons, either

by outsourcing jobs overseas or by otherwise commencing operations overseas (Hilmersson, 2014). Managers of large companies have been at the forefront of this movement; however, small business owners have shown interest to compete internationally as well (Mainela, Puhakka, & Servais, 2014). One question IEs face is whether different entrepreneurial strategies are necessary in the global arena compared to home (Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2013). Starting a new business is a risky venture regardless of the location as most domestic business startups close within 5 years (Small Business Administration, 2015). IEs deal with additional challenges, such as cultural differences, language barriers, corruption, and financial repatriation (Hisrich, 2013). Many American small business entrepreneurs do not know how to be successful in a global market (Roudini & Osman, 2012).

Problem Statement

Many service, retail, and information technology based small business owners could earn profits and increase chances of longevity beyond the critical point of 5 years by also operating in a foreign country (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). More than 70% of worldwide revenue for American businesses comes from consumers located outside of the United States in emergent markets such as India, the Middle East, and Northern Africa (International Trade Administration, 2016). Middle class consumers in emerging countries are increasing twice as fast as the overall world's population (Guarin & Knorringa, 2014). The general business problem was that many American small business owners are not operating in and capitalizing on emergent markets such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The specific business problem was that some American small

business owners lack the strategies for successful international entrepreneurship that may lead to competitive advantages as increased revenue and operational longevity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies American small business owners use for successful international entrepreneurship that may lead to competitive advantages, such as increased revenue and operational longevity. The target population for this multiple case study was American small business owners who had been operating in the UAE for at least 5 years. Each selected participant needed to own a small international entrepreneurial firm operating in the UAE for at least 5 years and have some affiliation to a nonprofit service organization that may help IEs, such as the I-E Scholars or the U.S. Embassy. Positive social change may occur if American small business entrepreneurs can incorporate the results from this study to implement strategies needed for successful international entrepreneurship that could lead to increased income and operational longevity. Strategies I gathered and reported in this study may evoke business growth and the employment of additional individuals within the community where the IE operates. In addition, scholars may use the findings and contributions arising from the study as a medium to research international entrepreneurship in additional emergent markets.

Nature of the Study

The method and design I used in this study was a qualitative case study analysis. Yin (2014) stated researchers use a qualitative method to explore a phenomena and the perspectives of participants within a study. By using a qualitative method, a researcher

may provide detailed descriptions based upon a phenomenon or lived experience (Seidman, 2013). Qualitative research leads to an interpretivist view, based on *how* and *what* inquiries about a real-life phenomenon that cannot be achieved by a positivist view that makes use of *yes* or *no* questions (Bernard, 2013). A positivist perspective from quantitative research would not have been appropriate because this study did not contain propositions that needed to be tested. Performing a quantitative study may have yielded a larger sample; however, the breadth achieved would have sacrificed depth of a qualitative study (Punch, 2013). A mixed-methods study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013). However, a mixed-methods approach would not have been suitable to this study, as the interview-based nature and sample size were not conducive to conducting quantitative analyses.

In conducting this multiple case study, I used a purposeful sample to consider American IEs who have operated in the UAE for at least 5 years. Palinkas et al. (2013) stated researchers that have used a purposeful sample specifically target participants from a larger group to obtain detailed information on the phenomena of concern. Using purposeful sampling, my aim was not to select participants at random or conclude with generalizations (Palinkas et al., 2013). This study represents my understanding of the strategies from American IEs who have operated outside the country for at least 5 years. In a purposeful case study, researchers focus on the human experience (Yin, 2014), which can be used to identify strategies on how to become a successful IE. A case study is conducive for explanatory enquiries because researchers may use a holistic approach, which includes scrutinizing documentation, and asking a participant how and why

questions (Seidman, 2013). Kafle (2013) distinguished between two primary types of case studies that deal with a phenomenon: empirical and hermeneutic. Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, and Yehuda (2014) stated that researchers use an empirical case study to focus or interpret participants' experiences or an event, while Silverman (2013) stated that in empirical case studies, researchers seek to define a phenomenon from an experience instead of a theory.

Kafle (2013) described hermeneutic case studies as opposite from empirical, wherein researchers seek to interpret a method or theory. In this study, I explored actual lived experience; therefore, the study was empirical. A case study differs from a qualitative phenomenological study because in the latter, researchers take a philosophical approach to capture the essence of a human lived experience, thus often taking a hermeneutical path to interpret a method or theory (Kafle, 2013). Researchers, who choose an ethnographic design use direct field observation, while scholars who use grounded theory begin with a broad topic, then make deductions (Merriam, 2014); neither was feasible for this study. However, in an empirical case study design, the researcher explicitly describes the process used to obtain the results and findings (Silverman, 2013).

Research Question

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do American small business owners use for international entrepreneurship that may lead to increased revenue and operational longevity?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies have you implemented to begin and operate a business the UAE?
2. What strategies enabled entry into the UAE?
3. What uncertainties and hindrances did you anticipate prior to opening a business in a foreign territory? What strategies did you use to handle them?
4. What uncertainties and hindrances are you currently dealing with while operating in a foreign territory? What strategies did you use to handle them?
5. How did previous strategies that you may have had (i.e., previous management, entrepreneurship, international business skills) help create your international business?
6. How have you used business networking strategies (if any) to sustain your company in a foreign environment?
7. What strategies do you use to gain resources needed to operate in the UAE?
8. What strategies do you use to sustain your business when operating in the UAE?
9. What additional information would you like to discuss regarding this topic?

Conceptual Framework

The most frequent theory that IE scholars use when studying IE strategies has been the resource-based view theory (RBV; McDougall-Covin, Jones, & Serapio, 2014). Small IEs typically do not have the same level of resources as large companies; therefore, the RBV has been the primary theory IEs use to compete in the similar markets (McDougall-Covin et al., 2014). IEs compile internal tangible and intangible resources to

adjust strategies to exploit external opportunities (Barney, 2014). The more valuable and scarce the skill or resource is, the better (Park, LiPuma, & Prange, 2013).

In 1984, Wernerfelt coined the term RBV by gathering principles established by Coase (1937) and Penrose (1959), who described specific strategies used by supervisors to strengthen organizations. IE scholars use RBV to formulate strategies of value creation for business owners who enter a new venture (Brouthers et al., 2015). International entrepreneurship literature about RBV has been interpreted by managers who are searching for ways to manipulate capabilities in order to form a strategy to gain a competitive edge, which in turn creates value (Yao, Yang, Fisher, Ma, & Fang, 2013). One tenant of the RBV theory is that disparities in competitive markets result from variations in resources and strategies (Barney, 2014). The RBV theory emphasizes strategies over tangible resources because the former enable managers to leverage the latter (Park et al., 2013). Many IEs use networking strategies to expand into new markets (Brouthers et al., 2015).

Operational Definitions

This operational definitions section will include explanations of key terminology I used throughout the study for the clarity and understanding of the reader.

Capability: The combination of dedication, procedures, and resources that create steadiness towards productivity needed to achieve the goals of the firm (Autio, George, & Alexy, 2011).

Entrepreneurial strategies: The tactics in which business owner (s) create and adjust the plan of procedures that are used to acquire necessary resources to perform favorable actions recognized in the market (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015).

Entrepreneurship: Processes that are primarily focused around how, by whom, and what controls opportunities that create future goods and services that can be found, assessed, and exploited (Covin & Miller, 2014).

International entrepreneur(s) (IE, IEs): Individuals, also known as born globals, who discover opportunities and act, evaluate, and exploit resources across national borders to create future goods and services (Zhang et al., 2009).

International entrepreneurship: The act of entrepreneurs who are finding, assessing, acting upon, and exploiting resources and opportunities outside of their home country to create future services and products (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005).

Resources: Possessions owned and /or regulated by a firm's owner, who can create and build strategies (Andersson & Evers, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions are the researcher's expected outcomes that are not verified (Simon, 2013). In this study, I assumed that the participants would respond honestly and openly to interview questions. I also assumed that the participants could accurately recall the strategic maneuvers and strategies used that led to successful international entrepreneurship for at least 5 years.

Limitations are the constraints that have an impact on the study (University of Southern California, 2014). My data collection and analysis in this study did not include a

specific type of international entrepreneurial firm other than five IEs who had operated in the UAE for at least 5 years. Yin (2014) stated that multiple case studies have constraints because there are boundaries that are limited to a specific subject or phenomenon within each case. In a qualitative study, data are limited to a participant's personal experiences and perceptions (Hancock, 2015), and in this case, the entrepreneurial strategies believed to determine international business success. The location in which the IE operates may not be suitable to every type of business and every global market. Location, time, and five American entrepreneurs who had been operating the UAE for at least 5 years bounded this study.

Delimitations are boundaries researchers set for the purpose of focusing on the scope of the study (Simon, 2013). I limited participation in this study to five American IE firms that had been operating in the UAE for at least 5 years. The results of this study might not be generalizable to large businesses or businesses not in a service-related industry or to non-American IEs. I did not consider the globalization of business apart from the specifics of entrepreneurial strategies. The scope of this study entailed interviewing five American entrepreneurs, who had been operating in the UAE for at least 5 years, with semi-structured opened-ended questions on what business strategies each used.

Significance of the Study

The findings from this study may be of significance to small business owners who want to obtain an enhanced understanding of strategies needed to operate in an international setting. This study may fill some gaps in international entrepreneurship

literature by revealing practices that lead to the competitive advantages of increased revenue and longevity for small business owners. Future scholars may use the research results from this study to generate new knowledge about international entrepreneurship in an emergent market. The results of the study might contribute to positive social change by increasing the opportunity for more small businesses to succeed in the prevailing global environment. As more IEs succeed, owners may help strengthen the foreign economy in which they operate by adding a tax base, employing local workers, or providing access to unique retail or service products.

Contribution to Business Practice

Roudini and Osman (2012) noted that information regarding skills needed for small entrepreneurs is beneficial because owners can tap into global markets to gain competitive advantages and greater profit. IE scholars have believed information on IE strategies is sparse (Brouthers, Nakos, & Dimitratos, 2015). A qualitative study could provide a richer description of approaches needed to succeed as an IE (Baronchelli & Cassia 2014). The results of this study may add to the existing body of literature within the international business and entrepreneurship discipline by providing information on the strategies needed for international entrepreneurial success.

Implications for Social Change

Business executives, business owners, and government planners who have a significant role in international entrepreneurship could use the results from this study to understand how to develop and deploy international entrepreneurial approaches. Those strategies may generate a competitive advantage leading to profit and longevity in the

international market. The results from this study may contribute to positive social changes by increasing the number of American, small business, owners who succeeded in operating globally. The findings might also lead to local employment opportunities in the host country. An additional positive social change may be improved local conditions that promote the worth and development of individuals in the community where the business operates.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies American IEs use in the UAE to create competitive advantages such as profit and longevity. The following research question was the crux of the study: What strategies do American small business owners use for international entrepreneurship that may lead to increased revenue and operational longevity? In this section, I will provide a review of relevant literature on RBV theory, the motivations of global entrepreneurs, IE capabilities and resources, global business dynamics, and competitive advantage. The relevant literature will include the capabilities that scholars have determined as successful IE needs.

I located information for this literature review in the following databases:

ScienceDirect, Emerald Management Journals, EBSCOhost, SAGE, ProQuest Digital Dissertations, ProQuest Central, IEEE Xplore Digital Library, Academic Search Complete, Management & Organization Studies, ABI/INFORM COMPLETE, Expanded Academic ASAP, Business Source Complete, Safari Tech Books, Journals@Ovid, Lexis Nexis Academic, InfoTrac One File, Hoover's Company Records, Computers and Applied Sciences Complete, Walden University Dissertation Database, and National

Technical Information Service. I also used Google Scholar to search for unpublished studies, books for reference material, and government statistical websites to compile the most recent business data. The table exhibits the numeral compilation of material used for the study.

Table 1
Summary of Literature

| Literature Type | References before 2013 (1937-2013) | References after 2013 (2013-2017) | Total |
|--|--|---|-------|
| Doctoral Studies | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Germinal and seminal books | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| Government and Organizational Websites | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Journal articles (peer reviewed) | 34 | 186 | 220 |
| Journal articles (non-peer-reviewed) | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Percentage of peer-reviewed literature | 15% | 85% | 100% |

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The RBV is the primary theory connected to IE scholarly literature. Wernerfelt (1984) formulated RBV based on principles established by Coase (1937) and Penrose (1959), who described behaviors used by supervisors to strengthen organizations. Global business executives use RBV for strategies regarding value creation (Brouthers, Nakos, & Dimitratos, 2015). Small business owners usually do not have access to the same resources as larger counterparts (Darcy, Hill, McCabe, & McGovern, 2014; Halme & Korpela, 2014). Small business owners could use RBV to exploit external opportunities by using existing intangible and tangible resources in new ways for differing situations (Lin & Wu, 2014). Many established IEs have used the RBV theory to identify core skills

and strategies to manipulate business-related resources in order to gain a competitive edge, which in turn creates value (Barney, 2014; Yao et al., 2013).

One assumption of the RBV is that each business owner has different resources and skills to comprise strategies towards gaining competitive advantages (Chen, Jiang, Wang & Hsu, 2014). Another assumption is that even though some competitors may replicate products, they are unable to implement the exact same strategies (Lin & Wu, 2014; Mason & Brown, 2013). As an example, an intangible resource as marketing skill may differ between organizations (Lonial & Carter, 2015; Mason & Brown, 2013). Intangible resources, such as intellectual knowledge, processes, or property, are immobile (Halme & Korpela, 2014). IEs have a better advantage to compete when unique skills and resources are adapted into the business environment (Mason & Brown, 2014). One of the advantages IEs have when using the RBV is the ability to adapt with change easier than with larger companies (Vanpoucke, Vereecke, & Wetzels, 2014).

