

2017

Exploring Strategies Microenterprise Owners Use to Succeed in Business Beyond 2 Years

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Tamika Ebony Haynes

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

Exploring Strategies Microenterprise Owners Use to Succeed in Business Beyond 2
Years

by

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MS, Ashford University, 2010

BS, Pennsylvania State University, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

December 2017

Abstract

In the United States, microenterprises, critical segment of the small business population, accounts for 110 million small businesses that source new jobs. Despite the increase in the number of created businesses in the U.S., more than 70% of microenterprise business owners are unsuccessful after 2 years. The multiple case study included 6 participants living in Houston, Texas, and intended to explore business strategies microenterprise event management owners used to succeed in business beyond 2 years. The conceptual framework that grounded the study was the 5-stage small business growth model and the 5-stage of the evolution of entrepreneurship theory. The data collection process consisted of interviews resulting in transcripts, review of company documents, and interview observations notes. The data analysis process while triangulating the data consisted of creating thematic codes, and clustering keywords, and ideas from the data. Development of visual aids assisted with organizing information, synthesizing, and generating new ideas. Text, word, and matrix coding queries were conducted and summarized for a cross-case analysis as relating to the interview questions. Thematic analysis and cross-case analysis revealed 3 major themes: customer relationship management, education/work experience, and promotional activities. Implications for social change include encouraging entrepreneurial and small business development programs to develop innovative curriculums that microenterprise business owners may benefit from to increase more business opportunities. An increase in microenterprises may help provide more employment opportunities that meet the needs of local communities, and improve socioeconomic conditions.

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Dedication

Obtaining my doctoral degree is a journey of a lifetime but only possible with the help and prayers from friends, colleagues, and my family. I dedicate this journey to my husband, William Haynes, for his undying love, support, and patience. To my daughter, Morgan Sage Haynes, who motivated me daily with her kind words and beautiful smiles to persevere. To my son, Ethan Asher Haynes, who empowered me with determination and forced me to the finish line. This doctoral degree is for you, my children. I want you to always know, that you can do ALL things through Christ, Jesus that gives you strength! To my parents, Patricia and David Benton thank you for all your prayers, and encouragement. To my Walden University “dream team” colleagues - thank you for your ongoing encouragement and support.

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Along my journey, I am humbled and honored to have met some extraordinary people who provided a significant amount of support, mentorship, and guidance to attain this high level of education—the Doctorate of Business Administration. I offer a very special thank you to my Chair, Dr. Gregory Washington, for supporting me with fast turnarounds and excellent mentorship and guidance. I would also like to thank my second committee members, Dr. Michael Ewald and my URR Dr. Rocky Dwyer, for their valued feedback, encouraging words, and guidance. I could not have been assigned a better committee to escort me to the finish line. I am truly thankful for such a team of three extraordinary and esteemed committee members. Finally, thank you, Dr. Freda Turner, for your ongoing support and encouraging me to the finish line. I would not be where I am today without you.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

More than 110 million microenterprises and small businesses are the source of all new jobs (Fiore, Niehm, Hurst, Son, & Sadachar, 2013; Liao, Hung, Kao, & Wu, 2014) in the United States (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; Gohmann & Fernandez, 2014).

Microenterprises represent one segment of small businesses that operate on a smaller scale and have less than five employees. Microenterprises are essential to local communities, but also play a significant key role in the stabilization of the U.S. economy (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). A largest percentage of new jobs in the U.S. are the direct result of microenterprises with few or no employees by owner managed and operated businesses (Hertz, Beasley, & White, 2015; U.S. Small Business Administration [SBA], 2014).

Fifty percent of small and medium businesses survive beyond the first 5 years (Sarasvathy & Dew, 2013; SBA, 2014). Microenterprises often experience higher business failure than their larger counterparts (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013). Within the United States, the failure rate is high, with 70% of these businesses failing after 2 years of operation (Sarasvathy & Dew, 2013; SBA, 2014). The high failure rate affects the number of available employment opportunities in the United States (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013; Phillips & Knowles, 2012; SBA, 2014). As a result, scholars have suggested that the lack of skill set with financial management (Haniff & Halim, 2014) and marketing (McKelvey, 2016) contribute to early termination of some businesses. Other scholars have suggested that the lack of planning (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013),

business experience, and skills (Block, Kohn, Miller, & Ullrich, 2015) are why business owners fail within 2-years. In this multiple case study, I explored the strategies used by one sector of microenterprises and small business event management owners to succeed in business beyond 2 years.

