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Sustainability Strategies for Small Business Restaurant Owners

Alisa Williams
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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Alisa Williams

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Sustainability Strategies for Small Business Restaurant Owners

by

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MS, Grambling State University, 1994

BS, Southern Arkansas University, 1988

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

November 2017

Abstract

Half of new businesses in the United States cease to exist after the first 5 years of operations, and the failure rate continues to increase after the first 10 years. The study was grounded on von Bertalanffy's systems theory to explore business strategies that small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Data were collected by engaging 3 small restaurant business owners in the Little Rock, Arkansas metropolis who sustained their business beyond 5 years. Information obtained from face-to-face interviews and data mining organizational document were analyzed with the support of qualitative software to generate themes. Data analysis included semistructured interviews and review of business documents using data mining and coding keywords for thematic analysis. A total of 5 themes were discovered from the findings, which included formal and informal training, customer relationship, startup resources, capacity building, and consistent quality of food and services. The social change implications of the study include identifying strategies to sustain small restaurant business to create more jobs for local residents, which can positively impact the economic viability of the Little Rock area.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research study to the heavenly Father, who made it possible and granted the grace to complete this program. To my parents, Acie Lee Williams (late) and Cassio Williams, who supported and gave me a strong educational push even in their difficult moments. I also dedicate this study to my son, Jonathan Burns, for allowing me enough space to study.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In the United States, small business owners are major contributors to the country's economic development (Karadag, 2015). Mason (2014) indicated that small businesses form between 60% and 80% of private sector jobs in the United States. However, small business owners encounter sustainability challenges such as management skills, planning, and lack of knowledge that lead to high business failure rates (Alstete, 2014). Alstete (2014) added that the failure of small business owners has contributed to the increasing rate of unemployment in the United States. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore key management strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

Background of the Problem

The U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Advocacy defined a small business as a business with less than 500 employees (SBA, 2016). The number of small business owners in the United States has decreased between 2015 and 2016 for lack of successful business sustainability strategies (Phelan, 2016). Similarly, success strategies for small restaurant businesses contribute to the growth of the small business industry in the United States (Perry, 2014).

The high rate of small business failure indicates financial losses for potential small business leaders (Adisa, Abdulraheem, & Mordi, 2014). More than 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of operations (SBA, 2016). Small business failure continues to affect the U.S economy causing business leaders to engage in finding solutions rather than building their businesses when problems arise (Marom & Lussier,

2014). Small business leaders play a role in small business performance (Samargandi, Fidrmuc, & Ghosh, 2014). Consequently, small restaurant businesses also continue to collapse due to the lack of clear-cut strategies in business operation.

Small business owners expect to experience challenges during the start-up phase of their new business (Brush, Edelman, & Manolova, 2015). The failure rate of small business start-ups falls between 70% and 80% in the first year of operations (Mason, 2014). Similarly, the lack of effective implementation of successful strategies to ensure long-term operations has led to the collapse of some restaurant businesses (Klein & Ferrari, 2015). Poor entrepreneur capabilities, poor business environment, weak management and leadership abilities are some causes of restaurant failures in the United States (Boo, 2017; Sandada, Pooe, & Dhurup, 2014). For restaurant business to exist beyond 5 years, business owners should endeavor to acquire knowledge to succeed the challenging internal and external business problems.

Problem Statement

Fifty out of 100 new businesses in the United States cease to exist after the first 5 years of operations, and the failure rate continues to increase after the first 10 years of operations (SBA, 2016). Small businesses account for 63.3% of all new jobs created between 1992 and 2013 (SBA, 2016). The general business problem is that some individuals open new small business restaurants without adequate knowledge of business strategies necessary to sustain their business. The specific business problem is that some small business restaurant owners lack business strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The targeted population for this study was three small business restaurant owners located in Little Rock, Arkansas, who sustained their businesses beyond 5 years from starting operations. The resultant data could contribute to social change by increasing small business restaurant owners' success rates, and increase revenues, and creating additional jobs in the local community.

Nature of the Study

The three research methodologies are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (Yin, 2014). Qualitative studies involve studying a phenomenon, which does not involve numeric data to explore human behaviors and the rationale that drives such behaviors (Niaz, 2009). Quantitative research includes statistical analysis of variables (Nwaigburu & Eneogwe, 2013). Mixed method research consists of both quantitative and qualitative research strategies (Yin, 2014). Neither the quantitative nor the mixed method were appropriate for this research study because statistical analysis were not applicable in understanding strategies needed to help small businesses survive beyond 5 years. Qualitative research involves developing a detailed understanding of the values, opinions, and rationale that influence human behaviors (Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2011).

The four designs appropriate for qualitative research include case study, narrative, ethnography, and phenomenology (Yin, 2014). Among the available designs, I used a case study because researchers use a case study design to explore a bounded system and

collect data through interviews to address the purpose of a study, as indicated by Yin (2014). Narrative researchers discover the experiences of individuals to formulate a narrative through obtaining participants' stories in a chronological story format (Yin, 2014). The narrative design was not appropriate for this study because I did not seek to tell a story about the restaurant businesses. Ethnographic researchers seek to provide a detailed portrait of a group and explore how they sustain their culture (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). The ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study because I did not seek to explore cultural influences related to small businesses. I did not use phenomenology because the purpose of my study is not to explore lived experiences.

Research Question

What strategies do small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

I used the following semistructured interview questions to engage participants in an in-depth discussion regarding the central research question.

What education, training, and skills contributed to your ability to remain in business beyond 5 years?

1. What strategies did you use during your first 5 years to remain successful?
2. What business development method did you use during the first 5 years of operations?
3. How did you address the barriers to implementing the strategies, which help to sustain your business?

4. How do you communicate your strategies for effective implementation?
5. What performance measures do you use to assess business operation?
6. What additional information would you like to share to help me understand key strategies contributing to your restaurant business success?

Conceptual Framework

Galea (2012) described a conceptual framework as a lens through which a researcher understands the context of research. To establish the conceptual framework of this study and address small restaurant business owner's strategies to sustain their business, I used the general systems theory. Ludwig von Bertalanffy introduced system theory in 1937 while speaking at the University of Chicago (von Bertalanffy, 1972). von Bertalanffy (1972) placed emphasis on the importance of the external environment on a system or organization.

A system consists of components or parts working together as an interactive network or system (Sayin, 2016). The individual components of the system work together to improve the outcomes when there is an understanding of the system process. The goal of systems theory is to discover a pattern or set of principles that help to improve a process (Sayin, 2016). Systems theory provided the most appropriate conceptual framework to explore essential strategies needed for small restaurant business owners to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

The contingency theory is the alternate theory to support the systems theory in the attempt to address the objectives of the study. Fiedler (1964) established the contingency theory. Fiedler explained that the theory emphasizes on how business leaders have

multiple ways of matching their leadership and management abilities to make business decisions for a successful operation. The constructs of contingency theory align with the purpose of this study in the attempt to explore sustainability strategies that might help restaurant business leaders to remain in business for an extended period. Furthermore, the construct of the study might provide leadership information restaurant business leaders need to improve on leadership style.

Operational Definitions

Business success: Business success refers to the continual sustainability and profitability of business operations over a 5-year period (SBA, 2014).

Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship refers to the practice of starting a new business that sells a product or provides a service (Parilla, 2013).

Entrepreneur: A person who starts a business and takes on the management responsibility and financial risks with the expectation of making a profit (Lawrence, 2014).

Management: The act of managing people to accomplish a common objective or goal (Perry, 2014).

Marketing strategy: A marketing strategy is an action plan used by business owners to achieve a greater market share (Mohammadzadeh, Aarabi, & Salamzadeh, 2013).

SBA: The United States (U. S.) Small Business Administration is an independent agency that is a division of the federal government that provides loans, counsels small business owners, and protects the interests of small businesses (SBA, 2014).

Small business: A small business is any activity, firm, or trade carried out by a small group of people with less than 500 employees (SBA, 2014; Senapati, 2014).

Systems theory: Systems theory involves the importance of the external environment on the organization (von Bertalanffy, 1972).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions represent the facts assumed true and unverified (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Qualitative research studies include some degree of the assumption made by the researcher (Yin, 2014). Three assumptions underpinned this study in my attempt to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business. The primary assumption in my study was that each participant would respond to the interview questions with truthful and comprehensive answers and did not include bias in their response. Another assumption was that answers provided by participants would provide the strategies small restaurant business owners need to achieve business sustainability. The third assumption was that conducting this research study in Little Rock, Arkansas, which is a large size geographical area, would provide sufficient data for the research study.

Limitations

Limitations are the external elements that could limit the scope or affect the outcome of the study (Miles, 2013). Researchers must address the shortcomings and limitations of the interpretation of the research and the general area of the study (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). As the researcher of the study, there are some limitations

which are out of my control. First, the geographical location in which the restaurant owners operates. In this study, the potential participants were limited to central Arkansas. The views of the participants in the central Arkansas area may not represent the viewpoint of all small restaurant business owners. Therefore, the findings of this study might not be transferable to small business owners in other areas of the world. The data gathering process is another limitation of the study. The strategies implemented by each small restaurant business owners may vary between each business owner. I asked a series of open-ended questions to each participant and asked them to describe various business strategies that helped them to sustain their business beyond 5 years. A response bias is another limitation of the study. A response bias involves the differences in collected data, which might lead to data inaccuracies (Carnes et al., 2015).

Delimitations

Delimitations outline boundaries imposed by the researcher to limit the overall scope of the study (Yin, 2014). Delimitations represent the boundaries of the study in researcher's control (Merriam, 2014). The delimitations include businesses, subjects, and areas the researcher deliberately imposed. In this study, I focused on small business restaurant owners who remain in business beyond 5 years. New start-up small business owners, with less than 5 years of operation, were not included in the study. The research population included only business owners with less than 500 employees. In addition, restaurant owner's geographical limitations include participants located in central Arkansas.

Significance of the Study

I explored strategies that contribute to small restaurant businesses surviving beyond 5 years. This study of small restaurant business success in central Arkansas could provide insights for aspiring new restaurant owners and reduce the failure rate of restaurants in the central Arkansas area. Small business restaurant owners are essential to the economic growth in the Little Rock, Arkansas area. Small business owners employ 48% of private sector employees (SBA, 2016). The failure rate of small businesses in the Little Rock, Arkansas area has an adverse impact on the local economy.

Contribution to Business Practice

Small businesses restaurant owners find it challenging to survive even when the overall economy experiences economic growth (citation). In times of economic downturns, small businesses face more challenges than their larger counterparts, which have broader access to capital and greater bargaining power (citation). Small business owners typically lack the necessary strategies to achieve their long-term goals (Noor, 2013). The findings of this study could provide small restaurant business owners with strategies to sustain their business in a competitive environment beyond 5 years.

Implications for Social Change

The purpose of this study was to provide business strategies that potential and current restaurant business owner use to sustain their small business operations beyond 5 years. The knowledge obtained from successful small business restaurant owners could provide new and aspiring small business owners with insight to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Also, the findings can assist policymakers who are seeking to support

small businesses with knowledge regarding the sustainability of small business. Decreasing the failure rates of small businesses should increase employment opportunities, employee benefits, and products and services that contribute to communities' economic growth.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

A literature review is carrying out a literature search in a systematic manner to ensure a more meaningful and credible review less prone to bias (Booth, Sutton, & Papaioannou, 2016). Literature review involves the collection of data from existing literature about a research study to examine a phenomenon (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). The purpose of conducting this qualitative research study was to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years

Sources of literature collection for this study includes information gathered from peer-reviewed journals and dissertations from Walden Library databases such as ProQuest, ERIC, ABI/INFORM Complete, and Google Scholar. Other resources include relevant books and information from web pages such as the United States' SBA.