Kindström, Kowalkowski, and Sandberg (2013) suggested a starting point for IEs is to take inventory of resources and capabilities before entering the foreign market. Kindström et al. also recommended that owners must first address the firm's boundaries internally as well as those of the industry it is in to figure out how to leverage the resources. Some competitive advantages that have derived from small business owners using RBV have been the ability to reach an unsaturated market, tailor items to customers, and find niche markets (Halme & Korpela, 2014; Vanpoucke, et al., 2014). By using the RBV theory, IEs may be able to tailor products and services for a foreign clientele. The more valuable and unique the resources and capabilities are, the better

advantage the IE will have in foreign markets as well (Eisend & Schmidt, 2014; Vandaie & Zaheer, 2014).

Although RBV theory has been widely used, it has detractors. Demil, Lecocq, Ricart, and Zott (2015) stated RBV theorists view knowledge as a general resource. The aforementioned authors criticized the theory because it does not adequately predict how knowledge and learning result in a competitive advantage. Demil et al. claimed also that the theory is too general and does not adequately identify specific characteristics managers need. Some IE scholars believed the RBV theory is too narrow and proposed it should be broadened (Warnier, Weppe, & Lecocq, 2013).

Years after its inception, adaptations to the RBV began to develop. A variation of the RBV theory is the knowledge-based view, which posits knowledge as an organization's most crucial resource (Eisend & Schmidt, 2014). The knowledge-based view is predicated on the assumption that company employees are repositories of wisdom that can be obtained through partnerships, prior experience, and firsthand knowledge (Fletcher, Harris, & Richey, 2013; Martín-de Castro, 2015). Omerzel and Gulev (2011) declined to recognize the knowledge-based approach as a proper theory because wisdom is intrinsically unique to each organization and not precisely replicated from one firm to another to guarantee a competitive advantage.

International entrepreneurship researchers have also considered using the dynamic capability to create competitive advantages. The dynamic capability is another adaptation of RBV in which managers use core competencies to adjust short-term effectiveness in order to build a longer-term competitive edge (Casillas & Acedo, 2013;

Lin & Wu, 2014). Conversely, Arend (2014) indicated that the dynamic capability be used as a competitive survival technique instead of as a sustainable competitive advantage. El Shafeey and Trott (2014) acknowledged the RBV theory is still evolving.

Tallman, S. (2015) described RBV theory as useful in determining a business owner's capability of building a firm, assimilating to survive, and ability to adjust internally and externally to the rapidly changing situational settings. For many Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), financial, human, and tangible resources are scarce; thus, entrepreneurs must be able to leverage assets for successful international business performance (Roudini & Osman, 2012). The resources and capabilities managers possess form the basis of an international strategy (Beleska-Spasova, Glaister, & Stride, 2012; Chen et al., 2014; Clarke, Tamaschke, & Liesch, 2013). Managers assess the firm's resources and capabilities, which ultimately form a strategy used to enter the international market (Lonial & Carter, 2015).

Although IE studies have proliferated in the last 2 decades, theoretical paradigms and methodological frameworks remain fragmented (Zander, McDougall-Covin, & Rose, 2015). A considerable amount of IE research incorporated the RBV theory. The theory has been widely employed in general management, technology, knowledge management, business strategy research, and business history (Roudini & Osman, 2012).

International Entrepreneurship

The understanding of international entrepreneurship has evolved since its inception in 1988. Gil-Pechuan, Exposito-Langa, and Tomas-Miquel (2013) stated the term originated with Morrow (1988) in a study of offshore business ventures and the

contribution of technology to business expansion. Since Morrow's study, a variety of business researchers have explored the distinctions between domestic and international ventures (Terjesen, Hessels, & Li, 2013). A formal conception of international entrepreneurship emerged in the work of McDougall and Oviatt (1997), who defined it as "a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behavior that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organizations" (p. 293). Hulbert, Gilmore, and Carson (2013) described international entrepreneurship as a process that discovers and exploits external opportunities to gain business advantage. Butler, Doktor, and Lins (2010) characterized international entrepreneurship as more of a process than a collection of characteristics. Covin and Miller (2014) described an IE as an individual globally engaged in capitalistic risks and opportunities.

Other international entrepreneurship researchers have focused on the topic in a variety of contexts such as in comparisons of entrepreneurial cultures (Autio, Pathak, & Wennberg, 2013; Zhang et al., 2009) or venture types (Jones & Casulli, 2014). Some IE authors focused on alliances and collaborative strategies to gain advantages (Brouthers et al., 2015) while other authors devoted research to internationalization for SMEs (Kunday & Şengüler, 2015). Business financing is an elusive aspect within the international entrepreneurship topic (Terjesen, et al., 2013). Cognition of business leaders in the sense of mental strategies has also served as a subset topic of a study (Murase, Carter, DeChurch, & Marks, 2014). International entrepreneurship scholars view management of knowledge in a broad sense being that the topic of international entrepreneurship as a collegiate study is new (Naldi & Davidsson, 2013). Acs, Autio, and Szerb (2014)

examined a business profile list that displayed various international entrepreneurship transactions worldwide. Turcan and Juho (2014) documented threshold strategies based on entry into foreign markets. Global business scholars entwine exporting with international entrepreneurship studies as a primary way to get into the global arena (Al-Aali & Teece, 2014; Javalgi, Deligonul, Dixit, & Cavusgil, 2011). There is a multitude of scholarly material about international entrepreneurship expansion for corporations (Kuratko, Hornsby, & Hayton, 2015; Ming, 2013) and about technological learning as information technology (IT) firms enter the global marketplace (Khavul, LiPuma, Newbert, & Doh, 2013).

International entrepreneurship is a popular academic topic because it combines international business, entrepreneurship, and strategic management disciplines (De Clercq, Sapienza, & Zhou, 2014). McDougall-Covin, Jones, and Serapio (2014) stated some scholars initially described international entrepreneurship as a branch of internationalization. More recently, however, it has become a discipline of its own (Jones, Coviello, & Tang, 2011). International entrepreneurship has challenged the conventional understanding of the internationalization process by focusing on the entrepreneur (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994, 2005).

Servantie, Cabrol, Guieu, and Boissin (2016) analyzed 567 peer-reviewed journal articles published from 1989 to 2015 and concluded that most research on international entrepreneurship extends from a study by McDougall and Oviatt (2005). Servantie et al. found most international entrepreneurship research falls into two main categories: a focus on national entrepreneurial systems with specific behaviors and conditions, or a focus on

the behavior and knowledge of entrepreneurs who operate globally. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies, which included skills and knowledge of global entrepreneurs that lead to success.

Motivations of International Entrepreneurs IEs

There are many reasons why entrepreneurs go global, but the dominant one is to increase profit. Cheng et al., (2011) noted how globalization has opened channels to resources that entrepreneurs can exploit and that it creates the potential to learn from business leaders in other countries. Globalization provides openings to new markets, cheaper goods and services, a broader array of consumers and traders, efficiencies in resource allocation, relaxed labor laws, and fewer environmental restrictions, all of which can lead to higher profits (Cheng et al., 2011; Hisrich, 2011). Global business has also improved relationships among nations by decreasing poverty in developing countries through increased employment for local residents (Cheng et al., 2011; Zahra, Newey, & Li, 2014).

Globalization has also changed the mode of business network communication due to IT (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). The advent of technology in particular has made the global network a much closer and faster connection (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). Hisrich (2013) noted that early instances of international entrepreneurship were primarily reactive. A company might receive specialty requests for products or services from global prospects and respond accordingly (Hisrich, 2013). Eventually, domestic companies became more proactive in seeking business abroad and extending operations globally (Hisrich, 2013).

The negative effects of globalization have included violations of human rights and an exploitation of lax environmental laws abroad (Cheng et al., 2011; Zahra et al., 2014). Many businesses managers go offshore simply to take advantage of reduced labor costs and to receive incentives from host governments (Tate, Ellram, Schoenherr, & Petersen, 2014). Hisrich (2011) highlighted Foxconn, a company that manufactures the Apple iPad, iPhone, and Macintosh computers, and whose employees have criticized it for low wages; long work hours; unsafe working conditions; and forced, uncompensated overtime. Doytch, Thelen, and Mendoza (2014) and Bélanger (2014) provided examples of how American companies operating abroad have abused labor rights by sanctioning child labor and paying substandard wages.

Managers operating companies abroad face a variety of potential obstacles: natural or human disasters, changes in foreign exchange rates, difficulty securing adequate raw material or supplies, communication problems caused by language barriers or cultural misunderstandings, preference for native businesses, cultural and legal differences among countries, and the inability to be on-site to oversee offshore operations (Hisrich, 2013). Becoming profitable is often a long-range proposition (Hisrich, 2013). Cheng et al. (2011) warned against going global prematurely by not researching the new business environment adequately. Establishing a business in a foreign country often creates a series of uncertainties (Autio et al., 2011).

Internationalization

International entrepreneurship scholars have cited internationalization as one of the most important growth strategies for entrepreneurial firms (Norbek & Persson, 2014;

Sarasvathy, Kumar, York, & Bhagavatula, 2014). Internationalization involves increasing participation across borders and adapting domestic operations to international environments (Zander, McDougall-Covin, & Rose, 2015). Research on internationalization surged in the 1960s and 1970s (Bingham, 2009). Documentation on how and at what point in an operation managers enter the global market remains elusive (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015; Madsen, 2013).

Business managers with the primary intent of pursuing global ventures have existed for years; however, there is a lack of theoretical literature on the topic (Baronchelli & Cassia, 2014; Oviatt & McDougall, 1994). Technology firms have been on the forefront of numerous internationalization articles because such owners tend to be more innovative and flexible with operations that are mainly conducted online (Onetti et al., 2012). In addition to technology, a substantial amount of internationalization material involves multinational corporations or managers who started domestically and then developed globally as incremental managers (Onetti et al., 2012).

Market Entry

Entrepreneurs enter global territories in several ways. The two most common methods of entry are incremental and born global (Hilmersson, Sandberg, & Pourmand Hilmersson, 2015; Zhou, Wu, & Barnes, 2012). The international entrepreneurship scholars most cited for global market entry literature are Johanson and Vahlne.

Incremental market entry. One influential development was the Uppsala theory (often called U theory), first articulated by Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) and later refined by Johanson and Vahlne (1977; 1990). The theory developed out of four

case studies of Swedish manufacturing firms. The U theory is considered the most referenced model for business internationalization (Cui, Walsh, & Zou, 2014) business owners that have used Johanson and Vahlne's (1977) original U theory of internationalization had taken a gradual approach that began with an occasional export order that slowly become more regular (Bouncken, Schuessler, & Kraus, 2015).

Luostarinen's (1979) also devised the product operation model (POM) which is based on the assumption that business owners typically begin operations domestically, then export products to countries in close proximity, and continue to slowly expand their global reach (Gnizy & Shoham, 2014; Osei-Bonsu, 2014). In POM, internationalization proceeds according to three variables: product (goods and services), operation, and market (Luostarinen, 1979). The POM has much in common with the U theory, both of which espouse gradual entry into international markets (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 1990; Luostarinen, 1979; Meng, 2014). These theories are classic explanations of what international entrepreneurship scholars call the incremental approach to globalization (Jiang, Li, & Yang, 2014; Yang, Lu, & Jiang, 2017).

Incremental business managers begin expanding operations with a low commitment to the global market and slowly increase that commitment as they acquire established relationships with foreign partners (Ahlbrecht & Eckert, 2013; Figueira-de-Lemos, & Hadjikhani, 2014). Incremental managers start with new clients in close proximity and then branch to the more profitable client areas to receive faster feedback (Johanson & Vahlne 1977; Taylor & Jack, 2013). The managers eventually decrease

resource obligations in areas where sales are lowest, which might be either domestic or global markets (Johanson & Vahlne 1977; Taylor & Jack, 2013).

Although U theory and POM are similar, there is a difference in several respects. The U theory attributes the gradual process of internationalization to managers' lack of foreign market knowledge, which results in uncertainty. Originally, in the U theory, if business managers were successful, operations gradually expanded; however, if managers did not meet sales, actions ceased (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Luostarinen (1979) believed the first sale or purchase constituted foreign market entry. Freeman, Giroud, Kalfadellis, and Ghauri (2012) suggested an approach for entrepreneurs with limited foreign experience, which is to trade first with countries in close proximity to the home market before expanding further. Inexperienced entrepreneurs can also slowly acquire global experience and expertise that gives managers the confidence to expand further (De Clercq et al., 2014).

Kuivalainen, Saarenketo, and Puumalainen (2012) cited several examples where successful internationalization did not conform to the U theory. Vahlne and Johanson (2013) eventually disclosed that the original U theory centered upon preexisting relationships to network, build trust, and gain knowledge incrementally in order to control the resources needed to penetrate international markets. The original Uppsala theory model contained within the U theory may not exhibit the true dynamics of the internationalization process to reflect current trends (Monferrer, Blesa, & Ripollés, 2014). Vahlne and Johnson acknowledged that the original Uppsala theory model did not include the increasingly common phenomenon of rapid internationalization by aggressive

entrepreneurs (Monferrer et al., 2014). Casillas, Barbero, and Sapienza (2014) specified 30 years after the U theory model was developed, its creators Vahlne and Johnson, still believed the internationalization process is primarily driven by managers who had investigational knowledge of the intended global marketplace beforehand.

Born global market entry. To account for the trend that not all global market entry is gradual, researchers have studied examples of more rapid internationalization. An early study in this area was by Hedlund and Adne (1985), who identified companies that skipped stages in the traditional model, a phenomenon called *leapfrogging*. Rennie (1993) studied 310 Australian production firms and found that 25% had extensively exported within the first 2 years after formation and that exports accounted for 75% of sales. Rennie concluded such business owners intend to exploit the global market and use the domestic market as a backing for global ventures.