Background of the Problem

Microenterprises and small businesses represent 99% of the workforce population in the U.S. (Fiore et al., 2013; Liao et al., 2014). Although small businesses have been recognized for their contributions to economic growth (Doer, 2016), only 70% remain in business after 2 years (SBA, 2014). The reasons why scholars suggested that business owners do not persist after 2 years contributes to several factors not limited to lack of skill set with financial management (Haniff & Halim, 2014; Sarasvathy & Dew, 2013). Other scholars have suggested the lack of marketing knowledge (McKelvey, 2016), little to no formal and informal business networks (Bastié, Cieply, & Cussy, 2013), planning (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013), business experience, and skills (Block et al., 2015). As a result, of the alarming high business failure rates in the U.S. research on small business development has emerged.

Research exists on strategies used by management of large and small businesses (Coleman & Kariv, 2013; Doer, 2016). However, few researchers have focused on the strategies that are necessary for microenterprises to succeed long-term (Block et al., 2015). Scholars have suggested insufficient financial management (Haniff & Halim, 2014), human capital/skill, education and knowledge base (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013), social capital/networking (Rahman, Amran, Ahmad, & Taghizadeh, 2015), and lack of

transferable industry experience and skills (Block et al., 2015) are factors associated with why some business owners fail within 2-years. Others have attributed planning (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013), timing and mode of entry (Haniff & Halim, 2014), marketing (McKelvey, 2016), industry competitive culture awareness (Dadzie, C, Winston, & Dadzie, K., 2012), and preparation for growth (McFarland & McConnell, 2013). The lack of insight into what strategies are successful may negatively impact the owners' ability to continue their operations beyond 2 years. Despite points of agreement, improvements in the U.S. economic growth increases when business owners implement successful strategies (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Additionally, survival beyond the critical years of small business failure is enhanced (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). As a result, I explored the strategies microenterprise event management business owners used to succeed in business beyond 2 years.

Problem Statement

Entrepreneurs start more than 1,500 new microenterprises in the United States daily (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Despite the increase in the number of created businesses in the U.S., more than 70% of microenterprise business owners are unsuccessful after 2 years (SBA, 2014). Improper business strategies account for most of these failures, according to Sarasvathy and Dew (2013). The general business problem is that the strategies of some small business entrepreneurs are insufficient and affect the owners' ability to continue business operations indefinitely. The specific business problem is that some microenterprise event management owners lack the necessary strategies to succeed in business beyond 2 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study design was to explore the strategies that microenterprise, event management owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years. The population for the study consists of owners from six different event management microenterprises located in Houston, Texas. The sample consisted of one business owner from each microenterprise.

Findings from this study may contribute to social change. Microenterprise owners may improve growth and vitality of local small businesses through the gain insights on proven strategies needed to operate a business indefinitely, including insight on the best services to increase sales, profits, and market shares (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; de Mel, McKenzie, & Woodruff, 2014). If the business owners persist, they may be able to provide services that meet the needs of residents living within local communities. An increase in successful microenterprises may enhance competition in the business environment (Debrulle, Maes, & Sels, 2013). As a result, the microenterprise owners may be able to offer more local employment opportunities and contribute additional sources of income for low- to middle-class families.