Keywords used to narrow the searches for existing literature included *systems theory, restaurant, small business, entrepreneur, customer service, marketing, contingency theory, business strategy, leadership, and management*. The total number of articles for my study includes 278. The literature review has 162 references, and of these, 90% are peer reviewed.

Systems Theory

The systems theory, developed in the 1930s by Bertalanffy (1972), is to explore unpredictable challenges business leaders face in an organization (von Bertalanffy, 1972). As noted by von Bertalanffy, the systems theory serves as a guide for researchers and business leaders to examine the existing relationships between the happenings of an event either within or outside of an organization. von Bertalanffy further noted that the systems theory consists of open and closed systems. He described open systems as a way business leaders can obtain information from the operating environment to influence its systems and indicated that closed systems as a system, which provides no opportunity to interact and interconnect.

Sayin (2016) noted that systems theory guides business leaders to discover a set of principles that help to improve a process or steps in an activity to improve performance. Business leaders who have used systems theory have developed fragments of the enterprise model into different parts for efficient business operations (Mostafavi, Abraham, & Lee, 2012). Business leaders explore the wholeness of business systems with the use of systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1972). The theory provides information regarding the complexity within a system and how it interconnects with the external forces of the environment where business owners operate (Bar-Yam, 2011). Hence, the use of the open systems theory serves as a guide for small restaurant business owners to recognize the complexities involved in a restaurant business and how to interconnect the systems for effective operations.

Researchers use both the systems theory and systems thinking as a guide to recognizing business problems in their business operation (von Bertalanffy, 1972). Diez-

Roux (2011) added that systems thinking is one of the mechanisms business leaders use to ensure business analysis. The use of general systems theory provides information for business leaders and researchers to gain a business solution to specific business problems (Barr, 2013). Business leaders who apply the theory in the daily business operations experience a shift to a new way of seeing things (Hanson, 2014). Hanson (2014) further explained that the systems theory aids leaders to carefully consider substantive issues where there are two or more interrelated parts. Consequently, the systems theory aids small restaurant business owners to make efficient business analysis for operational success.

To ensure the sustainability of the business, business leaders should endeavor to apply systems theory to connect the complexity of the environment (Valentinov, 2014). Luhmann (2017) noted that the use of systems theory is inspirational for business leaders to understand how to address the influence of external forces on business operation. Business leaders ensure a better way of promoting communication through the application of the constructs of theory, which helps business leaders sustain their business over an extended period (Adams, Hester, Bradley, Meyers, & Keating, 2014). According to Adams, Heaster, et al. (2014), business leaders gain a better understanding of a business operating system. Researchers and business leaders gain the predictive ability of the real-world systems when they understand the foundation of systems theory (Valentinov, 2014). Add synthesis to fully develop the paragraph and summary to connect back to your study.

The theory provides information to ensure valuable methodological orientation for business sustainability (Bai & Henesey, 2012). Similarly, business leaders who use systems theory gain an understanding of business strategies (Valentinov, 2014). Flood (2013) added that systems theory involves a systematic theoretical construct to understand the general relationships of the empirical world. Flood stated that business leaders who are guided by the constructs of the theory stand the upper chance of understanding how to sustain their business. To ensure business sustainability, business leaders must learn how to use systems theory in the meaningful interpretation of business data to achieve results (Marsan, Bellomo, & Gibelli, 2016). Add synthesis and summary.

Dynamically applying the constructs of systems theory aids researchers and business leaders to unify regulatory systems needing attention (Jaeger & Monk, 2014). von Bertalanffy (1972) simply added that researchers and business leaders use systems theory to see the business world in a different perspective. To understand a system as a whole, business leaders deploy systems theory strategies to understand the real-world systems (Adams et al., 2014). Consequently, it was a goal to use the systems theory strategies to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

Kast and Rosenzweig (1972) noted that for business leaders to maximize profit and stay in a competitive edge, it is essential to implement the systems appropriate for business objectives. Business leaders who have used an open system strategy have succeeded in understanding business systems to operate beyond the traditional boundaries of operations. Von Bertalanffy (1972) added that the strategies derived from the use of

the theory aids in business expansion as business leaders explore blue ocean territories. Similarly, business leaders who have adopted and implemented the strategies of the theory have experienced a well-structured business system, which ensures business longevity (Gilstrap, 2013). Hence, it is essential for restaurant business leaders to understand the concepts of the systems theory for effective profit maximization.

Business leaders develop a systematic way of thinking to help ensure interconnections and interactions of all internal and external factors that help to define business problems (Neumann, 2013). The constructs of the theory provide business leaders with the capabilities to develop better management skills for their businesses (Sun, Hyland, & Cui, 2014). Business leaders will achieve business sustainability when they develop critical thinking abilities about business systems (Gregory & Miller, 2014). To successfully implement any structural, operation, or business change, business leaders must ensure effective organizational systems thinking apply to the systems of the business (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith & Dutton, 2012). Add synthesis.

Hester (2014) posited that organizational processes and procedures fail because business leaders lack the ideas to interconnect elements that constitute complexity of business systems. Hester recommended a business leader to remain knowledgeable of the systems of business by understanding necessary inputs, procedures, processes, and outputs that contribute to achieving business success. With acquired knowledge about the systems theory, business leaders can implement choicest strategies that mitigate complex business problems to achieve business sustainability (Cheng, 2012). The use of systems theory is a more effective way for business leaders to improve the strategies in their

operations of activities (Zaher & Zaki, 2014). Likewise, the strategies of the theory aid business leaders to understand the *whys* and *hows* regarding the complexity of their businesses (Adams et al., 2014).

To understand the systems theory, it is important for business leaders to understand what constitutes a system and how each of elements interacts with each other (Mangal, 2013). Mangal (2013) further indicated that when business leaders learn how to combine resources and elements in systems efficiently, the chances of mitigating business risk is high enough to maximize profit. Business owners who acquire knowledge about the different elements of their business achieve business sustainability, career development, and effective structural systems (Patton & McMahon, 2014). Von Bertalanffy (1972) added that constructs of the theory provide business leaders with strategies to understand how to ensure the interdependence, interaction, and interconnection of all resources and elements for business success. Consequently, restaurant business owners are likely to experience operational challenges when they fail to incorporate the principles and tenets of the systems theory.

Systems theory constructs aids business leaders to support a business process (Mishra & Garg, 2013). Some businesses fail because of poor business processes (Jeston & Nelis, 2014). There is high efficiency in the business process when business leaders use systems theory as a systematic guide to interconnect all business units internally or externally (van der Schaft & Jeltsema, 2014). Lang (2014) added that through the constructs of the theory business owners can generate a clear communication channel for all to support the business process to ensure business sustainability. With effective

processes in place, business leaders achieve quality service operations (Gummesson, 2014). Amed (2015) noted that business leaders use the constructs of systems theory to understand human behavior to gain the trust of customers in the community. When business leaders ascertain information about the internal and external business units, they understand whom to execute specific actions to ensure business security (Young & Leveson, 2014). Business leaders should gain a better understanding of all the systems in business (Lussier & Halabi, 2010).

Alternative Theory

Systems theory encompasses contingency theory (von Bertalanffy, 1972). The contingency theory approach relates to problems that exist from within whole systems (von Bertalanffy, 1972). The mutual relationship of these theories relates to decision-making and leadership (Meier, 2016). Strategic contingency theory focuses on leadership effectiveness and strategies based on various factors that affect business operations (Parisi, 2013). The contingency theory approach will provide an understanding of how small business restaurant owners adapt to changes in circumstances.

The primary focus of contingency theory is the relationship between the business' design and performance (Bamiatzi, Jones, Mitchelmore, & Nikolopoulos, 2015). Contingency theory establishes that performance outcomes are the result of internal and external activities that affect business operations (Fiedler, 1964). Contingency theory also holds that management styles in a business organization require different designs and forms, which are specific to the organization's operating environment (Fiedler, 1964). Business leaders who use contingency theory develop a predictive mechanism to ensure

optimal control over the use of resources (Otley, 2016). Otley (2016) added that a more dynamic use of contingency theory aids business leaders to approach business procedurally to ensure effective management and control. Contingency theory suggests that size effects are relevant for effective operations management practices (Taylor & Taylor, 2014). With effective operations management practices, business leaders can develop, measure, and ensure business performance (Menz & Scheef, 2014). Through the construct of the theory, business leaders identify essential parameters that could serve as a solid foundation to interconnect business systems together for efficient operation (Mikes & Kaplan, 2015).

The ideas and strategies of the theory are useful for business leaders to develop an entrepreneurial spirit needed for business sustainability (Linton, 2014). The constructs of the theory provide an opportunity for business leaders to learn leadership and behavioral abilities that aid in effective business governance (McCleskey, 2014). Business leaders who gain leadership abilities minimize business failure and ensure meaningful business practices, which leads to long-term operations (Burkert, Davila, Mehta, & Oyon, 2014). However, Longenecker and Pringle (1978) indicated that effective leadership and management is contingent on both internal and external factors. With contingency theory, business leaders acquire several alternatives to organizing and leading a business (Fiedler, 1964).

Applying the principles of contingency theory to this study might help restaurant business leaders to gain information to manage employees effectively. Business leaders can plan and implement policies when employees are well managed, which may lead to

high organizational performance and effective resource usage (Desai, Lockett & Paton, 2015). Business leaders do not only manage employees effectively, but also internal contingencies to achieve business objectives (Church, Rotolo, Ginther, & Levine, 2015). A contingency plan contributes to organizational performance (Burkert et al., 2014).

Fiedler (1964) noted that the performance of business leaders depends on the environment in which the business operates. As indicated by Fiedler, business leaders should tailor their leadership and management style to fit their specific business operation. Contingency theory used by business leaders should involve many systems working together to collectively achieve business success (Grötsch, Blome, & Schleper, 2013). The ideas of contingency theory are to aid business leaders to adopt leadership, management, and motivational strategies to opposing business forces, which result in stunted growth of business (Bitektine & Miller, 2015).

Success Factors of Small Restaurant Business

Small businesses must perform some essential business functions to succeed in a competitive environment. Marketing is essential for small business success. Business owners have to implement effective marketing strategies to keep up with their competitors (Kenny & Dyson, 2016). Companies that hold a reputation for setting successful marketing tend to share similar strategies for success. These successful marketing strategies include implementing the marketing concept and efficiently using marketing research (West, Ford, & Ibrahim, 2015).

Marketing. Business owners should adopt effective marketing strategies to reach out to more customers in the marketplace (Homburg, Jozić, & Kuehnl, 2017). Marketing

concept comprises customer orientation, goal orientation, and the use of systems approach (Babin & Zikmund, 2015). When focusing on customer orientation, it is important that small business owners not lose sight of the organization's goals (Cook & Wolverton, 2015). Small business owners aim to make a profit by focusing on the components of a business system, identifying customer needs, and ensuring that the right goods are produced to meet customer needs (Chou, Chen, & Conley, 2015).