One result of research challenging the assumptions of gradualism was the coining of a new term: *born global*. Born globals are business owner(s) who plan to serve international markets from the beginning of operation (Kuivalainen et al., 2012; Sekliuckiene, 2015). Other terms for similar operations are *international new ventures* and *global startups* (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994).

Born globals are usually SMEs who typically have managers who are more flexible than are owners of larger companies because the size of the business allows for it (Kuivalainen et al., 2012; Oviatt & McDougall, 1994; Paul & Gupta, 2014). Born globals are able to internationalize more rapidly because they have accumulated less organizational superstructure (Autio et al., 2011). Born globals are better able to

surmount political and economic barriers and operate in risky markets that are not yet saturated (Efrat & Shoham, 2012). Tanev (2012) noted most born globals expand internationally by exporting from direct global sales, leveraging resources from independent foreign intermediaries, creating joint ventures, or making foreign direct investments. Born global firms typically have unique and superior product offerings used to target market segments not customarily supported by traditional, larger firms, thus creating a niche (Sekliuckiene, 2015). The choice of international market is very important (Taylor & Jack, 2013). Innovative product offerings are a key contributing factor to the success of born globals, but the specific strategies that help them become or remain innovative is unknown (Sekliuckiene, 2015). International entrepreneurship scholars have studied the steps born globals follow after the initial decision to go international, but they have not clearly documented time and development as separate issues (Kuivalainen et al., 2012).

One early assumption was that born globals are mostly technology firms (Hagen & Zucchella, 2014). More recently, however, researchers have identified a wide array of born global firms, both product- and service-based (Tanev, 2012). Born global firms generally offer unique and superior products and services to targeted market segments not customarily supported by more traditional and larger firms (Dlugoborskyte & Petraite, 2013). Although innovative offerings are a key factor in the success of born globals, the specific strategies that help them innovate are largely unknown (Kuivalainen et al., 2012; Sekliuckiene, 2015).

Efrat and Shoham (2012) described born globals as managers of companies that export 25% of sales within 3 years of inception. For Gabrielsson, Kirpalani, Dimitratos, Solberg, and Zucchella (2008), that figure was 50%. Paul and Gupta (2014) believed the requirements to be at least 2 years after the formation of the company with at least 76% of sales from exports. According to Cannone and Ughetto (2014), born globals begin companies with specialized products to create a niche market in a foreign country. Kuivalainen et al. (2012) emphasized that exporting is not always straightforward and that becoming a born global might take longer than 3 years. Gabrielsson et al. questioned ratio standards, noting that international activities can be influenced by where the born global originates, the economy, type of industry, and neighboring markets. Gabrielsson et al. also stated that being a born global does not guarantee fast-growing foreign sales but does enhance the long-term effectiveness of internationalizing.

Born globals typically have limited tangible and monetary resources (Tanev, 2012) and often lack financing and international business expertise (Trudgen & Freeman, 2014). Variables that directly affect the progress of born globals are innovation, finances, strategies for the product, networks and marketing, and organizational learning (Freeman, Hutchings, & Chetty, 2012). During the introductory phase, born globals rely on tactical knowledge, which helps with both human capital and developing unique products (Zhou et al., 2012).

Born globals usually depend on networks, especially for technological knowledge (Freeman, Hutchings, Lazaris, & Zyngler, 2010; Freeman et al., 2012). Born globals also often seek funding from both domestic venture capitalists and foreign investors (Braymen

& Wingender, 2014; Humphery-Jenner & Suchard, 2013; Manolova, Manev, & Gyoshev, 2013). For a born global to expand rapidly, managers need to consider and agree to the details of the partnership relationship (Hohenthal, Johanson, & Johanson, 2014).

Zhang et al. (2009) compared born globals to traditional exporting manufacturing firms and found differences in international learning capability, networking capability, and experience. Comparing the incremental and born global approach, Zhang et al. found the latter focused more on opportunity identification and exploration, whereas incremental managers try to solve a problem by meeting a particular need. Zhang et al. also found managers who have used an incremental approach and believed success of internationalization was due to experience in domestic and familiar market environments rather than any particular entrepreneurial expertise.

Born again global market entry. Bell, McNaughton, and Young (2001) introduced the concept of *born again globals* as an extension to the born global terminology. Born again globals are described as long established domestic businesses with managers who are compelled to internationalize due to client followership or a request for international patronage (Bell et al., 2001). Most born again globals are managers with a SME who learn through trial and error as they quickly extend globally taking advantage of opportunities as they go (Freeman, Deligonul, & Cavusgil, 2013; Kuivalainen et al., 2012). Born again globals differ from born globals because the latter begins global operations from inception.

Stieg, Hiebl, Kraus, Schüssler, and Sattler (2017) suspected most born again globals rapidly internationalize due to a change in management or company acquisition.

Unlike the incremental approach, born again global managers quickly change focus and accept rapid internationalization into countries that are farther in proximity (Kuivalainen et al., 2012). Schweizer (2013) noted exactly how managers of global bound firms learn from networking and developing synergistic strategies that enable internationalization remains elusive. Cavusgil and Knight (2015) claimed research on each method of internationalization stems from general information regarding their growth and survival.

Strategies of Market Entrance

Stieg et al. (2017) explained internationalization through terms of time and speed, place of operation, and mode of entry. Hisrich (2011) noted novice entrepreneurs might need to pace international investments slowly. Park et al. (2014) believed internationalization depended on familiarity and compatibility with the complexities of global business. Freeman et al. (2010) thought time is an important factor needed for global entrepreneurs to cultivate relationships in order to gain and share tactical knowledge. New global managers can incorporate some aspects of the incremental approach in order to learn from the global experience of other firms (Zhou et al., 2012). Cheng et al. (2011) recommended IEs might want to focus on creating a product to fit the needs of the locals and then exporting them.

Zhou et al. (2012) used the term *entrepreneurial proclivity* to describe a combination of market knowledge, innovativeness, and proactiveness. Zhou et al. also discussed how acquiring market knowledge is complicated because of cultural and operational dissimilarities between the firm and the host country. Ahmad (2014) noted would-be IE must prepare for unfamiliar barriers in a host country. As an example, Ajayi

(2016) surveyed 235 small to medium-sized Nigerian agricultural firms and found resource constraints, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of export assistance. Rask (2014) stated that barriers to market entry require creative strategizing. An especially valuable skill is the ability to improvise in unfamiliar business environments by being flexible and alert to change (Bingham, 2009). Cheng et al. (2011) suggested IEs use a strategic management guide as the following: look for uncommon resources or skills in a host country, meet conditions and needs of local clients, recognize competition in similar and supporting industries, and devise a plan and strategy to gain a competitive edge on competitors.

In early studies of internationalization, product differentiation was widely seen as a superior competitive strategy (Almor, 2013). More recently, scholars have emphasized opportunity identification more than product differentiation (Jones et al., 2011). After completing a study based on 323 business journal articles, Jones et al. concluded that identifying opportunities was the best way to facilitate international business entry.

Su (2013) conducted a qualitative study with 13 Chinese technology firms regarding market entry. Su (2013) listed exploitation, redeployment of resources, and learning as key components of internationalization. In both studies, the researchers emphasized the importance of not only leadership but also followership, along with the development of social capital (Su, 2013). For Freeman et al. (2010), technological experience supersedes market-specific experience and operation experience because it enables a company to promote products faster than competitors can and more quickly create codependency between buyer and supplier.

Capabilities of an IE

Autio, George, and Alex (2011) described capability as a manager's competence to organize an arrangement of resources and processes to attain a desired goal.

Conversely, there are conflicting views of what key capabilities IEs should have to succeed. IEs must be able to organize, structure, and develop ideas and procedures that conform to a global environment (Autio et al., 2011; Beleska-Spasova et al., 2012).

Roudini and Osman (2012) delineated four capability dimensions: people, resources, timing, and opportunity; the first two constitute an initial capacity for internationalization, while the last two are to seize new possibilities. Beleska-Spasova et al. (2012) developed a list of four capabilities for IEs: knowledge, organizing,

supervision, and technology. Brannen, Piekkari, and Tietze (2014) emphasized foreign language skill, international business knowledge, commitment to exporting, and

technology intensity. Zhang et al. (2009) stressed learning propensity, networking

orientation, and motivation, while Monferrer, Blesa, and Ripollés (2014) highlighted a

manager's capability to allocate resources. Frasquet, Dawson, and Mollá (2013) listed

cultural adaptability, openness to change, and ability to adjust to international demands as key attributes.

Potential capabilities determine the success of entrance and operation in a global market filled with uncertainties (Hisrich, 2011; Lonial & Carter, 2015). IE capabilities also determine how intense a global market orientation will be (Kuivalainen et al., 2012).

Fernández-Olmos and Díez-Vial (2013) found born globals to be more successful than established firms if they are committed to foreign markets and are able to adapt native

elements to a new environment. Griffith and Hoppner (2013) noted the need for IEs to develop soft skills such as leadership, interpersonal communication, and passion. Such capabilities will enable one to articulate a global purpose, establish partnerships, acquire resources, and diversify networks.

Vance, McNulty, Paik, and D'Mello (2016) in addition to Li and Lin (2015) affirmed the need to focus a product's marketability on conditions of the host country. Hisrich (2011) noted the importance of understanding the legal and regulatory environment of the host country. Lin and Darnall (2015) emphasized the ability to build a business network because it allows access to opportunities, adds to a firm's credibility, and creates strategic alliances. IE orientation drives exploitative and explorative capabilities, argued Boso, Cadogan, and Story (2013). Some IE authors believed IEs must discover a balance between exploration and exploitation (Lisboa, Skarmeas, & Lages, 2013). Wei, Samiee, and Lee (2014) stated managers do well to use a RBV in determining market orientation.

Prior Knowledge

Butler et al. (2010) stated IEs should have the same attributes as domestic counterparts (i.e., be risk takers, organizers, innovators, etc.). Hohenthal, Johanson, and Johanson, (2014) believed prior business and market knowledge would enable born globals to combine existing wisdom with new information. Autio et al. (2011) analyzed how managers of new startups use experience from previous professional roles to transfer, modify, and combine skills for new organizational capabilities. Unlike novice managers with limited knowledge of international markets, entrepreneurial firms with

leaders who have prior knowledge tend to enjoy more rapid and successful internationalization (Baum, Schwens, & Kabst, 2013; Jones & Casulli, 2014).

Hilmersson, Sandberg, and Pourmand Hilmersson (2015) studied 203 SMEs where managers had prior market entry experience and concluded that internationalization knowledge reduces uncertainty. Conversely, using previous methods can be restrictive to new IEs because transferring old ideas to a foreign environment might not work (Autio et al., 2011). Rego, Cunha, and Clegg (2012) recommended business managers to keep an open mind, abandon old business methods, and embrace innovative strategies conducive to new market dynamics.

Uncertainty

Uncertainty for IEs goes beyond simply being a new company because there are additional liabilities of being a foreigner (Vahlne, Schweizer, & Johanson, 2012). Sources for uncertainty abound with different ethical and labor standards, tariffs on goods, politics and security, cost disparities, and cultural and language differences (Hisrich, 2013). Uncertainty also accompanies dealing with products and institutional factors (Autio et al., 2011; Karra et al., 2008), organizational structures (Autio et al., 2011; Hisrich, 2013), gaining access to resources and market entry (Autio et al., 2013; Karra et al., 2008), and dealing with consumer needs (Autio et al., 2011; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 1993, 2009). Uncertainty also can be the result of the forced use of domestic business approaches that may not be appropriate in a foreign country (Rego et al., 2012). Butler et al. (2010) stated IEs must be comfortable dealing with uncertainty because managers in a global setting inevitably deal with ambiguity. Indeed, Butler et al.

argued, IEs may need to deal more with uncertainty than with risk, because with risk one can calculate an anticipated value for the potential actions and pick the action with the most beneficial expected outcome.

One antidote to uncertainty is the ability to improvise (Hohenthal et al., 2014). Improvisation depends on the type of business and circumstances (Zahra, 2014). Improvisation should not govern overarching decisions, such as where to locate an overseas business (Zahra, 2014). Instead, use it in situations requiring flexibility and alertness to change (Bingham, 2009). Bingham (2009) mentioned a dearth of information regarding which condition works best. IEs use less improvisation of opportunities such as country selection, and more on selected prospects, which permitted flexibility and alertness to change (Taylor & Jack, 2013). Bingham further explained that after opening a new venture, planning is more important in handling certain needs if operating in multiple markets. Some IE scholars have noted improvisation coupled with an awareness of the need for consistency, produced the most successful outcomes (Autio et al., 2011; Hohenthal et al., 2014).

Failures and false opportunities are common in internationalization. Initial stages of international entrepreneurship can be difficult because of established competition (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005; Uner, Kocak, Cavusgil, & Cavusgil, 2013). The challenge is how to learn from mistakes (Mainela et al., 2014). Schoemaker and Krupp (2015) noted that entrepreneurs learn by experimenting, problem solving, and making mistakes. Being able to recognize an opportunity does not necessarily mean that one is ready to act on it (Butler et al., 2010). IEs must be able to weigh the risks and uncertainties of identified

opportunities (Kalinic, Sarasvathy, & Forza, 2014). IEs who succeed globally are those who can identify the opportunities and to adapt to uncertainty (Butler et al., 2010; Cheng et al., 2011).

Global Business Dynamics

Successful IEs eventually become established industry participants. Successful IEs do so partly by observing competitors' methods and deciding which of those to use as their own (Andersson, Danilovic, & Hanjun, 2015). Oparaocha (2015) noticed after performing a multi-case study that SMEs were able to achieve more goals with interdependent system partners.

In areas where political pressure makes continuing operation untenable, managers can continue in the same industry elsewhere (Vissak & Zhang, 2016). Alternatively, managers might elect to withdraw entirely from the global market and focus efforts domestically (Javalgi et al., 2011). Exiting permanently might not be the best decision, because lessons to learn in order to reenter the market (Vissak & Zhang, 2016).