Nature of the Study

Maxwell (2016) suggested three types of methodology when conducting research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The qualitative approach allows a researcher to generate a deeper insight into a social phenomenon (Camfield & Palmer-Jones, 2013; Gibbins, Bhatia, Forbes, & Reid, 2014). The selection of a qualitative approach was suitable when studying small businesses because of the unstructured nature

requiring explanation rather than measurement or predictions. The qualitative approach is also suitable for studies with a smaller sample size. Researchers use quantitative approaches to test a hypothesis and measure and explored relationships among variables (Gressehme, 2014; Yazan, 2015). Selecting a quantitative research was not a logical selection because the study did not require statistical data collection. On the other hand, the use of a mixed methodology approach requires a researcher to measure variables and test theories, as well as use qualitative methods (Gressehme, 2014; Mauceri, 2014; Yin, 2014). Likewise, a mixed methodology approach was not suitable because the study did not require combining qualitative or quantitative data.

Qualitative research has several key designs options. However, three designs were available for consideration for this study, including case study, phenomenology, and ethnography (Camfield & Palmer-Jones, 2013; Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Researchers use a phenomenology design when attempting to discover the meaning of a specific experience within the stories told by participants (Chan, Walker, & Gleaves, 2015; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). A phenomenology design was not suitable for the study because the purpose of the study was not to explore the lived experiences of participants who share a common event or phenomenon. An ethnography design encompasses lengthy fieldwork of observation (Dixon-Woods, Leslie, Tarrant, & Bion, 2013) and examination of behaviors and patterns of cultural interaction among different groups in their natural setting (Christ, 2013). I did not choose an ethnography design because the design is not appropriate for studies involving microenterprise owners. A case study design requires researchers to explore questions of how and why through multiple sources of data and

consist of a multiple or single design (Yazan, 2015). I chose a case study design over the other designs because the design consists of a variety of procedures (e.g., time series analysis, explanation building, pattern matching, logic model, and cross-case synthesis) that I can use to explore the differences and similarities among microenterprise owners in the study.

Research Question

The research question addressed in this study is as follows: What strategies did microenterprise, event management owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years?

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the strategies that you have used in the past to make your business successful?
2. Why did you choose those strategies?
3. How would you describe the strategies that you are currently using that have resulted in your business being successful?
4. How did you develop the strategies that made you successful?
5. How would you describe the strategies that you used, but found to be unsuitable for your business?
6. How did you identify the strategies that you did not need to succeed?
7. How do event management business owners effectively manage strategies that are important for continued success?
8. Can you offer any additional comments that would help the study?

Conceptual Framework

I used two conceptual frameworks to support this study. The first conceptual framework presented was the organizational life cycle (OLC) (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). Tenets in the early to mid-1900s of the model vary. Churchill and Lewis (1983) are the most prominent tenets of the OLC model. The key concepts of the model have common themes contributed to changes in business transitional patterns (Lipi, 2013). Scholars use the OLC model to illustrate predictable transitional patterns, common problems, and key strategies necessary for growth as a business transitions through the stages of a life cycle (Lipi, 2013). The 3- stages of the life cycle include (a) existence, (b) survival, and (c) success-growth.

The second conceptual framework I used is the 5-stage evolution of entrepreneurship theory. Arenius and Ehrstedt developed the theory in 2008. The key concepts of the theory illustrate the trial and error process involved in an entrepreneur's transition into being a self-employed business owner (Arenius & Ehrstedt, 2008). Researchers use the evolution of entrepreneurship theory to illustrate a relationship between a business owners' skill set and competitiveness and business survival (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012; Haniff & Halim, 2014). The theory includes the following phases: (a) conception, (b) gestation, (c) birth, (d) infancy, and (e) adolescence.

I integrated both frameworks together to form the review of the professional and academic literature outline in this study. Both conceptual frameworks were suitable for the study because little research exist that recognize the stages of a life cycle in a small business prior to establishing key strategies for long-term success. As a result, the

frameworks may aid nascent entrepreneurs and small business owners in identifying successful strategies at critical transitional phases necessary for keeping their business viable beyond 2 years.

Operational Definitions

Following is a list of key words and definitions that I used throughout the study. I composed definitions using credible resources such as peer-reviewed journal articles.

Entrepreneur: Any person(s) who act on business opportunities and take risk (Gorgievski & Stephan, 2016).

Entrepreneurship: The process of transitioning into independent self-employed ownership of new or reestablished business (Parker & Prag, 2012).