Market research comprises the systematic gathering, analyzing, and recording of data related to the business organization's products or services (Fleisher & Bensoussan, 2015). Market research is an investment for a company (McQuarrie, 2015). McQuarrie further noted that the cost of market research is expensive, and the stakes should be justified to merit the investment. Before starting a new business, market research can be used to determine the best business location (Baker, 2014). For existing businesses, business leaders use market research to determine the need to develop new products, explore the need for new services, and decide whether to expand the business (Baker, 2014; Solomon, 2014).

The key to having a competitive advantage is to explore data to gain an understanding of customer behaviors, customer market segment base, and to offer customized services (Assunção, Calheiros, Bianchi, Netto, & Buyya, 2015). The focus on customer engagement has increased in recent academic literature and practitioner's decision making as it related to predicting brand loyalty (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016). So et al. (2016) further added that a marketing analysis is needed to locate and acquire potential future customers.

Business leaders develop a market research analysis to support the business goals (Grant, 2016). Marketing activities include the marketing mix, which consists of product, place, promotion, and pricing of business goods and services (Westwood, 2016). Pricing is one of the key components of the marketing mix (Davicik, & Sharma, 2015). Business owners should include the sales forecast, market research, and market segmentation in the market analysis. As noted by Westwood (2016), the market analysis section of the marketing plan aids business leaders to identify the potential customers. The sales forecast may include different scenarios such as most likely, best-case, and worst-case (Grant, 2016).

Planning is one of the most significant roles of management (Westwood, 2016). Westwood added that the company's business plan drives the business. Planning the sales forecast is an essential success factor that business leaders adopt (Gupta, 2017). The sales forecast consists of estimates of sales of a product or services that business leaders intend to sell in a particular market over a period (Hatten, 2015). Hatten (2015) continued to explain that the sales forecast market forms the boundary of the sales and business is destined to fail in the market for the insufficient forecast. A sales forecast may be short-term or long-term.

The sales forecast is the cornerstone of the income statement (Trugman, 2016). Business leaders cannot determine the cost of goods sold, taxes, and other variable cost without first determining the sales forecast (Trugman, 2016). It is difficult for a new business organization to prepare a sales forecast. Once the business has experienced prior periods of sales, the organization may establish a forecast for future periods (Kilger,

2015). Small business owners should make it a goal to learn how to prepare sales forecast to help with the business planning and budgeting.

Competitor analysis identifies the major competitors, their competitive advantage, and how the nature of competition is likely to change (Booth, 2015). New business owners often ignore the existence of competition because they believe the industry does not contain any close substitutes (Honig & Hopp, 2016). The essence of competition is to be aware of what competitors are doing. When a business owner's resources become scarce, the business leader must increase intensity by finding ways to take market shares away from their competitors (Weinzimmer & Nystrom, 2015). Business owners must be conscious of the need to do something better and different.

Business owner's strengths give them an edge over their competitor (Aithal, 2016). A business owner's weaknesses can be harmful when used against them by their competitor (Aithal, 2016). Business owners should study the strengths and weaknesses of existing competitors. Business owners should analyze the performance of their competitors to analyze the success of their businesses. In many industries, beating out the competition has become necessary to achieve the company goals and objectives (Fleisher, 2015). Business owners must be conscious of their competitor's existence and be aware of their competitor's marketing strategies. Competition and entrepreneurship are both important philosophies in the understanding of markets (Kirzner, 2015). The term competition conveys the idea that business owners compete with one another to deliver a performance that thrives above their competitors (Kirzner, 2015). Small business owners

continually strive to achieve a competitive advantage over their competitors by introducing new products and process innovations (Palmer, Wright, & Powers, 2015).

The key to having a competitive advantage is to explore data to gain an understanding of customer behaviors, customer market segment base, and to offer customized services (Assunção et al., 2015). A marketing analysis is needed to locate and acquire potential future customers. Marketing research is the process of acquiring information about potential customers such as age, ethnicity, gender, income, and education levels to guide the business's marketing decisions (Hamka, Bouwman, De Reuver, & Kroesen, 2014). Companies develop a market analysis to support the company goals (Grant, 2016). Marketing activities include the marketing mix. The marketing mix includes pricing, promotion, and distribution of the company products or services (Westwood, 2016). Business owners should include the sales forecast, market research, and market segmentation in the market analysis. The market analysis section of the marketing plan identifies the potential customers as the customer profile (Westwood, 2016). The sales forecast may include different scenarios such as most likely, best-case, and worst-case (Grant, 2016).

Leadership and Management. Effective leadership involves getting others to perform willingly and pointing them in the right direction. The role of leadership differs greatly depending on the stage of development and the size of the business (Northouse, 2015). Business leaders must endeavor to possess leadership qualities. Great leaders are trailblazers who surround themselves with team members and outside associates to achieve the business goals (Sims & Quatro, 2015). New business leaders face major

challenges of uncertainty when exploring the unknown. One of the most important qualities in a leader having the ability to be tolerant when things are not going well as expected (Delmatoff & Lazarus, 2015). When starting a new business, business leaders must be adaptable and able to adjust when unanticipated problems arise. In a growing organization, leaders must convey the business vision to all team members as they contribute effectively to achieving the organization's goals (Baxter, 2016).

Often, people expect a great business leader to be charismatic. In reality, charisma has little to do with the qualities of a good leader. Great leadership qualities have little to do with wanting to be in charge and more to do with having the ability to lead others and take charge (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2016). Virtuous leaders demonstrate a determination to do whatever is needed to help the company succeed (Ward, 2016a). Leadership in small businesses are more personalized than leadership in large business organizations. In small, individually owned businesses, the owners normally work long hours and are interacting with individual employees on a day-to-day basis (Ward, 2016b). When the business owners and employees have a good relationship, they establish a bond of personal loyalty (Renz, 2016). In a large business organization, the employee and employer relationship is normally not as bonding as it is in a small business.

Successful leaders often emerge in times of crisis (Showry & Manasa, 2014). Effective leaders shape the culture of the business organization. Business management is like a mental sport and leaders with the right frame of mind will win the game (Beer & Clower, 2014). Every leader should strive to integrate a positive attitude in the organizational culture. A good leader must have good communication skills, listening

skills, and must be able to influence and persuade their followers (Voight, 2014). Specific leadership styles are used in different situations because managers chose from a variety of approaches as they deal with different situations (Wang, Waldman, & Zhang, 2014).

Lowman and Thomas (2015) discuss Daniel Goleman's six leadership styles which include visionary leaders, coaching leaders, affiliative leaders, democratic leaders, pacesetter leaders, and commanding leaders. The visionary style leader sets the goals but allows team members to be free and creative in how they attain their goals (Seelhofer & Valeri, 2017). The coaching style leader motivates individuals to improve their performance (Hope, 2017). The affiliative style leader focuses on creating harmony in the group by increasing communication among team members (Hanlin, 2014). The democratic style leader uses the knowledge and skills of the team to guide the direction of the group (Kurucz, Colbert, Lüdeke-Freund, Upward, & Willard, 2017). The pacesetter style leader sets challenging standards and expects high-performance results (Xavier, 2014). The commanding style leader is most effective in times of crisis and demands immediate submission (Kurucz et al., 2017). Kurucz et al. added that most effective leaders shift between the first four styles of leadership and use the last two styles of leadership sparingly.

Management is the process designed to achieve business objectives by using resources effectively and efficiently (Foxall, 2014). To use resources effectively refers to using resources for their intended purpose. Managers are often evaluated by how effectively and efficiently they manage (Reich, Gemino, & Sauer, 2014). To use resources efficiently means to use resources to accomplish the business objective.

Management skills include leadership skills, conceptual skills, and technical expertise. Managers must be able to make wise decisions about functions such as planning, staffing, controlling, directing, and organizing.

The planning process is the first function of management. Planning involves determining the business objective and deciding how to achieve the objective (Slack, 2015). The objective is the end result desired by the organization. Managers are responsible for establishing long-term objectives and the strategies necessary to achieve the company goals (Goetsch & Davis, 2014). The planning process includes business leaders determining the elements of where, how, and by whom. Planning and controlling are closely related. Planning establishes the business goals and performance objectives and controlling evaluates the activities.

Controlling refers to the process of evaluating activity to keep the business on the right track (Rosemann & von Brocke, 2015). Controlling involves measuring activities, comparing performance standards, identifying variances or changes in standard performances, investigating the variances, and making corrections to performance standards when necessary (Mathuva, 2015). The control process helps managers solve problems that may arise inside and outside the business.

The organized structure is necessary when attempting to achieve the business goals in an efficient and effective manner. Without organizational structure, small business operations will become chaotic (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014). Organizing helps to improve lines of communication and establish the proper lines of authority. Organizing includes reviewing plans and determining the activities necessary to

implement the plans (Galliers & Leidner, 2014). Periodically, managers should review the business structural relationships and make adjustments as needed for effective operations (Galliers et al., 2014).

Staffing refers to the process of hiring employees who have certain skills to perform specific job functions. After business leaders determine the task, they must next determine employees needed, and type of skills to carry out the work (Kim & Ployhart, 2014). Managers must also train and motivate employees to work to achieve the company's goals (Kim et al., 2014). Another function of staffing includes downsizing the staff when necessary. Downsizing refers to eliminating a certain number of employees when necessary to ensure the company has the right number of workers necessary to perform business functions effectively and efficiently (Agwu, Carter, & Murray, 2014). Downsizing also helps businesses to reduce expenses and increase profits.

When business leaders complete staffing process, management must focus on directing the employees. Directing refers to leading and motivating the employees to achieve the business goals and objectives (Jayaweera, 2015). It is essential that managers interact with employees daily to be able to direct effectively (Jayaweera, 2015). Managers motivate employees by offering incentives such as bonuses or raises to entice workers to help achieve the business goals (Gambardella, Panico, & Valentini, 2015). Most employees want to know that their opinions matter in the organization. Effective managers ask workers to contribute their ideas, and this benefits the company and employees with whole-systems thinking (Gambardella et al., 2015).

Business environment and location. Business location has an effect on the business. Location effects the value of a business and will often make the difference in whether a business succeeds or fails (Khosa & Kalitanyl, 2014). One of the primary tasks for new business owners is to find the ideal location to attract their target customers and employees (Yazdanifard, 2014). In addition, business owners must be conscious of the local zoning regulations, taxes, and laws in the selected location (Audretsch, Link, Walshok, Andersson, & Henrekson, 2015). Finding an ideal business location is one of the most important factors for business success. When selecting a business location, it is important for entrepreneurs to consider the funds available and cost of operation to avoid insolvency (Tate, Ellram, Schoenherr, & Pettersen). The site chosen for a restaurant can make the difference on whether or not the business realizes a profit or loss. The site selection also will depend on the cost. Some small business owners are unable to afford the best location for their business because of high pricing (Khosa & Kalitanyl, 2014).

A study conducted by Tate et al., (2014) found that companies place importance on the location preferred by customers and how the chosen location would help them to expand to new customer markets. Customer accessibility is a significant factor when selecting a business location. Customers are seldom willing to repeatedly travel a long distance to shop at a specific store or eat at a particular restaurant (Wang, Gopal, Shankar, & Pancras, 2015). Business leaders should endeavor to situate restaurant business close to their target customer (Fong, Fang, & Luo, 2015). Fong et al. added that when business owners fail to situate restaurants in the near vicinity of the target customer, the customers will do business with their competitors. Small businesses have

been able to create a global presence on the internet by setting up business web pages which allow customers to access their business information such as, store hours, location, and products and services offered (Otero, Gallego, & Pratt, 2014).