Competitive Advantage

International entrepreneurship is a progressive phenomenon because it involves trying to secure opportunities for growth and profitability, compete for resources, and vie for a competitive advantage (Bingham, 2009). Butler et al. (2010) extended what Oviatt et al.'s (1994) work entailed about three elements of unique resources for sustainable IE: flexibility, keeping certain business transactions internal, and knowing the underlying methods to create a product or service. Cheng et al. (2011) recommended a strategic

management process when embarking globally to monitor economic trends in markets and global stakeholders.

Competitive advantages are optimal. A competitive advantage is more likely to result when a business produces a product at a lower cost or supplies a product that the market lacks but for which there is demand (Casadesus-Masanell & Zhu, 2013; Cheng et al., 2011). Competitive advantages also occur when business owners surpass competitors' ability to respond to clients' needs (Salunke, Weerawardena, & McColl-Kennedy, 2013). IE scholars provided similar advice about how to gain competitive advantages. Coelho and Laporte (2014) recommended keeping a short life cycle for perishable products. Karra et al. (2008) highlighted how IEs attempt to acquire superior local talent and labor (i.e., human capital), and, when necessary, alter business models and practices to fit the host country.

When seeking competitive advantages, IEs might have to unlearn skills used successfully in the past, especially if they were involved in domestic markets or in a multinational firm for a long time (Kumar, 2013). Cheng et al. (2011) stated IEs should think globally but tailor products and services locally. Cheng et al. listed three factors contributing to competitive advantages: uncommon resources or skills, foreign subsidiaries that help with local needs when specific situations arise, and a subsidiary that understands global networks.

Information acquisition and adaptive capability play a large role in achieving and maintaining a competitive edge (Mao, Liu, Zhang, & Deng, 2016). Trade shows and conferences can help IEs gain knowledge (Jia, Rutherford, & Lamming, 2016). Karra et

al. (2008) studied an IE who founded two successful ventures, and identified three components of successful value creation in a global venture: ability to identify opportunities, possession of multifaceted international resources, and capacity for cross-cultural collaboration. Lages, Mata, and Griffith (2013) recommended changing global marketing tactics when facing declines in performance, and moving to different areas when necessary.

Networking

One disadvantage born globals face is lack of access to the resources that established multinational corporations have (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). A way to overcome that disadvantage is through networking (Hohenthal, Johanson, & Johanson, 2014). Zhang et al. (2009) defined networking as the ability to capture resources by creating alliances and social connections. Networks can involve either individuals or organizations that help connect clients, suppliers, service providers, and government entities (Zhang, Tansuhaj, & McCullough, 2009). Chang, Jack, and Webster (2017) discussed how most IEs constantly seek out resources from the external environment and inter-firm networks.

In external networking, contacts help new enterprises cope with challenges in obtaining customers and suppliers in the early phase of business formation (Sigfusson & Chetty, 2013). Entrepreneurs commonly perform external networking to expand the firm and establish reputation-enhancing relationships with other parties to share valuable information, finances, and technology (Dobson, Breslin, Suckley, Barton, & Rodriguez,

2013). Networking is important in developing entrepreneurial capabilities used to form strategies and to enhance learning (Sigfusson & Chetty, 2013).

An entrepreneur's social position within a network affects his or her success (Stam, Arzlanian, & Elfring, 2014) and networks typically reflect the patterns of interaction in a particular community, district, or region (Rauch, Rosenbusch, Unger, & Frese, 2016). An entrepreneur's network position provides access to external information and knowledge, which can increase production (del-Corte-Lora, Vallet-Bellmunt, & Molina-Morales, 2017; Semrau, & Werner, 2014). Knowledge gained from networks transforms into producing new products and improving existing ones (Chen, Chang, & Lee, 2015). Torkkeli, Kuivalainen, Saarenketo, and Puumalainen (2016) researched how effective networking contributed to successful internationalization.

Zhang et al. (2009) emphasized networking as one of the main strategies for IE, because it helps to diminish a few uncertainties managers have of not understanding everything in their field. Having networking capability is imperative in acquiring resources such as strategic information, reliable foreign partners, and the latest information on the industry (Roudini & Osman, 2012). IEs maximize the benefits of networking through associations and various business networks to acquire and control transferrable assets to international locations (Oparaocha, 2015). SMEs heavily rely on technological resources and local partners to help them expand to many markets in a short period of time (Ciravegna, Lopez, & Kundu, 2014); Fernandez-Olmos & Diez-Bial, 2013).

The effectuation theory correlates to successful entrepreneurial networking.

The effectuation theory originated with Sarasvathy (2001) who interviewed 27 expert entrepreneurs about their strategies of starting a business and dealing with situations of uncertainties (Sarasvathy, Kumar, York, & Bhagavatula, 2015). Sarasvathy composed principles from the results known as effectuation logic for new entrepreneurs to help create opportunities with network partners by sharing resources that are currently available and shaping goals based upon what each has to offer (Ciravegna et al., 2014).

Networking also facilitates greater technological capability. Ramos, Acedo, and Gonzalez (2011) studied 945 SMEs and found having access to technology helped accelerate internationalization. Pérez-Luño, Wiklund, and Cabrera (2011) studied 2,942 managers and found that when IEs collaborate with other firms, 54% adopt innovations of those in their network, 7% generate innovations on their own, and 39% combine the two. Karra, Phillips, and Tracey (2008) identified successful IEs as being able to develop the cross-cultural connections needed to foster global relations with partners throughout different parts of the supply chain.

Advances in technology, communication, social networks, and transportation have made connectivity for global ventures easier (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). As an example, many IEs use social networks such as LinkedIn to build partnerships (Sigfusson & Chetty, 2013). Freeman et al. (2010) believed many skills, techniques, and experiences are difficult to codify because they occur in social networks. Despite technological advances, however, there is still a lack of understanding about how managers develop and maintain networking partners (Sigfusson & Harris, 2013).

Gaps in Literature

Congruent with the lack of literature on strategies needed for IE future value creation, many aspects of the IE topic are sparse and tenuous. Among what is not known is how IE's ethics, values, and personal agendas affects learning and responding to business opportunities and uncertainties (Baumann-Pauly, Wickert, Spence, & Scherer, 2013; Knudsen, 2013). Information is also needed about environmental forces that influence learning and internationalization performance of minority groups (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013; Sciglimpaglia, Welsh, & Harris, 2013). Javalgi, Deligonul, Dixit, and Cavusgil (2011) stated that IE scholars perform too few studies on IEs in other emergent markets as India. De Vita, Mari, and Poggesi (2014) researched gaps concerning limited research on entrepreneurship in developing countries. Hagen, Denicolai, and Zucchella (2014) identified gaps regarding effective approaches to increase performance and sustainable growth for many areas of IE literature.

Transition

In Section 1, my discussion centered on why exploring strategies needed for international entrepreneurship may be beneficial to small business entrepreneurs. Highlighted in the foundation of the study and the background of the business problem was how globalization has opened the path to more business opportunities and profit. The problem statement embodied the premise of this study, which was the exploration of strategies needed for international entrepreneurship. The purpose statement included the importance of studying IE strategies, which could lead to longevity, competitive advantages, and profit for small business owners who want to operate internationally.

Section 1 also encompassed the nature of the study, which was an area I used to justify why a qualitative method was sufficient to examine a human experience or event. Section 1 included the central research question regarding the necessary IE strategies in addition to the interview questions asked to the participants. The conceptual framework segment featured an explanation of why the RBV complimented the study. The RBV was what most international entrepreneurship scholarly literature attributes to how small businesses configure resources to gain competitive advantages and enter the global market successfully. The operational definitions of terms consisted of a list of technical terms used in the study. Also covered were assumptions that are facts thought as true, a limitations list of potential shortcomings, and delimitations, which were the boundaries of the research. Section 1 also included the significance of the study, how the research could lead to social changes by creating wealth for small business owners, and employment for residents in the host country.

Section 1 also consisted of a literature review of relevant scholarly material that divulged how researchers could connect the RBV to business practices to create tangible and intangible assets needed to acquire a competitive advantage. Section 1 also encompassed the history of IE and its evolution from an incremental approach to full immersion into foreign territory. Section 1 had information regarding the profit-based motivations of IE, strategies to market entry that highlighted trade, hypothetical capabilities of IEs, benefits of having prior experience when entering the global market, uncertainties of operating in a foreign country, general global business dynamics,

potential ways to competitive advantages, and how networking is beneficial. Section 1 closed with general gaps in international entrepreneurship literature.

Section 2 will begin with a reiteration of the purpose statement. Section 2 will contain the role of the researcher and the type of participant sought. Section 2 will also display that as a Walden University researcher, I adhered to the school's Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. Section 2 will include how a qualitative research method and a case study were suitable for an exploratory descriptive study. Section 2 will also consist of a discussion on the population and sampling component, which exhibits the requirement for five participants for this study. Also included in this section will be a description of the ethical protections to maintain a safe and confidential environment for the IE. Section 2 will end by exhibiting the data collection instrument, which is a list of interview questions, the data collection technique that highlights several settings the interview may occur, the data analysis used to scrutinize interview results and documents, and the preservation of reliability and validity of research by keeping a personal journal.

The central research question for this study will be in Section 3. A brief summary of the findings from conducting the interview and comparing the results with industry and commercial reports will also be in Section 3. A list and an explanation of resonating themes will also be contained in this area. Section 3 will exhibit the comparison of results to the scholarly information found in the literature review and any new studies that arose before this study ended. This segment will conclude with the results of the study amalgamated into the conceptual framework and current literature on effective business practices.

Section 2: The Project

The following section will contain a detailed plan regarding the data I collected from five small international entrepreneurship firm owners through semistructured interviews and review of cultural guides and government information needed to operate in the UAE. The type of services offered from the small business owners may have provided insights on how the firm's structure may affect the strategies. In section 2, I will also discuss elements of the data collection process to include the following: purpose statement, role the researcher, research participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies American small business owners use for successful international entrepreneurship that may lead to competitive advantages, such as increased revenue and operational longevity. The target population for this multiple case study was American small business owners who had been operating in the UAE for at least 5 years. Each selected participant needed to own a small international entrepreneurial firm operating in the UAE for at least 5 years and have some affiliation to a nonprofit service organization that may help IEs, such as the I-E Scholars or the U.S. Embassy. Positive social change may occur if American small business entrepreneurs can incorporate the results from this study to implement strategies needed for successful international entrepreneurship that could lead to increased income and operational longevity. Strategies that I gathered and reported in this

study may evoke business growth and the employment of additional individuals within the community where the IE operates. In addition, scholars may use the findings and contributions arising from the study as a medium to research international entrepreneurship in additional emergent markets.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative case study research involves using the researcher as the instrument for the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014). Each Walden University researcher must adhere to the ethical research standards noted in the *Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). In which all participants consent to participate, may withdraw at any time, be kept unharmed, and always be respected in a professional manner. Excluding business research experience that aids with collecting and analyzing data gained as a student at Walden University, I had not performed previous IE studies, nor had any prior contact with the participants.

Any preconceived notions that might have biased my interviewing technique or interpretation of interview results remained bracketed and kept in a personal journal separate from the actual data retrieved. In order to find the strategies needed for successful international entrepreneurship, interviewing was most appropriate for this study. Conducting interviews provide enriching details about the participant's experience (Griffith, 2013). Researchers are normally instruments in qualitative studies because they are responsible for data collecting and analyzing the results (Griffith, 2013). I was the sole instrument for this study and was responsible for interviewing, data collection, and analyzing the results.

Participants

The sample for this multi case study was five American small IE who operated a business in the UAE for at least 5 years. Palinkas et al. (2013) and Yilmaz (2013) noted that researchers use purposeful sampling to seek an information-rich case for in depth studies. Yin (2014) specified that sampling should involve using a non-probability sample, which targets the researcher's criteria. I used purposeful sampling to choose my subjects.

Sending an invitation through e-mail is one method used by researchers to solicit participants for a study (Griffith, 2013). Bean (2013) and Lutz (2013) used e-mail to solicit subjects for each of their dissertations, sending letters of invitation to volunteers to participate along with consent forms. Gonyo and Cantwell (2015) sent several e-mails at once to a specific organization to capture the amount of data needed for their study. After receiving approval to conduct the study from Walden University's the IRB, I sent a general e-mail inquiry identifying myself as a doctoral student studying the strategies necessary to become a successful American IE in the UAE to the I-E Scholars and U.S. Embassy (see Appendix A). Additionally, the director of the I-E Scholar received an advertisement (Appendix D) to place on the organization's website. My intent was to attract qualified IEs to participate in this study. The U.S. Embassy referred me to local business groups such as the American Business Council in Dubai, which had a free directory of businesses operating in the UAE on their website. My gathering of qualified participants for this study consisted of obtaining referrals, researching companies by examining their website content history, reviewing registries and then contacting the

owners. After contact with a qualified willing participant, each received Informed Consent (see Appendix B) and Interview Questions forms (see Appendix C) from me. Potential participants contacted me through the e-mail address or the telephone number provided on the Informed Consent form. Each selected participant who met the criteria signed the consent form and returned it back to me. The consent form displayed the purpose of the study and procedures concerning participation, the exhibition of the final results, the use of recorded data, and the process of securely keeping and destroying the data after 5 years by both reformatting the USB flash drive I stored the data on and shredding any printed documentation.

In the consent form, potential participants learned that the study was voluntary and that anyone opting to take part could withdraw at any time without consequence. Participants also read there that the responses and personal information to include the name of the company would remain confidential. Some entrepreneurs operated in the UAE; therefore, I had arranged interview dates, times, and best method to conduct the recorded interview with them either in person at a professional meeting facility or via Skype.