As noted by Ghita (2014), business leaders use site-selection software such as Geographical Information System to discover their ideal business location. Site-selection software gives users access to demographic information such as income, age, neighborhoods, traffic flow studies, and other nearby businesses (Rubin, 2014). The increased availability of computerized demographic software and the relatively inexpensive cost of the personal computer has resulted in the selection software previously used by large corporations (Rubin, 2014).

Customer service approach. The focus on customer engagement has increased in recent academic literature and practitioner's decision making as it related to predicting brand loyalty (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016). Small businesses have the ability to attract customers to the quality and personal service rather than on the price alone (Spiess, T'Joens, Dragnea, Spencer, & Philippart, 2014). Though the sales price is an important factor when attracting customers, many customers will patronize a business based on friendliness and loyalty to the community (Pandya, Mathur, & Mathur, 2016).

Understanding customer needs and understanding their purchasing habits are essential to business success. Hameed and Yasir (2014) researched the impact of customer's compulsive buying behaviors when shopping for three different types of products: convenience goods, shopping goods, and specialty goods. Convenience goods are normally affordable, purchased frequently, and carried by many stores (Hameed &

Yasir, 2014). Convenience goods do not represent goods sold in convenience stores, but they are goods in high traffic stores that are frequently stocked and satisfy the needs of the consumers (Hameed & Yasir, 2014). Shopping goods are normally more expensive and purchased after the consumer has spent time comparing prices (Hameed & Yasir, 2014). Specialty goods are higher priced goods with brand names that customers recognize (Hameed & Yasir, 2014). Customers spend a substantial amount of time and effort when shopping for specialty goods. Compulsive buyers purchase unnecessary quantities of goods that they cannot afford and that they do not need. Compulsive buyers purchase to alleviate stress, disappointment, and lack of self-esteem (Hameed & Yasir, 2014; Roberts & Roberts, 2012). Once a business owner has an understanding of customer's buying behavior, they can better accommodate their needs and desires.

Customer service is important to a small business because having satisfied customers can make the difference in a company's ability to survive in a competitive environment. Customer relationship management (CRM) refers to an organization's business strategy designed to increase profits, revenues, and customer satisfaction (Peppers & Rogers, 2016). The purpose of CRM is to learn more about customer behaviors and to build solid relationships with customers (Khodakarami & Chan, 2014). The strategy is to put customers first so that the business will survive. A business's sales will either come from a current customer or a new customer. Many businesses focus on acquiring new customers and neglect to concentrate on retaining current customers (La Rocca & Snehota, 2014).

Developing a plan for effective customer service is vital to business sustainability. Small businesses have a much better opportunity to respond to customer complaints and achieve customer satisfaction because the owner can give employees the authority to act in the organization's best interest (Spiess et al., 2014). In larger corporations, the manager normally has limited authority to make discussions regarding customer satisfaction issues. In small businesses, the owner can talk to the customer directly to get a better understanding of the customer's concerns. Assessing the level of effective customer service is essential to any organization. Customer service strategies should include responding quickly to customers' complaints and concerns, listening to the customers' response, and treating customers like friends or family members (Peppers & Rogers, 2016).

Sustainability challenges of small restaurant owners

Business sustainability has been challenging for some business leaders (Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge, 2014). Wagner and Syensson (2014) noted that adding value to business practices necessitates changes in operational systems, which in turn results in long-term business sustainability. Furthermore, the diverse challenges faced by business leaders hamper the sustainability of business operations (Lose & Tengeh, 2015).

Poor management abilities. Many small business owners have poor management skills which contribute to their business failure. Some entrepreneurs go into business because they have a vision for a great business idea, but they often lack the skills and knowledge to sustain the business (Arasti, Zandi, & Bahmani, 2014). Many small businesses fail because of the challenges they face in managing their business. Often new

entrepreneurs underestimate the amount of money they need to keep their business open. They go into business with just enough money to get the business going because they believe that they will generate enough money to keep the business going (Dunn & Liang, 2015). Entrepreneurs often think because they have a great idea for marketing a new product that they will be successful; however, many of them lack key management skills such as planning, negotiating, and financing strategies (Drexler, Fischer, & Schoar, 2014).

Some small business owners lack the management skills needed to manage growth. Business growth should be an advantage. However, business growth can turn into a disadvantage when not handled properly (Greene, Brus, & Brown, 2015). When small businesses mishandle growth, this could have an adverse impact on the business reputation (Hagen & Zucchella, 2014). When products are poorly made or do not arrive on time as a result of growth, this could damage the company's reputation. Growth often requires that management has specialized skills to hire new employees and give some employees authority to make higher decisions needed to maintain daily business operations (Sahut & Peris-Ortiz, 2014).

Small business owners often start a new business venture without first preparing a business plan. It is essential for business leaders to have a plan before going into business because it is a crucial element in the strategic plan. The business plan is one of the most important documents the small business owner will put together (Parks, Olson, & Bokor, 2015). All strategic, operational, and financial planning needs should be formalized into a business plan (Parks et al., 2015). The plan should include an explanation of the business

purpose including the products or services offered. Also, the business plan should include an analysis of the industry strengths and weaknesses, marketing policies, prices, promotions, and operations or promotion methods (Halabi & Lussier, 2014). The business plan should also include financial information related to future profits, investments, and cash flows (Halabi & Lussier, 2014). The plan will help small business owners remain focused on the target goals of the business. This formal plan should serve as a tool for making decisions.

Many small business owners go into business because they have a good idea for a particular product or service (King & Lakhani, 2013). Business owners should understand that good business ideas without the necessary technical expertise, conceptual skills, and analytical skills may not result in profit maximization. Business owners and managers need the specialized technical expertise and specialized knowledge to perform their job effectively (Kearns, Livingston, Scherer, & McShane, 2015).

Managers may not need to perform all the job duties but will need the technical expertise to train employees, provide guidance, and solve problems. In today's business environment, most companies rely on computers for daily routine tasks. For this reason, managers have found that having computer skills is an essential part of their job. Conceptual skills are also a necessary skill for managers. Conceptual skills refer to having the ability to think creatively (Jensen, McDaniel, Woodard, & Kummer, 2014). Creative thinking is behind many new innovative products and ideas. Analytical skills refer to the ability to identify issues and recognize their importance (Debortoli, Müller, & vom Brocke, 2014). When managers can identify critical factors, they can take the

appropriate actions to correct the issue. Finding a manager with excellent technical, conceptual, and analytical skills may prove to be difficult but business organizations should be willing to train their manager in the area in which the skill is needed to improve the job performance.

Poor business plans and strategies. When preparing the business plan, the business background, philosophy, mission, and objectives should be considered (Darkow, 2015). In addition, the business plan should include an analysis of the industry strengths and weaknesses, marketing policies, prices, promotions, and operations or promotion methods (Halabi & Lussier, 2014). The business plan should also include financial information related to future profits, investments, and cash flows (Halabi & Lussier, 2014). The plan will help small business owners remain focused on the target goals of the business. This formal plan should serve as a tool for making decisions.

A well-developed business plan will give small business owners a greater opportunity for success (Lussier & Corman, 2015). The formal business plan should include the business vision, business purpose, the business strategies, and the operating tactics. The vision helps everyone stay focused on the business goals. The vision should let everyone know where the business is going (Vitale, 2014). This critical element is usually missing from the business plan of small businesses (Vitale, 2014). The purpose should be used to remind employees and stakeholders of the vision of the business. The problem with some small business owners is that without a business plan, they often lose focus on the business goals when times get tough (Fayolle & Liñán, 2014). Staying focused on purpose helps everyone stay committed when things become chaotic. Creating

solid strategies will help the business owner to identify current and future resources to reach their destination (Kusumaningrum & Hidayat, 2016). The list of resources should include skills, time, and money needed to achieve business goals (Fayolle & Liñán, 2014). The tactics should include detailed step-by-step instructions about how the business will move forward towards the destination (Rowles, 2014).

Drafting a business plan should be a team effort. For effective execution, the business plan should be prepared by the business owner, managers, and with the advice of counsel (Finch, 2016). The key to a good business plan is not to make it too complex (Simón-Moya & Revuelto-Taboada, 2016). The business plan should include information on where, why, and how the business will reach the destination. The duty of the owner and manager is to ensure that the steps are followed, and the business is moving in the right direction (Ward, 2016a). Each of the four elements of the business plan should be considered daily. However, each element should be reviewed and revised as needed (Ward, 2016a). Without a clear business plan, it is difficult to know if the business is moving in the right direction.

Governance, risk and internal control management. Small business owners often give insufficient attention to evaluating potential risk (Harris & Patten, 2014). Business risk refers to the possibility of suffering a loss of earnings. Small businesses lose money due to various misfortunes such as theft, fire, or lawsuits. Risk management refers to the process of conserving the business earnings power by reducing the possibility of financial loss (Cohen, Krishnamoorthy, & Wright, 2017). Risk management allows the business to recover financial losses and operating efficiency after suffering an

unforeseen loss. Small business owners are faced with pure risk and speculative risk. Pure risk refers to losses suffered as a result of an unexpected event (Sunder, 2015). Speculative risk refers to the uncertainty of an activity or investment that may result in a gain or loss (Sunder, 2015).

The greatest risk that small business owners face is the loss of profits (Lam, 2014). Some business losses are insurable; however, loss of profits is uninsurable. Also, losses as a result of research and development, price fluctuations, and changes in the law are uninsurable losses (McNamara, 2014). There are several ways that a business can manage uninsurable risk. Risk avoidance is one way to circumvent uninsurable losses. Risk avoidance refers to refusing to undertake a seemingly risky activity (Pritchard & PMP, 2014). Risk prevention refers to using various methods to prevent or reduce the possibility of a loss (Sadgrove, 2016). Loss prevention techniques could include work safety rules, hiring security guards, or having a nurse's office. Risk transfer refers to shifting the risk consequences to someone outside the organization (Sadgrove, 2016). Insurance is a form of risk transfer because individuals or business owners pay a premium to an insurance company in exchange for coverage in the event of a loss (Bromiley, McShane, Nair, & Rustambekov, 2015). Risk assumption refers to the company offering self-insurance (Lam, 2014). With self-insurance, a company will set aside funds to pay for uncertain and infrequent losses.

The process of risk management includes implementing steps to preserve the business assets and earnings. Risk management is concerned with finding the best way to prevent loss. The first step is to identify the risk. It is important that small business

owners be aware of the possible types of risks the organization may face (Drennan, McConnell, & Stark, 2014). The business should implement an efficient approach to identify pure risk. The second step is to evaluate risk by identifying possible losses that could occur (Drennan et al., 2014). Potential risk should be either critical, important, or unimportant. The third step is to select a method of managing risk (Drennan et al., 2014). The two primary methods of managing risk are risk control or risk refinancing (Sadgrove, 2016). Risk control refers to minimizing or reducing loss by choosing not to engage in potentially hazardous events. Risk financing is when business leaders focus on making funds available for potential losses (Sadgrove, 2016). Step four is to implement the decision. Once a business decides to use a particular technique to manage risk, the company must follow up by taking action such as purchasing insurance (Drennan et al., 2014). The final step is to evaluate and review the risk management technique. The review is necessary because over time old risks will go away and new risks will arise.