Participants have become more accessible for researchers to interview since internet software has made it easier (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). Iacono and Symonds (2016) in addition to Peters and Halcomb (2015) performed studies that used Skype in situations with time, financial, and geographical constraints. Peters and Halcomb (2015) concluded there were no deviations in study results when performing interviews between Skype and a face-to face interview. In this study, Skype was an

option for all of the IE participants because they were located either a few hundreds of miles away or in the UAE at the time of the interview. I used TalkHelper to record the interviews. Third party software such as IMCapture MP3, Skype Recorder, and Pamela Pro saves Audio from Skype to a computer as a MP3 file (Janghorban et al., 2014). A professional transcription company can retrieve the MP3 file by e-mail (Skype, 2015). Skype is synchronous which allows researchers to view the participant's facial expressions (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

Researchers that use internet software to interact with contributors must take in consideration of potential problems (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Several shortcomings of Skype include not having a full view of the participant's body language (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). The participant and researcher must have access to streaming internet and know how to sign on to use the web camera (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Faulds, 2015; Peters & Halcomb, 2015). If the interview is uncomfortable for the participant, one click of a button may end the call (Janghorban et al., 2014). Researchers must notify the participant of what the study entails (Dove, Knoppers, & Zawati, 2014). For this study, it was important that participants were adept at using Skype. Skype was an option on the participant consent form. Technology driven institutes and e-learning programs have successfully used Skype for years (Faulds, 2015).

Research Method and Design

This research method and design section will contain a discussion of the data collection techniques I used in this study. This section will include the research method and research design in addition to the research population, sampling type, and an

elaboration on ethical research. The instrument for data collection, technique of gathering data, organization of data, data analysis and reliability of data will also be included in this section.

Research Method

In qualitative studies, researchers seek to understand participants' real-life experiences through examining important contextual situations (Yin, 2014). Yazan (2015) described qualitative research as a method that produces an understanding of a phenomenon through the meaning of texts and actions gathered by the researcher. Patrick (2014) explained how the qualitative research method is exploratory in which academics may use it to understand the how and why of a subject in a deeper sense. Accordingly, I used a qualitative method for this study, which is a common approach in the social sciences that explores participants' lived experiences (Yin, 2014). The findings from this study may confirm strategies needed to operate a business globally.

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in part by the types of questions asked and the conclusions drawn by the researcher (Houghton et al., 2013). Qualitative studies are interpretivist, in that researchers evaluate participants' motivations, preferences, and actions in a nonnumeric fashion (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, adopt a positivist perspective by identifying propositions that are numerically tested (Punch, 2013). A researcher using an interpretivist perspective tries to explain how general patterns apply in practice, while someone adopting a positivist perspective attempts to identify specific details (Ragin, 2014).

Silverman (2013) recommended that qualitative research is most appropriate when studying human behavior and motivations. Qualitative case studies represent a research approach suitable to gain insight into the lived experiences of participants (Gioia et al., 2013; Merriam, 2014). A qualitative case study was most appropriate for this study because the study was descriptive and involved human behavior and motivations. In qualitative case studies, Merriam (2014) described how interviews could provide in depth valuable insights. Seidman (2013) stated that interviews are useful to extract data in a behavior science study because the researcher has direct contact with the participant. Performing a quantitative study yields a larger sample; however, the breadth achieved could sacrifice the depth from a qualitative study (Punch, 2013; Ragin, 2014). Moustakas (1994) posited that qualitative research addresses to the wholeness of the experience rather than its parts. Individual interviews were most appropriate because I was directly studying the human behavior of IEs.

Research Design

A research design is the framework that binds the parts of every investigative study together (Punch, 2013). The design includes the measures, samples, and methods of assignment that address the central research question posed in the study (Alasuutari, 2013). Moustakas (1994) described several specific designs that fall under the umbrella of qualitative research: ethnography, grounded theory, hermeneutics, heuristics, and phenomenology. Yin (2014) mentioned two additional designs: biography and case study.

Yin (2014) noted that the research design is a strategy used by the researcher to piece the topics within the study together to address the problem statement in the most

effective manner. An ethnographic design is an attempt to understand a particular way of life from the perspective of insiders (Astin, Horrocks, & Closs, 2014; Yin, 2014). An ethnographic design may have been appropriate if the study involved the dynamics of a specific company instead of a human being. Even more focused would have been a biography, which involves studying the personal specific attributes of an individual (Karakas, 2013); however, it was not an appropriate design for exploratory research. Grounded theory involves testing existing theories or generating a new one (Chong & Yeo, 2015); therefore, it also was not a suitable design for this study. In phenomenological studies, researchers take a philosophical approach to capture the essence of a human lived experience in a subjective manner (Kafle, 2013). The phenomenological design was not chosen because an object view of the participants lived experienced was needed to reflect the authenticity of reality.

Case studies contain bounded experiences of situations or people to study closely (Yin, 2014). Researchers who use a case study design may acquire a better understanding of the meaning of participants' experiences (Bernard, 2013). Hancock and Algozzine (2015) stated many studies based upon lived experiences use the case study design. Using a case study, researchers explore how participants make sense of their experience (Punch, 2013). Case study research is appropriate for deriving essential data from human experience with a focus on a single participant, which is linear, or collectively with many (Yin, 2014). Hancock and Algozzine also noted location and time are pivotal in case studies. A case study design was most suitable for this study because it allows the

researcher to obtain a more enriched and objective understanding of participants' lived experiences (Bernard, 2013).

Boden and Eatough (2014) distinguished between hermeneutic and empirical qualitative studies. In the former, researchers gather information from texts or written reports to explore a phenomenon (Boden & Eatough, 2014). Researchers have found that in empirical studies, participant's experiences with a phenomenon can include a self-reflection on the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This empirical case study contained enriched interviews and relevant pertinent documentation. Empirical studies encompass similarities among different manifestations of a phenomenon and are based on participants' actual words (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Silverman, 2013). Empirical studies are usually very detailed, descriptive, and typically involve very thorough research (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

I used member checking during the interviews. Silverman (2013) noted that member checking occurs during and/or after the interview to ensure accuracy as well as further the probe. The five participants provided similar answers to certain questions. In qualitative studies, data saturation occurs when information becomes redundant or stagnant (Punch, 2013). The attainable number to reach for data saturation is subjective and elusive in case studies (Houghton et al., 2013). Data saturation occurred in this study after conducting multiple interviews and recognizing there was no new information offered by subsequent participants as compared to that already provided by the several preceding participants. Redundancy and repetition in the data were indicators to halt the

interview process. Further interviews beyond my sample size of five participants would have diminished the returns in quality data.

Population and Sampling

The research sample was five American IEs who have been operating in the UAE for at least 5 years. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (2015), half of all small businesses close within 5 years; however, heightened longevity occurs if owners sustain operations after that period. The participants must also have had some affiliation to an U.S. Embassy or to the I-E Scholars, which are nonprofit organizations that aid IEs.

I used purposeful sampling to select American IE firm's owners to interview for this multiple case study. Palinkas (2015) discussed that researchers use purposeful sampling to perform exploratory qualitative research that involves information-rich in-depth studies. Yin (2014) specified that nonprobability sampling target the researcher's criteria. Lutz (2013) used purposeful sampling to focus on capturing the phenomenon of interests.

Bernard (2013) described qualitative studies as usually having a smaller sample size than quantitative studies. Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, and LaRossa (2015) believed the sample size of a case study varies and it depends on the type of details sought. Patton (2002) stated that the "sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 244). Sample sizes depend on saturation, the point at which a researcher has enough participants to make for an

enriching study (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Yin (2014) stated case studies vary from single to multiple depending on what the researcher plans to study.

Hancock and Algozzine (2015) noted that researchers use multiple case studies to gain several views of a particular experience. Case study scholars have indicated it could be feasible to use multiple cases in a study of the same phenomena to receive richer results (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015; Thompson, 2015; Yin, 2014). Swainer (2016) performed a case study using five participants to gain various perspectives of the same program. Similarly, this study involved five American IEs who operate a business in the UAE for at least 5 years. Performing a multiple case study with five IEs does not produce a superfluous amount of information, but one that is rich in data with detailed perspectives that other IEs could use.

Silverman (2013) noted that researchers attain data saturation once data gained from the findings from participants becomes redundant. Silverman stated the exact number to data saturation for qualitative case studies is obscure and could vary. The five participants involved in this study had similar answers to certain business questions. During each interview, I performed member checking and reiterated participants' answers in addition to using follow up questions to gain clarity. Member checking can help researchers obtain accuracy and a deeper understanding of the answers (Silverman, 2013). After coding the interview data with shortened keywords from answers given, patterns emerged. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that data saturation is attainable if researchers replicated the study and obtain similar results. If researchers repeat this study, data saturation may also be achievable in this manner.

Sampling began with an e-mailed inquiry to the I-E Scholars and the U.S. Embassy within the UAE, which are nonprofit organizations that aid IEs, to solicit participants for the study (see Appendix A). All qualified willing participants had to review, sign the Consent Form (see Appendix B), and keep a copy. The participants also received the Interview Questions form (see Appendix C). The I-E Scholars director posted the advertisement (see Appendix D) to the organization's website to provoke interest. The U.S. Embassy referred me to the American Business Council in Dubai's website, which exhibited a list of businesses that were operating locally. I called potential participants to ask selection criteria related questions. I also researched each company via website and registry. Participants who met the criteria and who were willing to contribute to the study reviewed, signed, and kept a consent form. The consent form contained information as the nature of the study, the type of interview questions, the voluntary nature of participation, and the way to contact the researcher. Bean (2013) and Lutz (2013) used e-mail to solicit subjects to participate in each dissertation with a consent form outlining the terms of conditions and noting that contribution was voluntary. Gonyo and Cantwell (2015) sent e-mails to obtain particular participants. From those who responded affirmatively to the invitation, I purposefully sampled to select five IEs to participate in the study.

The participants opted for the choice of an interview by one of two methods: upon suggestion, by face-to face either in a professional conference area or by an application such as Skype in a clean quiet setting. Given the global nature of the businesses involved in the study, I anticipated conducting the interview in person but Skype was the chosen

alternative. Researchers have labeled video applications as Skype the next generation platform to perform qualitative research (Janghorban et al., 2014). Iacono and Symonds (2016) in addition to Peters and Halcomb (2015) performed studies that used Skype in situations with time, financial, and geographical constraints in which the software application Skype has been a rising option for some social scientists that are in situations with time, financial, and geographical constraints. Third party software as IMCapture MP3, Skype Recorder, and Pamela Pro saves Audio from Skype to a computer as a MP3 file (Janghorban et al., 2014). A professional transcription company can retrieve the MP3 file through an e-mail (Skype, 2015). Applications as Skype are synchronous which allows researchers to view the participant's facial expressions (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

Several shortcomings of Skype include not having a full view of the participant's body language (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). The participant and the researcher must have access to streaming internet and know how to sign on to use the web camera (Faulds, 2015; Peters & Halcomb, 2015). If the interview is uncomfortable for the participant, one click of a button may end the call (Janghorban et al., 2014). Mason and Ide (2014) noted it is important that the researcher notify the potential participants of what the study entails. For this study, it was important to have participants who are adept at using Skype since this was the method many had chosen. Skype was an option on the participant consent form. Technology driven institutes and e-learning programs have successfully used Skype for years (Faulds, 2015). Participants chose the time and day for the interview.

Before the interview began, I reviewed the informed consent form and requested that each participant sign and retain a copy (see Appendix C). The form described the study's purpose and procedures. The informed consent form displayed that participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time without consequence. The participants could have chosen to withdraw during the interview or after the interview was complete, by contacting me via phone, or e-mail within 15 days after the interview. The consent form also displayed how the participant's personal information and company's name remained confidential. If a participant had withdrawn from the study, I would have solicited another qualified business owner to participate and requested that the contributor reviewed and signed the consent form.

Ethical Research

Several ethical considerations must be part of any study involving human subjects (Harriss & Atkinson, 2015). The first step was to obtain approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. The next step was to send a Letter of Inquiry to the director of the I-E Scholars and the U.S. Embassy within the UAE to solicit participants for the study (see Appendix A). After establishing contact with qualified candidates, each received a Consent Form (see Appendix B) to sign and retain. Each participant also received and reviewed the interview questions (see Appendix C). Lutz (2013), a case study researcher, conducted similar procedures. The participants could refuse to answer any interview questions that felt uncomfortable and could withdraw entirely from the interview at any time without consequence. Fortunately, not a single participant withdrew. The directors of the I-E scholars and the U.S. Embassy had

an option to post an ad soliciting participants (see Appendix D) to their website if interested. Participants did not receive compensation; however, to thank contributors who completed the interview process in its entirety, I offered a donation to the participant's charity of choice, if so desired.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1979) in the Belmont Report detailed standards by which researchers must ensure the safety of participants, and inform them of any risks the study could entail. I informed the participants during the initial invitation that the responses were recorded, professionally transcribed, used only for the study, and were stored on secure, password-protected, computer files. The participant's name and business name will remain confidential and all identifiers removed from the findings within the document. I addressed each participant as sir or ma'am during the interview and as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and so on through P5, in the findings. All data, including electronic and hard copies, will be securely stored for 5 years from the official completion date of the study, and then erased by reformatting the USB flash drive and professionally shredding pertinent documents.