Corporate governance has been a major topic of discussion at many organizations for decades (Al-Malkawi, Pillai, & Bhatti, 2014). Many business failures, such as Enron and Lehman Brothers, has been the result of poor corporate governance and internal controls (Al-Malkawi et al., 2014). Corporate governance refers to the system a business uses to direct and control the daily business operations. When business leaders implement corporate governance strategies, they will provide incentives to management to pursue organizational objectives that are in the owner's best interest and provide for effective monitoring of performance (Neubauer & Lank, 2016). Internal control is a process set up by management to provide assurance to meet company objectives. Internal controls put

into place by management provides assurance that the financial reports are reliable (Balsam, Jiang, & Lu, 2014). Some financial statement errors are intentional, and some are unintentional. Financial statements contain three different types of errors (Balsam et al., 2014). Financial statement may exclude some expense transactions which would result in an overstatement of earnings. Secondly, the financial statements could improperly include sales revenue earned in a different period. Lastly, the financial statements may include revenues or expenses recorded for an incorrect amount.

Proper internal controls can help prevent or reduce financial statement errors (Balsam et al., 2014). Preventive controls help to deter events from occurring (Strecker, Heise, & Frank, 2015). For example, requiring authorization for a transaction over a certain dollar amount would be an example of a preventive control. Detective controls help to detect undesirable events that have already occurred (Strecker et al., 2015). An example of a detective control would be a bank reconciliation. The detective control would seek to find mistakes made by the bank or transactions incorrectly posted on the company books. Separation of duties is another form of preventive control. Separation of duties refers to separating the responsibility of the person who authorizes transactions, records transactions, and the person who has custody of the assets (Merkow and Breithaupt, 2014). If the duties are not separated, one person could make unauthorized transactions without being detected. Effective internal controls can provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are reliable (Cohen & Simnett, 2014).

Laws affecting small businesses are either the federal or state constitution. The legislative, executive, and the judicial branch are responsible for making, interpreting,

and administering the laws (Meiners, Ringleb, & Edwards, 2014). Some of the laws are contradictory, complex, and hard to understand. Because the laws affecting businesses differ from state to state, the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) was drafted (Meiners et al., 2014). The UCC is a set of uniform statutes to govern business transactions in all 50 states. The UCC codes consist of nine articles: sales, general provisions, commercial paper, bank collections and deposits, letters of credit, bulk transfers, documents of title, investment securities, and secured transactions (Meiners et al., 2014).

There are several approaches that small business owners can use to address government regulations. Business owners should attempt to learn as much as possible about the laws that relate to their business. Business owners should also challenge any laws that are harmful towards their organization (Steingold, 2015). They also get involved in the political system to help elect officials who will help to change laws that are unfavorable to their business needs (Steingold, 2015). Lastly, business owners have the option of moving to a different location with different rules, or they can learn to comply with the current laws and regulations in their area (Steingold, 2015).

Transition

In Section 1, I explained information regarding the background of the problem, problem statement and purpose statement, the nature of the study, and conceptual framework. The section also contains information about the conceptual framework, research question, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, and the delimitations of the study. I identified the interview questions and expounded on the review of the

literature to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

In Section 2, I established a restatement of the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, the participants, research method and design. In the subsequent segment, I explained the research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection instruments and techniques, data organization technique, and analysis of data. I concluded the section with the reliability and validity of the study. In Section 3, I introduced the presentation of the findings, recommendations, future research, and the application of the professional practice and social impact of the study.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I provide information that explains the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, and population and sampling. The section also contains information regarding the ethical research practices, data collection instrument, data collection technique, data organization technique, data analysis technique, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The targeted population for this study was three small business restaurant owners located in Little Rock, Arkansas, who sustained their businesses beyond 5 years from starting operations. The resultant data could contribute to social change by increasing small business restaurant owners' success rates, increase revenues, and create additional jobs in the local community.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in a qualitative research study involves engaging participants to collect data (Yin, 2014). The researcher is the primary person to obtain data from the participants (McLure, Level, Cranston, Oehlerts, & Culbertson, 2014). As a qualitative researcher, my goal was to recruit potential participants as well as collect and analyze the data. I used a qualitative multiple case study with face-to-face interviews. The data collection process included reviewing documents from profitable small business owners while at the business locations as a secondary data source.

Developing a working relationship between a researcher and research area is essential to help gain an understanding of the participant's perception of the research question (Berger, 2015). As posited by Bryman (2015), a researcher that gains familiarity with participants and the research area is efficient and effective in their data collection process. With the experiences gained from assisting and advising a friend operating a small restaurant business for the past 7 years, I understand industry best practices which helped me to ascertain a better understanding of business sustainability. As a consultant to a restaurant owner in the Little Rock, Arkansas metropolitan area, I am familiar with the research location. With the industry experience and knowledge gained in the small business operation, I understand the merits and demerits associated with operating a business within this area to ensure business sustainability.

Remaining ethical throughout the data collection process is important for researchers (Akhavan, Ramezan, & Moghaddam, 2013). The 1979 Belmont Report provides ethical guidelines such as respect, beneficence, and justice to alleviating bias during the data collection process (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). As a researcher, I ensured that I followed the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report to respect participants and protect their identity.

Researchers should not include their personal viewpoints to generate an understanding of the research topic (Bell, 2014). As explained by Yin (2014), researchers should avoid personal assumption to ensure information gathered are reliable. To avoid the research biases, I neither engaged participants who have affiliations with me nor include personal viewpoints.

Qualitative researchers use interview protocols to outline the structure of the interview (Boehm & Hogan, 2014). As indicated by Baskarada (2014), the use of interview protocol helps researchers to avoid deviating from the research objectives. Hence, I used the interview protocol to ensure a well-organized interview structure and unnecessary deviations from the research study (Appendix A).

Participants

As indicated by Yin (2014), qualitative researchers establish criteria for participant eligibility to avoid ineffective data collection. Researchers establish eligibility criteria to ensure selected participants have the experience and knowledge concerning the research study (Shoup, 2015). To ensure that participants possess knowledge and experience, I used the following selection criteria: (a) successful small business restaurant owners or managers with businesses located in Little Rock, Arkansas, (b) successful small business restaurant owners or managers who have sustained their business beyond 5 years; and (c) small business owners having less than 500 employees.

Gaining access to participants involves an agreement and consent of gatekeepers to ensure transparency regarding researcher's identity and participant protection (Høyland, Hollund, & Olsen, 2015). Qualitative researchers need administrative approval from gatekeepers to access participants (Ortiz, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) recommended researchers to keep in contact with gatekeepers of an organization where data collection is intended to take place without which it may be difficult to gain entry to certain settings. Therefore, I gained access to participants after obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) by sending out a letter of cooperation (see

Appendix B) to the gatekeepers of the restaurants where I collected data. After receiving permission from gatekeepers, I sent out a letter of invitation (see Appendix C) to potential participants explaining the purpose of the study and seeking their agreement to participate in the study.

The researcher should establish a trust relationship with the participants and be honest concerning the intended purpose of the study (Anney, 2014). Developing a working relationship with participants affects the willingness of participants to share knowledge concerning the research study (Zhang & Jiang, 2015). A researcher who develops a good working relationship with participants gains the trust of participants which prevent withholding of information (Jack, DiCenso, & Lohfeld, 2016). Hence, to ensure a good working relationship with participants, I assured participants of their confidentiality and explain the background and purpose of the study to curtail any negative impressions about my data collection process.

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this study was to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. To address the objective of the study, I used a qualitative case study design. Quantitative researchers select research methods and designs which help with the analysis of data (Lewis, 2015). Choosing an appropriate research method and research design is essential to a research study (Yao & Deng, 2014).

Research Method

Qualitative studies provide insights into the perceptions and experiences of a set of events, processes, or actions in a social context (Yin, 2014). The focus of this study was to explore strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years? Researchers use qualitative research to gain a detailed, in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). A review of prior small business research studies reinforced the appropriateness of qualitative methodology for this study. I used qualitative research method for this study because it was my goal to use face-to-face interviews to obtain data from participants about the research question.

Quantitative research consists of analyzing and identifying variables to determine the significance, correlation, and relationship (Khan, 2014). Researchers use the quantitative research method to test the relationship between variables and to test the hypotheses (Belkin, 2014). Hence, I did not use a quantitative research method because my study does not involve the testing of hypothesis or examining the causal relationships between any two variables. Mixed method research comprises both quantitative and qualitative research strategies (Yin, 2014). Neither the quantitative nor the mixed method were suitable for this research study because statistical analysis was not appropriate in understanding strategies needed to help small businesses restaurants survive beyond 5 years.

Research Design

A research design is a systematic plan that involves connecting the elements in the process of exploring research questions and conclusions for a study (Leedy et al.,

2013). Researchers use a qualitative case study to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon by answering the why and how of the research question (Yin, 2014). Qualitative researchers use case study design to obtain a quality data context, which strengthens and supports the patterns of the study (Vohra, 2014). Hence, I used a qualitative case study to gain quality data to address the central research question.

I did not select the other research designs like ethnographic, phenomenological, or narrative because none of them is a fit for my study. Ethnographic researchers provide a detailed portrait of a group and explore how they sustain their culture (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Ethnography research explores cultures, daily lives, behaviors, and activities in a culture or community (Petty et al., 2012). I did not intend to use the ethnographic design because I did not seek to explore cultural influences related to small businesses.

Phenomenological researchers seek to interpret lived experiences and provide a detailed description of their experiences with a phenomenon from the perspective of others (Petty et al., 2012). A substantial sample size can help the phenomenological researcher gain a deeper perspective of an event (Yin, 2014). Although I explored the lived experience of the participants, it was difficult to reach data saturation for small business owners in Little Rock, Arkansas because I collected data using interviews and company documents and no other data sources were used. The phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because the purpose of the study is not focused on individuals' experience with a phenomenon.

Narrative researchers explore the experiences of individuals to formulate a narrative through obtaining participants' stories in a chronological story format (Yin,

2014). Researchers implement narrative design approach for small sample size to gain rich data with the intent to learn from life stories (Yin, 2014). The narrative design was not appropriate for this study because I did not seek to tell a chronological story about the businesses.

A multiple case study design was appropriate for gaining in-depth information from small business restaurant owners who have sustained their business operations beyond 5 years. The five components of case study design include the study questions, analysis, propositions, linking the data to the propositions, and interpreting the findings (Yin, 2014). Multiple case studies involve interviewing more than one business owner and entity, including the environment, circumstances, and characteristics of the inhabitants of those entities (Yin, 2014). In this qualitative multiple case study, I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions and a review of company documents to explore successful strategies for small business restaurant owners.

Data saturation and the application of methodological triangulation techniques during the analysis process of a multiple case study increases the trustworthiness of the case study findings (Petty et al., 2012). Methodological triangulation involves using more than one method to gather and confirm data from multiple sources such as interview responses and secondary data such as a review of company documents (Yin, 2014).