Data Collection Instruments

The overarching research question of the study was: What strategies do American small business owners use for international entrepreneurship that may lead to increased revenue and operational longevity? The data collection involved two methods: (a) individual, semistructured interview and (b) triangulation with secondary documents, including a business regulation guide and a country culture guide. The interview protocol

was a self-designed instrument consisting of nine questions (Appendix D) asked of each participant:

1. What strategies have you implemented to begin and operate a business the UAE?
2. What strategies enabled entry into the UAE?
3. What uncertainties and hindrances did you anticipate prior to opening a business in a foreign territory? What strategies did you use to handle them?
4. What uncertainties and hindrances are you currently dealing with while operating in a foreign territory? What strategies did you use to handle them?
5. How did previous strategies that you may have had (i.e., previous management, entrepreneurship, international business skills) help create your international business?
6. How have you used business networking strategies (if any) to sustain your company in a foreign environment?
7. What strategies do you use to gain resources needed to operate in the UAE?
8. What strategies do you use to sustain your business when operating in the UAE?
9. What additional information would you like to discuss regarding this topic?

Prior to submitting the final results of a qualitative study, Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) suggested that researchers' member check with subjects during the interview to clarify possible misinterpreted answers. Yin (2014) indicated that researchers may use member checks to elucidate the participants' answers and to obtain deeper meaning. I performed member checks with each participant during every interview for clarity and to ensure the answers given during the interview were

intentional. Houghton et al., (2013) believed that allowing participants to review the transcription increased reliability and validity. Copies of the interview transcription and other documentation (i.e., consent form) were available to the IEs by request.

In developing this study, I reviewed country-specified business operating documents needed to work in the UAE. I also used a cultural guide to assist my understanding of the standards to conducting business in the country. Researchers use more than one data source such an interview and documentation for triangulation to validation and reliability purposes when conducting qualitative research (Bernard, 2013; Hancock, 2015; Modell, 2015). I used a reflective journal to help recognize and limit any personal bias that might compromise the study's objectivity (Bernard, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Keeping a journal included personal reflections before, during, and after the interview to aid in validity of the study (Bernard, 2013; Simon, 2013). I used a journal throughout the entire study to document the process and personal ideas.

Data Collection Technique

This study entailed collecting data through open-ended, semistructured interview protocol with five participants, all of whom were American IEs who had operated a business in the UAE for at least 5 years. One difficulty in recruiting and interview participants was that the participants were operating globally within different time zones and were very busy, which posed a challenge in reaching qualified participants. The advantage to this technique was the option of having several methods to communicate between me and the participant.

Interviewing participants in person enables the researcher to observe body language and hear the tonality among words, which may provide a deeper understanding during feedback (Merriam, 2014; Punch, 2013). An in-person interview may result in richer findings because researchers are able to ask contributors to expound or define answers given (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015). The preferred method was an in-person interview in a professional meeting space. If the participant was long distance, an application such as Skype was available. Some researchers have labeled video applications as Skype as a viable way to perform qualitative research (Janghorban, et al., 2014). Some social science researchers have conducted studies using Skype in situations with time, financial, and geographical constraints (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). When conducting a study that involves participants, it is important for researchers to protect and maintain rights to the subjects involved (Lutz, 2013; Seidman, 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I recorded the interviews through a professional recording device that was compatible with Skype, and I had each interview professionally transcribed; however, the participant and the company name remained unknown to the transcriber.

An informed consent form displays the criteria between the study and the participants (Yin, 2014). Lutz (2013) noted in a study the consent form is a permission agreement and is a crucial part of research. Hancock and Algozzine (2015) stated that a consent form is protocol for research studies involving humans. I began the interview by confirming that the chosen participant has signed an informed consent. The consent form included information for the participant that recording and transcribing the interview was

part of the process. The potential participants could ask any questions about the consent form or the study's purpose and methods before participating.

Punch (2013) explained how semistructured interviews are very common in qualitative research because of the questions involve asking how and why. Hancock and Algozzine (2015) noted that some case study interviews are conversational because the participants are able to expound on answers given. Merriam (2014) described semistructured interviews as researchers having a framework of questions; however, new thoughts or further details may occur. The interviews for this study were semistructured, in that there was a need to ask the chosen participants follow-up questions for clarity depending on the initial response. When conducting qualitative research, a personal journal helps separate personal thoughts from the interview data, which can diminish bias, and help maintain validity (Bernard, 2013; Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2014). After completing the interview, I immediately engaged in a period of reflection, making appropriate notes in a journal.

Houghton et al. (2013) suggested that researchers conduct member checks with participants by summarizing the interview data to clarify possible misinterpreted answers. Seidman (2013) indicated that elucidating the participant's answers could present further detailed information about the human lived experience. Merriam (2014) noted that member checking could be performed during or after the interview whichever makes the participant most comfortable. Hancock and Algozzine (2015) stated some researchers allow the participants access to the transcriptions. Similarly, I performed member checks with the participants during the interview as a discussion, in which I summarized the

findings for clarity and gained more information about each IE's experience. To establish validity and reliability, each IE had 3 weeks after the interview to access the transcription for review a timeline established in order to meet publication deadlines.

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative and quantitative researchers use codes to organize data (Punch, 2013). Qualitative researchers may designate a meaning or situation to a code to identify recurring patterns and themes (Bernard, 2013; Merriam, 2014). Researchers could use codes such as alphabet letters or shorten keywords to organize themes (Singh, Meng, & Hansen, 2014). Keywords from my interview questions were codes to organize information within the data. I also used secondary coding to form relationships and then view patterns. To increase the validity of the findings, I hired an NVivo 11 specialist who created a tree map to make a visualization pattern of nodes and comparative relationships among them. NVivo 11 is software to help qualitative researchers organize rich text data for analysis (Kwon, 2016; Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014; Zamawe, 2015).

Punch (2013) stated many qualitative researchers record the participant interviews for transcription and for accuracy, as data can be lengthy. Yin (2014) also noted reviews of the transcriptions are necessary for accuracy. Hancock and Algozzine (2015) explained how qualitative researchers who perform case studies might have the raw data professionally transcribed. I recorded the participants through a recording device and had the interview professionally transcribed; however, the names and companies remained confidential by referring to each contributor as sir or ma'am during the interview and as Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), and so on through P5, in the findings. When

conducting a study that involves participants, it is important for researchers to protect and maintain the rights of the participants involved, including, but not limited to, privacy and confidentiality (Lutz, 2013; Seidman, 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The Consent Form (Appendix C) ensures participant rights and confidentiality.

It is Walden University's policy to secure raw data in a locked container for 5 years. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1979) further recommended in the Belmont Report that participant's rights and dignity need respected at all times. Mikesell, Bromley, and Khodyakov (2013) noted that social science researchers are obligated to maintain higher ethical guidelines when involved with human participants. At the conclusion of the study, I transferred the electronic data from a personal computer to a USB flash drive. All the collected data, including recordings on the USB flash drive and hard copy data such as transcripts were stored in a secure location (a locked cabinet). The data will remain for 5 years and then destroyed by reconfiguring the USB flash drive and professionally shredding all paper files associated with this research study.

Yin (2014) recommended that qualitative researchers use a reflective journal during the data collection and analysis process. The purpose of maintaining the journal is to document the data collection process and forego any potential bias that might affect the interview or interpretation of the results (Bernard, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). I kept a reflective journal. Its contents included sporadic thoughts on the process, personal insights, and my views at the conclusion of the interview.

Data Analysis

Houghton et al. (2013) described methodological triangulation as using more than one manner to collect data. Hancock and Algozzine (2015) stated methodological triangulation aids in validity in qualitative research when researchers view multiple sources for consistency or non-consistency. Lutz (2013) used methodological triangulation in a study by comparing interview results to documentation within a special education program. Methodological triangulation was important for this study. I analyzed the interview results in context of secondary data sources, including the website of each participant's company whenever available, cultural books, and government and country required documentation needed to operate in the UAE.

Bengtsson (2016), Moustakas (1994), and Patrick (2014) advised researchers to adhere to the following process to analyze data sources: list and group every relevant experience, reduce and eliminate extraneous data to capture essentials of phenomenon, cluster and organize the data to identify core themes. Based on the recommendations of the aforementioned scholars, I engaged in methodological triangulation by reviewing documentation regarding the participants' businesses, ensuring the reliability of the information shared during the interviews. The steps in the research process led to a composite description of each participant, providing a rich context for the experiences of the participants in the research sample.

Hancock and Algozzine (2015) discussed how qualitative researchers may organize themes in various manners in case studies and presented examples such as by activity, event, or program. Bean (2013) and Lutz (2013) performed qualitative studies

and presented themes based upon central questions asked in each study. I developed a code for each similar keyword and organized these into themes in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Organizational categories included items taken listed from the interview questions, the literature review, the conceptual framework, and recently published relevant studies.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Yin (2014) defined reliability as the degree to which studies are repeatable. Results should be verifiable and transferable, which means that other researchers could be able to replicate the study (Konradsen et al. 2013; Merriam, 2014). Extrapolated data conducted from interviews, which coincides with scholarly research on the subject, supports reliability (Bernard, 2013). Comparison between the extrapolated interview data and the gathered documentation served to increase the reliability of this study.

Documentation included the cultural guide and government information needed to operate a business in the UAE, such as licenses and permits from government agencies.

Member checking is another method of reliability in which the participant reviews the interview answers for accuracy (Silverman, 2013). Lutz (2013) used member checking with a participant by reviewing statements during an interview to ensure a deeper understanding of a lived experience. Houghton et al. (2013) and Lub (2015) suggested that researchers should member check with subjects for clarity and reliability purposes. During the interview, I asked participants to clarify vague answers, and repeated answers to obtain accuracy. Reiterations of some of the participants' answers

served as a reliability mechanism for this study. The participants also had access to the study's transcript 3 weeks after the interview as exhibited on the consent form.

Validity

Credibility involves ensuring that the results from the study are believable from the perspective of the participant (Cope, 2014). Member checking involves participant feedback for clarifying purposes during, after or throughout the interview process (Bernard, 2013; Merriam, 2014; Punch, 2013). To diminish threats against credibility internal validity, the researcher conducted member checking by asking each participant to clarify summarized answers during the interview. Each participant had the opportunity to confirm the accuracy of response interpretation during the interview and received a copy of interview transcription following the interview. Confirmation by the participants ensured that their statements provided tacit assumptions of authenticity, accuracy, and objectivity to substantiate reliability and validity (Casey et al., 2013; Konradesen et al., 2013).

Transferability is the degree in which the findings from the study may transfer to other settings or contexts (Cope, 2014). Yilmaz (2013), in addition to Konradesen, Kirkevold, and Olson (2013), stated that external validity depends on whether or not the findings could justifiably apply across similar groups. Bengtsson (2016) noted external validity is a measure used to apply findings outside the specific research phenomenon or experimental situation. Use of appropriate measures to protect against potential threats to external validity included consideration of the knowledge and experience of the qualified entrepreneurs who are credible participants in the research. The IEs belonged to business-

based associations that assisted them, additionally; each small company was registered and had a website that contained researchable detailed information. There is no a guarantee that data from one study is transferable to the next (Houghton et al., 2013). However, the detailed, rich data of this study correlated to the themes derived from a review and analysis of peer-reviewed and other scholarly literature, which may be transferable to another study performed on IEs in a similar environment.

Dependability is a measure in which the results from the study might repeat if performed within equal circumstances (Cope, 2014). A case study design may help subsequent scholars follow the processes used because of the detailed descriptions it contains (Houghton et al., 2013). To aid with dependability, I used a case study method with rich descriptions of strategies from each IE and compared the data to operational business-related documents. To diminish threats against dependability, each participant clarified summarized answers during the interview, which is an aspect of member checking. Member checking involves participant feedback for clarifying purposes during, after, or throughout the interview process (Bernard, 2013; Merriam; Punch, 2013). Confirmation by the participant may ensure that statements provide tacit assumptions of authenticity, accuracy, and objectivity to substantiate dependability (Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Konradesen et al., 2013).

Some qualitative case study scholars have suggested modes of communications such as telephone, written correspondence and in person to build a working relationship with participants and researchers (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015; Punch, 2013; Yin, 2014). I contacted participants through the telephone and e-mails to encourage them to remain

engaged throughout the research process. When conducting a study involving human participants, researchers must maintain the rights and protect the contributor involved (Lutz, 2013; Seidman, 2013; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The participant identity and interview data remained confidential. These procedures may have built trust between the participant and me; thus, enhancing the study's dependability by establishing credibility based on integrity.

Yin (2014) suggested qualitative researchers keep personal thoughts in a journal to diminish bias. Hancock and Algozzine (2015) in addition to Bernard (2013) believed that journals help researcher maintain reliability and validity by keeping the raw data and personal thoughts separate. I maintained conformity throughout the research by adhering to suggestion of keeping a journal for personal thoughts to eliminate bias.

Confirmability is the way in which the results are validated by more ways than one (Cope, 2014). A comparison between the findings from the interview, and other data sources such as credible and pertinent documentation could ensure methodological triangulation (Bernard, 2013; Punch, 2013; Silverman, 2013), because richer explanations add to credibility, transferability, and reliability (Houghton et al., 2013; Silverman, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). I compared interview results with documents such as a cultural guide, and government and business operating licenses and permits needed to operate in the UAE.

Silverman (2013) and Simon (2013) noted that researchers attain data saturation once data gained from participants becomes redundant. Silverman stated the exact number to data saturation for qualitative case studies is elusive. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that data saturation is attainable if the study has transferability. In this study, data

saturation was more easily achieved with certain questions than with others; data saturation might more likely to occur if all participants ran the same type of business. Due to the small sample size, holistic data saturation was not feasible for this study, but the findings may still be replicable by future researchers due to careful documentation of the research process. The information obtained for this study involved detailed data on an American small business IE that has been operating in the UAE for at least 5 years.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 contained several components such as the purpose statement, which was comprised of exploring strategies of a successful IE. Section 2 also consisted of the role of the researcher in which I was the sole instrument with no prior relational experience to the participants. The participant area exhibited the technique of obtaining participants, which was by using purposeful sampling obtained from solicited e-mails from either the I-E Scholars, or the referrals from the U.S. Embassy within the UAE.