Population and Sampling

I used purposive sampling for this qualitative research study. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling method used by researchers to select participants who possess the knowledge and experience about the research study (Etikan, Musa, &

Alkassim, 2016). Qualitative researchers use this judgmental sampling technique to identify a range of experienced participants in the attempt to gather information from different perspectives regarding a phenomenon (Taylor & Taylor, 2014). Researchers use purposive sampling technique as a strategy to capture the diverse perspective of professionals regarding the research problem (Moja et al., 2014). It was my goal to use the purposive sampling to gather data from participants who have gained experience and succeeded in the operation of a small business restaurant for more than 5 years in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The population of this study is comprised owners of small business restaurants in Little Rock, Arkansas. To select a population sample, researchers should choose a sample size that has the best opportunity to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Robinson (2014) recommends that researchers select sample sizes between three and 16 to ensure data saturation. Fugard and Potts (2015) advised researchers to make sure that selected sample size is small enough to manage the data collected and large enough to provide a new and richly textured understanding of experience. Therefore, my sample size involved three restaurant business owners in Little Rock, Arkansas who have succeeded in doing business over 5 years.

Data saturation is a qualitative rigor used by researchers to build rich data within the process of inquiry (Morse, 2015a). Yin (2014) posited that researchers should continue to collect ample data to reach data saturation. Researchers use data saturation as a means to withdraw from collecting additional data after no new information can be ascertained (Noohi, Peyrovi, Goghary, & Kazemi, 2016). To this effect, I made data

saturation a high priority by ceasing to collect data when no new data is emerging from the interviews. As part of making data saturation a priority, I transcribed the interviews at the end of each day, and by doing so, it was easy to notice the point where all new information added no new theme to the study. At that data saturation point, I recognized that I had collected enough data for analysis and presentation of findings.

Establishing eligibility criteria for the participant is helpful to avoid ineffective data collection (Yin, 2014). To ensure that participants possessed the knowledge and experience I needed for the research study, I established eligibility criteria. Firstly, successful small business restaurant owners or managers whose business is located in Little Rock, Arkansas; secondly, successful small business restaurant owners or managers who have sustained their business beyond 5 years; and finally, small business owners having less than 500 employees.

In the interview settings, it was my goal to have potential participants respond to seven questions using semistructured interviews guided by open-ended questions. The use of interview questions by researchers ensures flexibility of the responses from participants to contribute on the relevance of the research topic (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Researchers use interview questions to gain an understanding of the experiences of participants in a more subjective manner with the participants (Alexanders, Anderson, & Henderson, 2015). To ensure a deeper understanding of interactive interview sessions with participants, I recorded the communication with each participant as recommended by Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez (2015).

Ethical Research

Researchers use ethical guides to ensure the credibility of the data collection process and diminish personal biases (Alby & Fatigante, 2014). To ensure an appropriate ethical research procedure, it was my goal to use the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix D) as an ethical guide. The informed consent form is a written agreement developed by researchers containing the procedure, benefits, and potential risk involved in a data collection process (Brett et al., 2014). Similarly, Sherlock and Brownie (2014) indicated that the informed consent allows participants to comprehend the intended procedures of research fully. For this study, I used the informed consent from Walden University as an ethical guide for my study. To ensure an ethical research, it was my goal to ask participants to read and sign the informed consent form prior to interviews. I provided a copy of the informed consent forms to participants to assure them of the confidentiality and data privacy.

As part of my ethical research procedure, I made it easy and flexible for participants who intend to withdraw from participation. Connelly (2014) indicated that participants should be aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I explained to the participant that their participation in the study is strictly voluntary without compensation or incentive for their participation and can withdraw at any time. I explained that they will have access to the results and I provided them with a copy of the research findings.

Protecting the rights of the participants and demonstrating utmost measures of care during data gathering, data storage, and data analysis process is essential to

protecting the rights of the participants and preserving their privacy (Yin, 2014). Researchers should keep research data confidential (Connelly, 2014). I did not use the data collected for purposes outside the scope of the research study. It was my goal to ensure participants information is kept very private. Protecting the confidentiality and privacy of the participants, helped to make sure that the reader would not be able to determine the identity of the participants (Grossoehme, 2014). I did not expose the names of the participants or their business organization in the study; rather I used alphanumeric codes, such as SbR1, SbR2, and SbR3. I ensured that the participants understand the purpose of the study and guarantee the confidentiality of their business operations.

Taking the utmost care of the data obtained during the study is paramount in protecting the rights and privacy of the participants. I did not store all written data and findings in a secure, locked fireproof file cabinet in my home. To protect the rights of the participants, I did shred any written data after 5 years. I stored all electronic documents on a personal external password-protected hard drive, and I will delete it after 5 years. I also intend to include the Walden University's approval number and expiration in this study after approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a significant role in the data collection process (Yin, 2014). As indicated by Yin, the common methods of collecting data include interviews, observations, artifacts, observation, and archival records. A semistructured interview is a common data collection process used by qualitative researchers (Bryman, 2015). Semistructured interviews allow the participants an opportunity to reflect on their

personal experiences and freely express their point of view and experiences in detail (Parker, 2014). Hence, I served as the primary data collection instrument for this study and use semistructured interviews guided by open-ended questions during the data collection process.

During the face-to-face interviews, I engaged participants with five interview questions to address the central research question restricted to 30 minutes of each participant. Brayda and Boyce (2014) advised researchers to use face-to-face interviews to engage participants in an audio recorded data collection process. Hence, it was my goal to conduct and record the semistructured interviews with the permission of participants to ensure that I capture very detailed and accurate responses as recommended by Yii, Powell, and Guadagno (2014). To ensure a well-structured data collection process, I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to avoid deviating from the research objective. An interview protocol is essential to ensure researchers stay focused during the data collection process (Yin, 2014).

Next, I conducted member checking to ensure credibility, accuracy, reliability, and validity of the research study. Member checking is a technique for ensuring credibility and accuracy in the study (Cope, 2014). Researchers who use member checking offer participants with the opportunity to provide feedback on collected data to avert misrepresentation of fact collected (Andrasik, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014). Hence, I transcribed collected data and forwarded a summary of the interviews with each participant to review and confirm the accuracy to ensure no missing information. Additionally, it was my goal to adopt a methodological triangulation

technique to ensure the validity of the findings. Modell (2015) encouraged participants to use different sources such as company documents to supplement data collected to ensure the reliability of the study. Hence, I sought permission from participants to review other business documents such as annual reports, policy manuals, and daily activity logs to retrieve information to triangulate interview data collected. I sought the assistance of participants who provided me with business documents to extract only relevant information aligned with the specific business problems discussed during the interview.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection is the process of gathering information from the participants for the purpose of the study (Yin, 2014). After participants respond to the letter of invitation, I scheduled a date and time appropriate for each participant. Researchers should make prior arrangements with participants regarding data collection to ensure participants prepare ahead of time (Bond et al., 2014). The data collection technique for this study was semistructured interviews at the business or selected location of participants with the use of five interview questions (see Appendix E) and a review of business documents. Choosing a familiar interview location for the participant helps to establish a comfortable atmosphere for the participant (Scheibe, Reichelt, Bellmann, & Kirch, 2015). Before I begin the interviews, I ensured that participants have read, understood, signed, and have a copy of the informed consent form. To proceed with the interviews, I sought permission of the participants to record the interviews. As recommended by Moustakas (1994), I allowed participants to express their viewpoints while I actively listen.

There are advantages and disadvantages of using the semistructured interviews in a research study. Firstly, the use of semistructured interviews is the dominant way to collect data to analyze a phenomenon of study (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). The face-to-face interviews occurred at the participants' place of business. Also, semistructured interviews serve as a guide for researchers to capture the social cues from the interviews (Vogl, 2013). I incorporated follow-up questions to assist the participants in providing rich, detailed descriptions of their experiences. Finally, researchers who use semistructured interviews develop a rapport and maintain the full attention of the participant (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). Adversely, semistructured interviews involve the cost of reaching out to participants for an onsite interview (Diaz, 2011). Vogl (2013) indicated that during semistructured interviews, the researcher might influence the interviewee's responses, which could distort the interview results.

After collecting data from participants, I used member checking to ensure appropriate interpretation of responses. Participants can confirm the accuracy of the interview interpretation through member checking (Morse, 2015a). Scott (2016) used member checking to verify accuracy from participants for the interpretation from interviews. Following the interviews, I transcribed each interview. Participants received a copy of my analysis to confirm the accuracy and validity of their responses. I provided the participants with a copy of the data interpretations and requested that they review my analysis for relevance and accuracy.

Data Organization Technique

The organization of data collected is vital for accurate analysis, review, and reporting (Yin, 2014). Data organization for qualitative studies require multiple steps in organizing data obtained from semistructured interviews, such as reviewing interview notes, maintaining journal notes throughout the study, entering data into qualitative data analysis software, and checking data (Miles, 2013). Data organization techniques help to support the validity and integrity of the information obtained. I used a hand-held recorder to collect the interview data. I took handwritten notes during the interview process. The files created for each participant included the company documents, interview transcriptions, the consent forms, and any other additional documents obtained during the study. As the researcher, I maintained and kept confidential a master file, which contained journal notes, transcripts, audio files, data labeling system, and company documents as recommended by Gibbons (2015).

I ensured that data storage procedures align with Walden University's Institutional Review Board requirements. After collecting data, I have the only person to have access to the participant's data. I stored electronic data on a password protected external hard drive with a copy of the electronic data on the cloud drive. Cloud storage is a storage space on the internet (Yalamarathi, Hephzibah, & Seelam, 2014). I encrypted all data before transferring the data files to the cloud drive to ensure the protection of the data. Preserving data confidentiality and privacy is critical (Connelly, 2014; Grosseohme, 2014). All data stored on an external hard drive and on cloud storage will be destroyed

after 5 years. I stored all hard copies of data in a secured locked file cabinet and will permanently destroy all the files 5 years after completion of the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of case study evidence relies on empirical thinking (Yin, 2014). Researchers use data analysis to learn about the meaning participants hold about a problem or issue by identifying patterns (Lewis, 2015). Similarly, qualitative researchers use data analysis techniques to process collected data for use (Guo & Guo, 2016). As a qualitative researcher, I employed the use of triangulation to ensure the credibility of the study. Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources to validate a research study (Mayer, 2015). Consequently, I reviewed business documents to ascertain data to support interview data.

Yin (2014) explained that data analysis sequence involves the evaluation and categorization of data. To ensure a logical and sequential data analysis process, it was my goal to apply data analysis steps recommended by Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014). The steps include data collection and mining, data analysis, and interpreting data in a thematic manner. To follow these steps successfully, I used interviews as a primary data collection technique and supplemented with casual observations, and review of the business document for data mining. I ensured member checking after a successful transcription of the data. With the use of research software such as NVivo, I classified data into themes, and interpret data findings.

To ensure accurate coding and identification of themes, I used NVivo data analysis software. NVivo is a well-established research software that is used by

researchers to facilitate coding and analysis (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016). Qualitative researchers use NVivo software for effective management data, the emergence of theme, and data interpretation (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Le, 2014). Hashim (2015) added that researchers use qualitative data software such as NVivo to analyze qualitative data. Therefore, I purchased and installed the latest version of NVivo to help in creating themes from the transcribed data to make meaningful interpretation for the study.

To focus on the key themes of a study, I used a thematic analysis approach to identify and report all important themes in findings as recommended by Padgett (2016). Qualitative researchers should ensure that themes align with the purpose of the study to avoid deviation (Bogers et al., 2017). When using thematic analysis, researchers can make an analytical clarification and increase the rigor of the study (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). Hence, in addition to using the NVivo software, I employed a thematic analysis to ensure that the key themes of the study correlate with the literature and conceptual framework.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity exemplify the accuracy and exactness of a research study (Yin, 2014). Researchers use reliability and validity to ensure the accuracy of findings through the implementation of specific procedures in qualitative case study design (Noble & Smith, 2015). Morse (2015b) indicated that the use of reliability and validity involves dependability, consistency, and repeatability (Morse, 2015b).

Reliability

Reliability ensures the coherence of the research findings (Yin, 2014). Noble and Smith (2015) explained that the reliability of study findings is a necessary measure to ensure sound judgment and the integrity of making conclusions. Researchers ensure reliability through the dependability of the study (Kihn & Ihantola, 2015). Hence, I used the member checking technique to ensure the dependability of the study. Member checking is a process where researchers provide participants with a summary of the findings for a review to ensure data accuracy (Scott, 2016). To ensure effective member checking, I made sure that I email a summary of the research findings to all participants and request their feedback to make sure that I did not include any personal viewpoints in the data collected.

I used triangulation as another measure to ensure the dependability of the findings. Hussein (2015) recommended researchers use multiple data sources to triangulate the findings and rigor of the study. Using multiple data sources to support interview data ensures the reliability of the results of the research (Joslin & Müller, 2016; Noble & Smith, 2015). Therefore, to ensure the reliability of the study, it was my goal to support interview data with information collected through the review of company documents and notes taken from casual observation during the interviews.

Validity

In qualitative research, researchers ensure the validity of the study to enhance the quality of the findings (Leung, 2015). The validity of a study involves the accuracy of the data findings (Gonzalez, Rowson, & Yoxall, 2015; Morse, 2015b). Qualitative

researchers can ensure the validity of a study through strategies such as credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Barber et al., 2015). Hence, I ensured the credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the study for data accuracy and consistency.

Credibility. Credibility aids researchers to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the research study (Yin, 2014). Similarly, researchers ensure the credibility of a study through the text derived from the source publications (Babar, Kan, & Scahill, 2014). The credibility of a study describes whether or not the representation of data fits the views of the participants studied and whether the findings hold true (MacRae et al., 2015). Hence, I ensured the credibility of the study by using member checking to verify the interview data from participants. Member checking involves engaging participants to verify the interpretation of research findings (Bartholomew, Pérez-Rojas, Lockard, & Locke, 2017). Consequently, I emailed a summary of the transcribed interview data to all the participants for their review to ensure I did not include my personal opinion in the findings.

Transferability. Transferability is guaranteed by passing information to the reader about the boundaries of the study which are pertinent to other settings (Piškur et al., 2017). Researchers enhance transferability by thickly describing the data collection process enough for readers to apply to their situation (Saab, Landers, & Hegarty, 2017). Primarily, the person who intends to transfer or apply the findings of the study to a befitting context ensures transferability (Elo et al., 2014). To ensure transferability, I made sure the research study contains enough information to provide readers with the opportunity to transfer the study findings to other settings. I ensured that all data used for

this study contains the appropriate source to enable readers to gain the confidence needed to apply the findings to the context.

Confirmability. Confirmability is the degree to which others can confirm or corroborate the findings of a study (Amankwaa, 2016). Confirmability involves an audit to ensure that information exists to support interpretations (Brott, 2015). To address confirmability of this study, I used triangulation to support the findings of the study. Triangulation refers to using multiple approaches to generate a broader understanding of the study (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017). Researchers use triangulation to array different types of existing data from diverse sources to verify data findings (Tiberio et al., 2017). Hence, I used multiple data sources from the review of company documents and notes taking from casual observation during the interviews to confirm the findings of the study.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 started with a restatement of the purpose statement. I continued to provide information regarding my role as a researcher, the criteria that was used to select potential participants, the research method, and design. Next, I provided information regarding the population and sampling of the study, ethical research, data collection instrument, technique, and organization. The section also contains data analysis process, the reliability, and validity of the findings.

I began Section 3 with an introduction by ensuring it contains information about the purpose of the study and the research question. Next, the section contains information about the presentation of the findings, the applications to professional practice,

implications for social change, recommendations for action, further research, and my reflections. Finally, I concluded the section with a summary and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This section of the study contains information regarding the strategies used by small business restaurant owners to sustain their business beyond 5 years. I explored and discussed successful strategies and best practices that have kept three successful restaurants in operation beyond 5 years. In this section, I provide information regarding the presentation of the findings and how applicable the findings are to professional practice. The section also includes information regarding social change implications, recommendation for actions and further research, reflections, and the conclusion of the study.

Overview of Study

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. To achieve this objective, I engaged three small restaurant business owners in the Little Rock metropolis in Arkansas in semistructured interviews and conducted casual observation while collecting data at the restaurants. The data collection techniques helped to understand the perceptions of participants in the context of the objective of the study.

I related the findings obtained from the participants with the central research question of the study. To ensure the privacy of small restaurant business owners who participated, I designated the participants as SbR1, SbR2, and SbR3. Member checking confirmed the accuracy of the responses obtained from the participants. I deployed the use of qualitative software NVivo version 11 to organize the collected data into

meaningful themes such as training, customer relationship, startup resources, capacity building, and consistent quality of food and services.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for this study was: What strategies do small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years? For this study, I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews guided by open-ended questions with three ($N = 3$) restaurant business owners in the Little Rock, Arkansas.

Table 1

Interview Questions and Primary Themes (N = 3)

Interview questions	Primary theme
1. What education, training, and skills contributed to your ability to remain in business beyond 5 years?	Formal and Informal training
2. What strategies did you use during your first 5 years to remain successful?	Customer relationship
3. What business development method did you use during the first 5 years of operations?	Startup resources
4. How did you address the barriers to implementing the strategies that help to sustain your business?	Formal and Informal training
5. How do you communicate your strategies for effective implementation?	Capacity Building
6. What performance measures do you use to assess business operation?	Capacity building
7. What additional information would you like to share to help me understand key strategies contributing to your restaurant business success?	Consistent quality of food and services

For this study, I used the systems theory to explore successful strategies used by small restaurant business to sustain their operations in the long term. The systems theory

aligned with the research study because data obtained related to the different systems which influence each restaurant business operation. Using systems theory as a foundation of the study helped to think of the systems for a successful business analysis.

The small restaurant business owners who were interviewed used different systems which constituted their business operations, and that helped to generate the themes into the following subsections below. For the restaurant business involved in the study, the use of the systems theory guided to identify principles that help to avert operational complexities such as all the parts of the businesses, the qualities possessed for business success, and the internal relationships among the different business parts. For the study, a closed system were not identified as all the restaurant business owners had interacted with the environment in which business is conducted by direct or indirect means.

Theme 1: Formal and Informal training

Successful restaurant business operation ensures effective training of both employees and management (Chen & Elston, 2013). All participants indicated that education, training, and skills contributed to their ability to remain in business beyond 5 years. The participants expressed how their education, training, and skills gave them the confidence to go into the restaurant business. According to Sondari (2014), a college education provides students with essential knowledge and expectation needed to own their own business. Some students enroll in college to pursue a degree in small business ownership to obtain the knowledge required to own their own business (Diaz-Garcia, Jimenez-Moreno, & Saez-Martinez, 2015). Add synthesis and summary.

To improve the sustainability of the business, training plays a significant role (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). All three small restaurant business owners attributed the foundation of their success to knowledge acquired through either formal or informal training. For instance, SbR1 stated that “I have no formal training and advance education. What I tell everyone is just learning a little every day and getting better.” However, SbR3, who had a formal education, noted that despite the formal education, most of the skills and training acquired was an informal hands-on experience.

Small business owners who lack necessary management skills contribute to the high level of small business failure (Dahmen & Rodríguez, 2014). SbR1 noted how gaining a bachelor’s degree in business contributed to operating a successful restaurant business more than 5 years. Kirsten (2013) explained that a combination of formal and informal education or training significantly contributes to successful of business performance.

Läikkö-Roto and Nevas (2014) indicated that it is essential for food handlers to obtain a training certificate as evidence of skills acquired in food handling skills and hygiene. Participants agreed that undergoing training helps to keep a standard of operation, which impacts the same knowledge in employees. SbR3 noted that a direct mentorship for employees who have no formal education in restaurant business helps to gain a more practical understanding of the different aspects of the food business.

Participants agreed that training helps to manage and expand business operations. SbR1 contributed the advancement of business from the purchase of a food truck to a storefront small business restaurant to the knowledge of the business. SbR2 also indicated

that training helps effective management of funds and resources. SbR2 indicated the different expansions made as a food service worker to providing school lunches, and later purchasing a restaurant. All three participants relied on their previous education and work experience as a strategic plan to establish their small business restaurant.

Theme 2: Customer relationship

Small restaurant business owners must learn how to retain customers through a healthy relationship to sustain their business customer retention strategies (Kurian, & Muzumdar, 2017). The findings of the study confirmed that customer relationship is an essential factor to their business sustainability strategy. During the interviews, Participant SbR1 indicated that the giving away of discount coupons helped to maintain multiple customers. SbR1 added that “some customers are lured into the restaurant when coupons are offered.” To build a good customer relationship, participant SbR1 explained that it is essential to give an ear to customer feedback and critics. As noted by Han, Bonn, and Cho (2016), small restaurant business owners who make an effort to inquire customers for feedback end up providing and satisfying customer needs which builds a good relationship with customers for a long period of time. SbR1 explained that listening to positive feedbacks alone does not grow the progress of the business; instead of asking for areas of potential improvement have contributed to the growth of the business.

Building a good relationship with customers should be a cultural practice for all small restaurant business owners (Pare, 2016). Participant SbR2 noted that participation in local community events has contributed to developing a good relationship with most residents who are consistent patrons. Participants agreed that when customer relationship

becomes a culture, the customers become the most significant concern in the business. Participants indicated that building a relationship with customers and participating in local community events helps to cut down on the cost of radio and television advertisement. SbR2 stated, “I walk around my restaurant and network with customers to make sure they are happy with their meal. I want my customers to come in and feel welcome and have a good meal.” Showing appreciation in very simple ways such as thanking customers for coming has contributed to having long time repeat customers. According to SbR2, saying thank you and making sure customers are appreciated has built a bond with customers in that customers continue to come back. As noted by Canny (2014), the restaurant business will remain profitable if owners of the business deploy different methods that will motivate customers to return to the store.

Theme 3: Startup resources

Insufficient capital and inadequate financial management techniques lead to small business failure (Diehl et al., 2013). The availability of resources contributes significantly to a successful startup of the restaurant business. The participants indicated that they used numerous business development and networking techniques in the startup stages of their business. None of the three participants obtained bank financing to start their business. One of the participants initially started their business using funds earned from food truck sales. Other participants explained that the purchasing of established restaurants which had been in operation for over 5 years.

To start the restaurant business, SbR1, indicated taking loans from financial institutions should be a last resort. Family support could be one of the startup resources.

As noted by SbR1, their family assisted with \$10,000 to finance the food truck which has yielded a profit of \$250,000 per year and enabled SbR1 to move into a fixed restaurant location within 3.5 years. Ascertaining financial resources from family members and relatives helps to avoid debt and increase profitability. The findings from the study revealed that family assisted owners can expand business at their own pace without any external pressure.