The research method segment included the rational and suitability of using a qualitative method over quantitative, and other designs and techniques. The reason for the qualitative method selection was due to the necessity of gaining rich descriptions of human lived experiences. The research design section contained a justification on why a case study was more appropriate than other designs. A case study entails detailed information of a complex phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2014). The population and sampling section encompassed the process used to gather participants. The criterion for participation was that each participant owned and operated a small business in the UAE for at least 5 years.

The ethical research section included the manner of keeping the data secure by omitting each participant's identity, by having a signed consent form, and by notifying the participants how to withdraw from the study. Section 2 encompassed an explanation of the data collection instrument, which was the intended use of an interview. The data collection involved nonpaid 1-2 hour interviews preferably face-to-face in a professional conference room; however, an application as Skype was an alternative option. Another technique was the personal use of a journal for reflections to reduce bias.

I used the data organization technique area to explain how the participant's information was kept confidential, ensuring that the data is secured in a locked cabinet and on a flash drive, and then reprogramming and shredding documents after 5 years. The data analysis section encompassed how data findings correspond against secondary documentation and authoritative sources to assess validity and resonating themes. Section 2 also included how the process and results of a study may support reliability in which future scholars may be able to replicate (Bernard, 2013; Konradsen et al., 2013). This section also included how to ensure validity, which is by allowing the participants to review the transcribed data and clarify or correct information (Bernard, 2013). Case studies have more than one source to draw data from (Yin, 2014). The findings from the study in conjunction with cultural information and government documentation as licenses and permits aided with validity.

Section 3 will begin with the purpose statement and the intent of finding strategies of IE for small international business owners. A brief summary of the findings will be included. This section will also include the central research question and results of the

study. Section 3 will also consists of a description of how the findings relate to international entrepreneurship scholarly knowledge in the literature review as well as recently published international entrepreneurship studies.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what strategies American small business owners use for successful international entrepreneurship that may lead to competitive advantages as increased revenue and operational longevity. This study consisted of semistructured interviews using open-ended questions with five participants and member checking during each interview to ensure accuracy and clarity. I transcribed the data from the interviews and then coded it to align with themes found in the literature review. To ensure reliable application of the emergent themes, an NVivo 11 specialist coded the data utilizing a method that allowed for the specialist to apply multiple codes to any passage containing more than one theme. The data were also triangulated with peer-reviewed articles, government information, and cultural guides. The participants are in sequenced codes and listed as Participant 1 or P1.

The participants owned an array of service-related businesses; the companies' details were not included in this study due to a verbal agreement of privacy to mitigate the risk of a potential increase of competition if details of the businesses were to become public. The participants discussed a wide variety of strategies for international entrepreneurship in the UAE to increase revenue and ensure operational longevity. The themes found correlated to the RBV, document reviews, and data collection. The themes I found correlated to the RBV theory, document reviews, and data collection. The participants discussed four common strategies that corresponded to interrelated emergent themes: (a) strategic planning, (b) understanding local culture, (c) building relationships,

and (d) using digital platforms. See Figure 1 and Table 1 for derivation of themes. See

Figure 1 and Table 1 for derivation of themes.



Figure 1. Word Clustering of Primary Themes by Coding Similarity

Table 1

Derivation of Themes

| Excerpts regarding derivation of themes | Interpretation and analysis | Emergent themes |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| P1: “The visa requirements are harder. I mean, everything else is harder to get in, but once you’re in, you’re in, as far as Saudi Arabia is concerned.” | P1 spoke about the research and planning necessary with regards to fulfilling requirements for operating a business in the UAE. | Strategic planning |
| P4: “The first strategy is doing your research – doing the research about the UAE and looking into opportunities that are currently over there.” | P4 discussed the importance of doing market research before trying to launch in the UAE. | Strategic planning |
| P2: “The culture is trust. The culture is their word. I shouldn’t need a piece of paper to understand that they’re actually being loyal to me, that they’re actually going to come through.” | P2 implied that cultural competence involved learning the role of verbal contracts in business deals in the UAE. | Understanding local culture |

| Excerpts regarding derivation of themes | Interpretation and analysis | Emergent themes |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| P3: "They're very gracious people, very gracious people. So, of course, we respond with graciousness in return. That makes a very pleasant interaction." | P3 stated that mutuality in certain aspects of the local culture made business dealings pleasant. | Understanding local culture |
| P2: "You build the relationship. From building the relationship, then you look at opportunities." | P2 discussed the need for to build a relationship before professional engagement could take place. | Building relationships |
| P5: "You need to get into a network pretty quickly when you come here to do business, so networking is key." | P5 addressed the value of building personal relationships via professional networking. | Building relationships |
| P1: "We do outreach through our website. We do outreach through LinkedIn." | P1 mentioned the business utility of various online platforms. | Using digital platforms |
| P2: "A lot of people shop on Facebook and Facebook will build your international business faster than anything." | P2 addressed the importance of using available digital platforms in building an international business. | Using Digital Platforms |

Presentation of the Findings

The central question for this research study was: What strategies do American small business owners use for international entrepreneurship that may lead to increased revenue and operational longevity? After completing interviews with the five participants, performing member checking with each participant during the interview, and reviewing the transcription, four core themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) strategic planning, (b) understanding local culture, (c) building relationships, and (d)

using digital platforms. The collaboration of themes may lead to potential competitive advantages.

Emergent Theme 1: Strategic Planning

The UAE is a flexible and friendly country to operate a business in because of the trade and investment agreements made with the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2017) and the fact that the territory serves as a business hub for performing transactions with other Middle Eastern countries (Participant E; United Arab Chamber of Commerce, 2017). According to Siddique (2015), in the UAE small business owners account for 90% of the economic development and employ 60% of the workforce. If a new small business owner travels to explore business options in the UAE for under 30 days, a free travel visa is optional upon point of arrival and extended through a local immigration office if needed (U.S. Department of State, 2017; U.S.- UAE Embassy, 2017). A valid passport beyond 6 months of initial entry is required in addition to round trip airfare (U.S. – UAE Embassy, 2017).

There are two primary methods of doing business directly on the ground within the UAE: in a free zone or in a joint partnership (U.S. - UAE Embassy, 2017). In a joint partnership, business owners choose or become connected to an Emirati national who will own 51% of the company (U.S.-UAE Embassy, 2017). The UAE Embassy and US-UAE Trade Department website models entrance into a joint partnership in a non-free zone, which includes classifying the business structure, and obtaining specific licenses.

In a free zone, business owners own 100% ownership, profits, have low import duties, export exemptions, and do not pay corporate taxes for 15 years, which may be

renewed after this term (U.S.-UAE Embassy, 2017). Businesses that operate directly in the UAE, whether in the free zone or non-free zone, must obtain a license as noted on the U.S. - UAE Trade and Commercial official website. Offshoring is a third choice, business owners have an office located in the United States, and they frequently travel to the UAE.

Free zone, non-free zone and offshoring small business owners were participants in this study. Of the businesses owners interviewed, three were offshoring based in the United States but travel to the UAE and two were born globals. One born global operated in a free zone and the other in a joint partnership. One born global had previous knowledge from working for a similar company prior to self-starting one and the other did not.

Baum, Schwens, and Kabst (2013) noted that prior knowledge of global experience may help business owners decrease market uncertainties. However, scholars such as Nummela, Saarenketo, Jokela, and Loane (2014) believed IEs operate with effectual logic in which they network and operate with what they have, and who they know to leverage situations. Prior knowledge is helpful but not necessary.

The RBV represented the conceptual framework and underpinned this study. Kellermanns, Walter, Crook, Kemmerer, and Narayanan (2016) implied a positive correlation between how entrepreneurs used the principles of the RBV for strategic management and value creation to their companies. Participants did not specifically divulge what combination of skills and resources each used to leverage their business as noted as a principle of the RBV framework. However, strategic planning was a

commonly discussed theme among IEs; thus, as Nummela et al., (2014) discussed, it is likely that successful IEs use their knowledge base to build their success. The time each participant spent operating in the UAE ranged from 5 years up to 30 years, with an average of 13 years across all participants, far surpassing the 5 year average that the Small Business Administration (2015) quotes for small business startups. Small business owners tend to be more flexible and innovative with strategic planning (Leal-Rodríguez, Eldridge, Roldán, Leal-Millán, & Ortega-Gutiérrez, 2015). At the time of this study, four of the five participants had expanded their businesses globally beyond the UAE.

Table 2

Emergent Subthemes Within the Strategic Planning Theme

| Excerpts regarding “strategic planning” | Interpretation and analysis | Emergent subthemes |
|--|--|--|
| P2: “The biggest thing was the free zones and whether or not I wanted to actually work outside the free zone, because then you would have to have a sponsor. I wasn’t sure about the sponsors. That was my uncertainty.” | Participants discussed the significance of understanding geography, free zones, and resulting logistics in choosing their location of operation. | It is crucial for business owners to plan logistics regarding location of operation in the UAE. |
| P4: “When you come there, you’re going to do it their way, not your way. They dictate how you’re going to do what it is that you do, and they give you the freedom to make mistakes. You make too many mistakes; you’re going to go home. It’s real simple. (Laughs.) So if you go there, you build a business, follow the rules and regulations.” | Participants cited the importance of understanding and following the established rules and regulations in the UAE. | Understanding and following the legal requirements for individuals and businesses in the UAE is essential. |
| P1: “I do a lot of market research and I think data directs your pathways. For me, the strategy is identify the process and the direction.” | Participants spoke to the importance of market research. | Data driven market research is key in making business decisions. |

Participants discussed strategic planning as being vital to their entrepreneurial success in the UAE. Several participants discussed the need to perform market research

prior to entering the UAE. Participant 4 advised that it is necessary to “do your research,” considering the many regional rules, laws, and regulations that need to be planned for and abided by. As an example, several participants discussed the need to understand visas, the UAE’s free zone system, and the sponsorship requirements when functioning outside an established free zone. Participants reflected that it is necessary to make intentional decisions about interacting with the various systems that are in place within the UAE in order to maximize effectiveness, necessitating a business owner’s possession of a solid understanding of all technical aspects of doing business in the UAE.

Table 3

Frequency of Strategic Planning

| Participant ID | Times discussed | % coverage |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| P1 | 4 | 15.19% |
| P2 | 9 | 23.9% |
| P3 | 5 | 11.01% |
| P4 | 10 | 46.9% |
| P5 | 9 | 33.5% |
| Across all participants | Total: 37 | Average: 26.1% |

Emergent Theme 2: Understanding Local Culture

In their interviews, the participants emphasized that local culture in the UAE is significantly different from that of the United States, particularly as it pertains to business interactions and interpersonal expectations. These answers aligned with the existing literature, as countries that score high on uncertainties on the Hofstede paradigm usually exhibit rigid codes or beliefs to control outside anxiety and ambiguity (Chipulu et al., 2016). Although English is common when conducting business transactions in the UAE, Islamic culture is the norm and Arabic is the official language (UAE Embassy, 2017), all which can pose a steep learning curve for business owners operating in the UAE who are based elsewhere. It is standard for business cards, brochures, and websites to be in both English and Arabic (Morrison, 2012; UAE Embassy, 2017).

A general code of conduct for American business owners is to get to be direct and to the point; however, in the UAE, people take time to know one another and to build trust (UAE Embassy, 2017). Furthermore, in the UAE spoken business deals are just as highly regarded as written agreements (UAE Embassy, 2017). When doing business in the UAE, cultural competency is an essential aspect of business etiquette; a successful business person must respect religious holidays, know of important leaders, maintain awareness of cultural customs, have patience, dress modestly, and know that weekends are Friday and Saturday (Morrison, 2012). One aspect of a successful IE is the ability to adapt to change easily, which is a principle of RBV (Vanpoucke et al., 2014).

Table 4

Emergent Subthemes Within the Understanding Local Culture Theme

| Excerpts regarding “understanding local culture” | Interpretation and analysis | Emergent subthemes |
|---|---|---|
| P5: “Emiratis, it’s the Arab culture. They like to sit and have coffee. You know? And you and I, Skype is like we are having coffee, right? There’s no language barrier. But Emiratis, even the ones who speak good English, they just don’t like... I mean, they’ll do the conference calls, but I notice again, they don’t really like it. They like to see you.” | Participants talked about the relationship between understanding the unique local culture and being successful in doing business. | Business owners must be culturally competent to succeed in business in the UAE. |
| P2: “I never saw a paper contract – the contract was verbal for years, because the culture is based on trust.” | Participants relayed that the UAE has a trust-based culture, often leading to verbal contracts. | Cultural competence involves adapting to use of verbal or informal contracts. |

Most participants reported that trust is a very important cultural factor in establishing strong relationships (as discussed in Theme 3). The consensus was that owners must remain cognizant of how trust might affect aspects of business relationships. As an example, Participant 2 disclosed having had primarily verbal contracts while working in the UAE and stated that this is culturally standard in the region. The data analysis demonstrated a relationship between “understanding local culture” and “building relationships” – the significance of trust was present in both themes. The relationship between these two themes, and the role of trust in both, is worthy of exploration in a future study.

Table 5

Frequency of Understanding Local Culture

| Participant ID | Times discussed | % coverage |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| P1 | 3 | 4.64% |
| P2 | 6 | 12.51% |
| P3 | 3 | 7.47% |
| P4 | 3 | 10.71% |
| P5 | 5 | 8.65% |
| Across all participants | Total: 20 | Average: 8.8% |

Emergent Theme 3: Building Relationships

During data collection for this study, I encountered a vast amount of networking events and social groups as Meetup.com, Internations, Linked In, and IE Scholars. There were also a variety of professional organizations such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, The UAE Business Council, U.S. Department of Commerce's Gold Key business matching program, and the UAE Women's Council. Cavusgil and Knight (2015) noted that small business owners are not equipped with many resources as large corporations. Other scholars have stated that IEs network externally to expand business opportunities, enhance reputations, and gain value information and resources (Dobson, Breslin, Suckley, Barton, & Rodriguez, 2013).