All participants admitted that for small restaurant business startups, it is better to start on a small scale to raise funds. SbR2 noted that “My spouse and I saved our monies from working in the food service industry providing food to public schools and privately-owned restaurants until we purchased an existing restaurant.” SbR3 added that “the ability to purchase a restaurant was because of the strong initiative to save money and the continual savings of the proceeds of the restaurant business has resulted in a large well-established customer base business.” Consequently, all three participants agreed that aspirants of restaurant businesses should endeavor to start small to avert incurring cost.

Theme 4: Capacity building

Capacity building is a strategy used to develop, train, and engage staff to perform efficiently in an organization. Participants explained it is important to train, coach, and meet regularly with employees to increase capacity building. SbR1 mentioned that “happy employees make happy guests, so I had to make happy employees.” The findings revealed that there are steps for an employee to learn how to do a little bit more every day so that they can become a really good employee. Participants noted that capacity building helps to improve a little bit of everything. Participants noted that restaurant business

owners who engage various capacity building strategies equip their businesses to operate toward achieving business sustainability.

SbR1 indicated that detailed processes are followed in regular meetings with employees to keep them abreast with the necessary industry standards to increase performance. The findings revealed that regular meetings with employees curtail employee turnover rate. As noted by the participants, change is hard and difficult for an employee, but the fact is that consistent communication has helped to shape employee proficiency. Participants' indicated that through weekly meetings with employees, communication is enhanced and ideas for business operations are made.

Through capacity building strategies, participants noted that employees at the frontline of the business have improved the relationship with customers. SbR1 explained that capacity building strategies have helped to adopt technology platforms for business efficiency and to create an edge in the industry. The findings of the study revealed that small restaurant business owners who continually engage employees in meetings and training have identified inappropriate working practices needing to be resolved. Participants indicated that regular coaching and meetings between restaurant owners and staff help implement essential strategies for business growth. The findings of the study revealed that successful restaurant business owners engaged in some aspect of capacity building.

Theme 5: Consistent quality of food and services

The findings of the study revealed the need for restaurant business owners should endeavor to ensure a consistent quality food and service. As noted by SbR1, "I started the

business by continually selling out fresh products.” Participants indicated that the quality of food and services contributes significantly to customer retention. Poor quality of food and services affect customer retention which affects the growth and sustainability of the restaurant business (Perry, 2014). Participants indicated that a persistent improvement in the food and services helps to meet customer needs. Lee, Hallak, and Sardeshmukh (2016) mentioned that business operation is affected by the environment it exists in when owners fail to improve and maintain a consistent quality.

Participants indicated that for a restaurant to continually offer quality food and services, business leaders should endeavor to play a significant role. The findings of the study indicated that restaurant business owners should adopt strategies and appraisal measures that will ensure, food and services are in continuous quality improvement. Customer demands are likely to decrease when restaurant business owners fail to serve food and services in poor quality. SbR2 indicated that a restaurant business which fails to maintain quality is not able to gain a superior advantage in the marketplace. Furthermore, SbR2 explained that the lack of strategies to maintain the quality of food and services is part of the reason some restaurant business owners fail to survive more than 5 years in the industry.

Participants indicated that restaurant business owners who lack the skills of maintaining a quality of food and service should endeavor to acquire the knowledge needed for improvement of services. Carter and Baghurst (2014) explained that the success of a restaurant business depends on business leaders. Hence, the lack of quality food and service is attributed to restaurant business leaders.

Applications to Professional Practice

The study is relevant to explore the strategies small restaurant business use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The findings of the study might provide restaurant business owners with information on best practices needed to operate their business in the long term. Best management and operation practices might help restaurant business owners to develop business plans that will provide smooth operations. Furthermore, the findings of the study will provide an operational guide or work plans which will help restaurant business owners to remain in business.

The findings of the study might help small restaurant business owners to gain knowledge which might help them to gain a competitive edge over rivals in the restaurant industry. Restaurant leaders who expose themselves to the acquisition of knowledge and skills gain a competitive advantage in the long term (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Additionally, the information of the study might help business owners to understand the need for maintaining a consistent quality of food and service to satisfy customers. As noted by Fowler (2014), restaurant owners should endeavor to understand the customer intensive nature of restaurant business to keep the qualities of the operation efficient.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study when made available to business owners in the restaurant industry, might serve as a reference document for small restaurant business owners to ascertain strategies and best practices for their business which in turn will increase employment in the private sector. The knowledge acquired by restaurant business owners might help business owners to expand their operations which might

contribute to America's economic development. More restaurant job creation might help curtail social vices such as thuggery, drug addiction, and criminal activities among the unemployed youth in the Little Rock area. As noted by Asaju, Arome, and Anyio (2014), social vices such as thuggery, drug addiction, and criminal activities are prevalent when there is high unemployment in any metropolis. Furthermore, information might help new and aspiring business owners to overcome operation barriers that hinder the growth of restaurant business beyond 5 years.

Recommendations for Action

Providing recommendations for research findings helps both aspiring and existing researchers to improve on the existing phenomena of study (Tsang, 2014). The successful small restaurant business owners in the Little Rock metropolis possess the capability to expand their operations beyond their physical borders over the long term. For this study, I have identified three recommendations beneficial to both aspiring and existing restaurant business owners to operate their restaurant business for more than 5 years. The recommendations include (a) effective training and capacity building strategies, (b) consistent quality of service, and (c) focusing on customer needs.

The first recommendation from the study is for small restaurant business owners to deploy the use of successful training and capacity building strategies to help sustain operations beyond 5 years. The responses from participants indicated that small restaurant business owners who engaged staff or employees on a regular basis in meetings, coaching, and effective communication experience improved employee skills needed for successful business operation. Also, the responses from participants revealed

that most small restaurant business owners did business with family members who could lead to lackadaisical work attitude if firmness is not instilled to ensure training and curtail familiarity.

The second recommendation for small restaurant business owners is to ensure a consistent quality of service which will draw more customers. Small restaurant business owners should ensure that continual quality assurance is measured on a periodic basis to grow the business. In addition, small restaurant business owners should communicate their strategies to employees and be willing to also receive employee and customer feedback to improve and maintain quality services.

The third recommendation focuses on how small restaurant business owners should focus on what satisfies customers. The findings of the research indicated that building customer relationship is a key element for successful restaurant business owners. Hence, it is recommended that these owners will provide food and services which satisfy customers. Developing an amicable relationship with customers helps to know what customers need and not what business owners think is right for customers. Doing this will ensure customer loyalty and customer retention to maintain business growth and sustainability.

The results of the findings will be disseminated in various ways to ensure that both new and existing small restaurant business owners have access to the information needed to operate a smooth business. Firstly, it is my goal to disseminate the results of the study through scholarly journals available for free on the internet for easy downloads. As part of my goal to disseminate the findings of the study, I intend to write a white

paper for the office of Small Business Administration (SBA). Finally, it is my goal to present the findings of the study in industry conferences.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of the study was to explore business strategies small business restaurant owners use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The findings of the study provided a foundation for other researchers to explore how successful small restaurant business can expand beyond their physical borders and remain competitive. Conducting further qualitative research might provide information for restaurant business owners who are researching starting more branches of their business without collapsing. Additionally, further studies could help provide information for high school and college graduates who intend to operate a restaurant without failing in the first year of existence. Further research may be conducted in other cities of Arkansas since this study was limited to the city of Little Rock, to determine if similar strategy context applies in other settings.

Reflections

During the data collection process, I had the opportunity to conduct semistructured interviews with 3 small restaurant business owners who are successful in their operation for more than 5 years. During the data collection, I gained knowledge which has deepened my understanding of the small restaurant business operation. Some small restaurant business owners failed to honor the interview scheduled while some of the participants who honored the interview were unwilling to provide secondary documents for review. However, each participant who participated was very comfortable with the data collection process and wanted to make sure information they provided was

sufficient for the study. In its entirety, it was an experience as a student to randomly select restaurant business owners in Little Rock and engage them in a study which has empowered me with an interest to become a small restaurant business owner.

Conclusion

Despite the increase in small restaurant business operations, the average lifespan of a restaurant in the United States is less than 5 years. Some small restaurant business owners fail to survive in the industry because they lack adequate knowledge of business strategies necessary to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

This qualitative multiple case study was grounded on Ludwig von Bertalanffy's systems theory. A face-to-face semistructured interviews and casual observations were used to collect data from three restaurant businesses in the Little Rock metropolis in Arkansas. Five themes merged after data was analyzed which were formal and informal training, customer relationship, startup resources, capacity building, and a consistent quality of food and services. The positive social change for the findings of the study includes the creation of employment and reduction of social vices such as thuggery and drug addiction. The findings of the study contained information which might enable small restaurant business owners to operate beyond 5 years.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview: Finding out about competitive strategies small business owners need to achieve business sustainability.

I will begin the interviews by greeting and thanking the participants for agreeing to participate in the interview. Next, I will explain their voluntary nature of their participation and ability to withdraw at any time.

I will make sure I introduce myself and the research topic to the participants.

I will ensure participants read and ask related questions before signing the consent form.

I will give participants a copy of the consent form to keep.

I will inform participants of the interview procedures, which involves the use of audio recording the interview.

The interview will be restricted to 45 minutes for responses to 7 interview questions, in addition to any follow-up questions

I will inform participants that I will make the transcribed interviews available to them via email to ensure appropriate interpretation of their responses.

At the end of the interviews, I will thank the participants for agreeing to take part in the research study.

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation

<Community Research Partner Name>

<Contact Information>

<Date>

Dear Alisa Williams,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Sustainability Strategies for Small Business Restaurant Owners. As part of this study, I authorize you to engage current company employees and review company documents. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: managerial staff, board member, and conference rooms. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

<Authorization Official>

<Contact Information>

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate

<Date>

<Address Block>

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of my doctoral dissertation research at Walden University, I invite you to participate in a research study on the exploration Sustainability Strategies for Small Business Restaurant Owners. I invite you to participate in my doctoral study because of your professional experience and industry knowledge. Please be assured that your participation is voluntary and confidential. Enclosed is a consent form. I request that you read and ask any questions before acting on this invitation to participate.

Your participation depends on satisfying the following criteria: (a) successful small business restaurant owners whose business is located in Little Rock, Arkansas, (b) successful small business restaurant owners who have sustained their business beyond 5 years; and (c) small business owners having less than 500 employees.

If you satisfy these criteria and would like to participate, kindly notify me via the contact information provided below. I will contact you again via phone call for the interview. The interview, which will last for about 45 minutes, will be audio recorded and transcribed. To ensure privacy, the location will be coordinated before the interview. After the interviews, I will conduct member checking by sending participants a summary of my analysis of their interview responses to review via email no later than 7 days after the interview. I will ask participants to review, verify, and provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the information to ensure the validity of my analysis.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with questions. I appreciate your kind assistance and cooperation with my request.

Sincerely,

Alisa Williams.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

What education, training, and skills contributed to your ability to remain in business beyond 5 years?

What strategies did you use during your first 5 years to remain successful?

What business development method did you use during the first 5 years of operations?

How did you address the barriers to implementing the strategies that help to sustain your business?

How do you communicate your strategies for effective implementation?

What performance measures do you use to assess business operation?

What additional information would you like to share to help me understand key strategies contributing to your restaurant business success?