Hohenthal, Johanson, and Johanson (2014) stated that business owners are opportunity seekers who desire to gain critical knowledge and resources through a network of relationships. Participant responses regarding building relationships aligned with Hohenthal et al.'s literature.

Table 6

Emergent Subthemes within the Building Relationships Theme

| Excerpts regarding “building relationships” | Interpretation and analysis | Emergent subthemes |
|--|---|---|
| P4: “You normally have created a relationship with someone through some type of networking process to kind of open up the door for you.” | Participants stated that professional networking was vital to their success due to the necessity of personal connections in the market. | Professional networking is key to establishing new business relationships in the UAE. |
| P5: “To me, the main thing is trust.” | Participants indicated that their success in business ventures in the UAE was dependent upon developing trusting relationships. | Establishing trust in existing business relationships is of the utmost importance. |

All participants discussed the significance of building relationships, which is a key component to forming a successful business that is operating in the UAE. Participants discussed this theme in the context of (a) establishing connections with new contacts, and also (b) strengthening relationships with existing contacts. Professional networking was a recurring idea within this theme and participants spoke to the importance of both formal and informal networking. As discussed in the section about the second theme, trust formed an interconnection between understanding local culture and

building relationships. The relationship between these two themes cannot be well understood based upon these data and warrant a more in-depth consideration.

Table 7

Frequency of Building Relationships

| Participant ID | Times discussed | % coverage |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| P1 | 2 | 4.17% |
| P2 | 7 | 10.29% |
| P3 | 4 | 8.16% |
| P4 | 2 | 6.3% |
| P5 | 10 | 6.45% |
| Across all participants | Total: 25 | Average: 7.07% |

Emergent Theme 4: Using Digital Platforms

Each participant reported that the utilization of digital platforms, such as social media, video chat platforms, and company websites, is crucial to the success of American small business owner's operation in the UAE. The participants used skills to connect with others via the internet, to leverage their businesses (Hohenthal et al., 2014). Digital platforms were key for the participants in building relationships (as in Theme 3), including use in establishing new business relationships as well as in building trust in

existing building relationships. See Table 8 for more information about the derivation of this theme and related subthemes that emerged from the thematic analysis.

Table 8

Emergent Subthemes Within the Using Digital Platforms Theme

| Excerpts regarding “using digital platforms” | Interpretation and analysis | Emergent subthemes |
|---|--|---|
| P3: “We have technology that connects us. . . . because we have so much technology now, you just go online and download it on your computer. And people find us that way.” | Participants stated that technology played a crucial role in networking. | Technology helps to build relationships necessary to doing business in the UAE. |
| P1: “There’s a section on our website in Arabic that’s more for senior management, that’s more of a courtesy to let them kind of know that we’re interested in them, not necessarily it’s required for them to understand. It just kind of lets them know that, yes, we’re interested.” | Participants reported that digital platforms created opportunities to connect with clients and to grow their businesses. | Technology allows for culturally significant targeted marketing. |

Participants stated that the internet was important to their businesses, in part because a few owners were not physically based in the UAE all of the time and they reported that digital platforms assisted them in operating and in growing their businesses without having to be physically present in the UAE all of the time. Additionally, participants utilized digital platforms to enhance relationships with clients based in the UAE, allowing the business owners to establish a global mindset. Owners also used the internet to directly contract services. The use of digital platforms both to operate and to

network abroad aligns with the principles of networking and RBV found in the literature review.

Table 9

Frequency of Using Digital Platforms

| Participant ID | Times discussed | % coverage |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| P1 | 3 | 5.33% |
| P2 | 3 | 5.22% |
| P3 | 4 | 9.74% |
| P4 | 1 | 3.5% |
| P5 | 1 | 0.75% |
| Across all participants | Total: 12 | Average: 4.91% |

Applications to Professional Practice

According to the Small Business Administration (2015), 50% of domestic small business owners fail by the fifth year from inception. Small business owners who are looking to improve longevity and revenue may benefit from operating internationally in available markets (Nkongolo-Bakenda & Chrysostome, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies American small business owners used for successful international entrepreneurship in the UAE. Such success in

global operation may lead to competitive advantages, such as increased revenue and operational longevity resulting from business engagement in an emerging market.

I conducted semistructured interviews with opened-ended questions with five American small business owners who had operated in the UAE for at least 5 years as IEs. The participating IEs varied in services offered. Two participants were born globals living in the UAE (according to Zhang et al., 2009, individuals who initiates a business across national borders without operating domestically). The three other participants traveled occasionally to the UAE, but primarily conducted businesses online from their headquarters in America. The primary emergent themes resulting from qualitative analysis were: (a) strategic planning, (b) understanding local culture, (c) building relationships, and (d) using digital platforms. Based upon these findings, I recommend that small business owners who are looking to operate in a foreign country incorporate these four themes into operations.

Market research and planning helps small business owners have an idea of what to expect or what might happen. Business owners must be flexible and adapt in some capacity to new foreign territories, and have respect with patience when understanding local cultures. The Internet is a dynamic resource for information, but small business owners need interpersonal skills to build relationship with those who may be helpful along the way.

In this study, I also used the RBV for the conceptual framework. Lin and Wu (2014) discussed that by using RBV, small business owners can take advantage of outside opportunities by inventorying their intangible and tangible resources to create something

of value in certain markets (Lin & Wu, 2014). The themes presented in this study were primarily skill based. Manipulating skills and resources to create a competitive advantage are principles of the RBV. Professionals may take an inventory of their resources as Lin and Wu noted, and use the skills that made the IE participants successful to create value and extend operating longevity.

Implications for Social Change

The results from this qualitative multi-case study may foster change in small business owners who may have had apprehensions of doing business in an Arab country or globally. The findings from this study may also simplify the process of initiating international business ventures: during a time of heightened competition, recession, or market saturation, American small business owners could consider branching to new foreign territories, even if that market is outside the UAE. The findings from the study may result in transferrable knowledge that could increase the number of owners who succeed globally.

The findings may also help business executives and government planners who have a significant role in IE have a better understanding as to how to develop and deploy international entrepreneurial approaches. Using the results in addition to the principles of the RBV; stakeholders may generate competitive advantages leading to profit and longevity in the international market. The findings may also lead to an increase in local employment opportunities in the host country. An additional positive social change may improve local conditions that promote the worth and development of individuals in the community where the business operates.

Recommendations for Action

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do American small business owners use for international entrepreneurship that may lead to increased revenue and operational longevity? The themes that emerged from interviews regarding this research question were: (a) strategic planning, (b) understanding local culture, (c) building relationships, and (d) using digital platforms. Knowing what strategies successful owners use may increase the sustainability of businesses and the economy (Mitchell, Madill, & Chreim, 2015). The U.S. Commercial Service could use the findings at the annual import-export conference that hosts small business owners who desire to trade and operate overseas. Additionally, the findings may incorporate into other educational endeavors, such as a business lecture series.

Roudni and Osman (2012) noted a lack of scholarly literature regarding the capabilities of IEs; this study may serve to increase understanding about international entrepreneurship and all it entails. According to the International Trade Administration (2016), 70% of worldwide revenue for American businesses comes from consumers who are outside of the United States, in emerging markets. I would like to teach an IE course or perform consultations to improve small businesses' chances of survival in global settings.

Recommendations for Further Research

A limitation of this study is that participant sampling was not specific to the type of business operating in the UAE, beyond being American-owned. Performing a study in the future based on the type of business may be beneficial to candidates who operate in a

certain industry. However, future scholars may use the research results from this study to generate new knowledge about international entrepreneurship in any given market, as the findings in this study may be transferable to businesses operating another country. A qualitative researcher may explore certain strategies in more detail. Alternatively, researchers may study why some IEs are not successful in the UAE or a similar market.

Hisrich (2013) noted one of the largest problems that IEs face is financing; the author suggested that some IEs do not have the same equity or stakeholders for a loan, as compared to larger companies. In the study, Participant 2 started a small business with \$300, it has been operating for 12 years, and the owner is branching onward to another country after being so successful. I must wonder if it is really about how much money one has, or is it about manipulating and leveraging the tangible and intangible skills that IEs have, which are similar to the principles of the RBV. A qualitative study would be helpful to identify the skill-based capabilities of how IEs overcome financial hurdles and gain the needed tangible items that could lead to longevity and revenue.

Reflections

Since childhood while traveling on summer vacations with my late grandparents, it has been a desire to work in international business and foreign affairs. It is a passion to travel. It is amazing to witness different cultures and lifestyles. I chose the topic of IEs (e.g., born globals, SME, global ventures) because of the lack of literature on what it takes to become one. After attending a U.S Commercial Service conference about six years ago, there were thousands of small business owners interested in learning how to export or finding a market for their products.

After thoroughly researching peer-reviewed scholarly articles, I speculated what Onetti (2012) and other IE scholars stated, which was that technology firms were at the forefront of being IEs. However, technology owners were not the demographic of participants for this study. The few technology business owners found and contacted did not respond to the invitation. Participants in this study were in service and consulting related businesses. I thought professionals in this industry would be time oriented, elusive, and not answer the resource based questions in particular. That was not true at all; instead, they were generous with their time and knowledge, in addition to being extremely accommodating and kind.

My experience with the DBA Doctoral Study process has been one of the toughest tasks in my life. I enrolled shortly after the program started and had many obstacles to overcome. I thought the entire journey was similar to a military boot camp or joining a sorority/fraternity in college with so many hurdles to go through. Thus, I thought accessing participants would be no different. In the beginning, it was tricky finding the right participants who were willing to contribute, being that I was an unknown person asking for help over the Internet.

As a novice researcher, I was nervous asking personal questions and about strategies towards success. The biggest worry was to protect the participants' identity during the recorded interview. The participants were of much help; thus, by all means I wanted to respect them and keep them safe. I am thankful to have come across wonderful participants who were remarkable to interview. Each had unique views to the questions

about strategies. The experience was interesting, that after completing the data selection, I wanted to continue interviewing more people.

Conclusion

American small business owners who would like to know some of the successful strategies of operating or trading globally might find this study very useful. More than 70% of worldwide revenue for American businesses does not come from the United States rather, from emergent markets as the Middle East, India, and Northern Africa (International Trade Administration, 2016). Globalization and data technology have changed the way small businesses operate and compete (Qin & Ndiege, 2013).

In this study, there was an exploration of strategies that American small business owners use for successful international entrepreneurship that may lead to competitive advantages as increased revenue and operational longevity. The research method chosen was qualitative and the design was a case study, which contained semistructured open-ended questions used to interview five successful American IEs who have been operating in the UAE for at least 5 years. Member checking was the technique used to ensure accuracy and clarity during each interview. Initially, I coded the data manually which was based on key words found in the literature review and interview questions. I also worked with an NVivo 11 specialist to ensure that the data were coded reliably; thus, increasing the validity of this study. I triangulated the data by comparing peer-review journal articles, government documents and cultural guides.

Four themes emerged from the study, which were a) strategic planning, (b) understanding local culture, (c) building relationships, and (d) using digital platforms.

The themes emerged after data coding, word clustering, and observing repetitions of phrases and keywords, which eventually formed patterns due to the repetition of keywords from the data-generated themes.

Market research of the intended country is crucial. Understanding local culture is valuable for business survival. Using digital platforms are vital to operate most businesses in today's time. However, building relationships within this country is just as important. The RBV was the conceptual framework for this study, which correlated to the themes found.

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Appendix A: Letter of Inquiry

Dear _____,

My name is Shelley Mosley, a doctoral candidate from Walden University. I am asking your permission to invite qualified members of your organization to participate in a scholarly interview for my doctoral study. May I please exhibit the Request for Participants on your website, or may I receive potential participants' contact information to forward an Informed Consent to Participate invitation?

In the study, I will examine the strategies of an international entrepreneur in the United Arab Emirates to boost American small business international entrepreneurship. To qualify, an American candidate must have operated a small to medium sized business in the United Arab Emirate for at least 5 years.

Professional interviews will take approximately 1-2 hours. Questions include the following:

1. What strategies are used to become a successful international entrepreneur?
2. What strategies are used to gain entrance into the country?
3. What types of uncertainties happen when operating an international business?

The participant will not receive compensation for their participation. However, the participant that finishes the interview and the document process in its entirety may have a XXXX donation via Paypal given to a charity of his or her choice if so desired as a thank you.

The participant's responses to interview questions will remain confidential. Information collected will be stored in a secure location for 5 years, and then professionally destroyed. The participant is free to refuse to answer any particular questions and to withdraw from participating at any time without consequence within 15 days after the interview by contacting me through email or telephone. The participants' names and company identifier will remain confidential.

The interview will be conducted at a time and location of participant's convenience. I prefer a face-to-face interview in a professional conference room setting; however, if unavailable an application such as Skype will be offered. I may be reached via e-mail at XXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX.

I am under the direction of my mentor, Dr. Thomas Schaefer. If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact him at XXXXXXXX

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Shelley Mosley
DBA Candidate

Appendix B: Request for Participants

Doctoral Study: Request for Participants

What entrepreneurial strategies are used to determine future international business success in an emergent market? Please join a scholarly research study that is designed to make a positive social impact on today's small business sector. If you meet the following requirements:

- **A small American entrepreneur that has operated a business within the UAE for at least five years.**
- **Willing to answer nine questions relating to general successful business strategies used to operate in the UAE**
- **Volunteer to give approximately 1-2 hours of your time for a professional meeting or via Skype & receive a XX donation to the charity of your choice**
- **Name & Company identifiers will only be known to the researcher**
- **If willing, please inquire about the consent form for complete details**

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Shelley Mosley, MPA

Please contact Doctoral Candidate:

XXXXXXXX or XXXXXX
XXXXXXXX or XXXXXX