Microenterprise: A business having fewer than five employees (Hertz et al., 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that affect the validity of stated information assumed true (Grant, 2014; Kirkwood & Price, 2013). A skilled researcher acknowledges the existence of assumptions to produce credible results (Fan, 2013). The first assumption is that the multiple case study is an appropriate design for the study. The second assumption is that the interview instrument would yield accurate, detailed, reliable, and unbiased interpreted responses that generate new knowledge and insight. The third assumption is that each owner of the microenterprise event management business reflects an appropriate cross-sectional sampling representation across geographical areas. The results will be both

transferable and applicable across sectors and industries. The final assumption is that the qualitative approach allowed me to select participants who are trustworthy and can accurately recall pertinent events and, thus, not jeopardize the credibility of the study.

Limitations

Limitations result from potential weaknesses from the design and framework that can affect a study (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013; Connelly, 2013). The first limitation is the restricted underpinning theories, understanding, and research on what strategies did microenterprise use to keep their business viable beyond 2 years in Houston, Texas. The next limitation of the study consisted of a population of event management, microenterprise business owners only. The final potential limitation includes the study exclusion to be universal and replicated in other regions of the world.

Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the restrictions and boundaries that a researcher sets to focus and narrow the scope of a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The first delimitation is that the population excludes microenterprise owners outside of the event management industry. In addition, the sample population geographic location was a potential delimitation in this study, as I only interviewed microenterprise, event management owners within Houston, Texas. Finally, other potential delimitations included generalization of evidence from employing a qualitative design is valid to a population both outside and within the United States.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this qualitative, multiple case study may enable business leaders to improve growth and vitality of microenterprises. From this study, microenterprise owners may gain new insights on proven strategies needed to operate a business indefinitely, including insights on the best services to increase sales, profits, and market shares (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; de Mel, et al., 2014). An increase in successful microenterprises may enhance competition in the business environment (Debrulle et al., 2013). As a result, the microenterprise owners may be able to offer more local employment opportunities and contribute additional sources of income for low- to middle-class families.

Further, the findings of the study may aid governmental and non-governmental interest groups in radically transforming their strategies for helping microenterprise business owners with plans for long-term business improvements, and new business practices. The groups responsible for small business development include (a) the American Management Association, (b), the Service Corps of Retired Executives, (c) business consultants, (d) the SBA and Small Business Develop Centers, and (e) the Centers for Entrepreneurship Management. Nascent microenterprise owners may use the new insights resulting from this study to implement a road map with successful transitional strategies necessary throughout the lifecycle of the business. As a result, nascent business owner may establish lasting and effective business procedures, processes, and systems.

The result of the study may also contribute to social change. The findings regarding proven and successful strategies may improve the stability and vitality of firm production within local communities. An increase in the variety of services offered may better meet the needs of residents living within local communities. As a result, a variety of local employment opportunities may increase within the community, which may contribute to the development of additional sources of income for low to middle-class families.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Although entrepreneurs embark on new business ventures each year, the failure rate after 2 years is 70%; this affects the number of available employment opportunities in the United States (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013; Phillips & Knowles, 2012; SBA, 2014). The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study design was to explore the strategies that microenterprises, event management owners' use to succeed in business beyond 2 years. The following is a review of literature related to entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Literature Review Research Strategy

The sources selected for this study were from the Walden University Library and online databases that included SSRN, Science Direct, Thoreau Multi-Database, Business Source complete, ProQuest, Emerald, ABI/INFORM Global, and Google scholar. Keywords, phrases, and subject terms used in the search were *case study research methodology, qualitative methodology, microenterprises/small business success, small business failure, OLC, entrepreneurship and business operations, new businesses and*

entrepreneurship, and *business strategies*. The content of this study was from both Walden and other universities around the world. The content consists of literature collected from multiple sources including dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles; national, state, and local government references, books, industry reports, and research methodologies.

The organization of the literature review is in chronological order. Literature reviews are flexible in organizational structure. The purpose of a literature review is a tool to aid researchers in translation of statistical analysis into quantitative data, and for a more empirical perspective through qualitative data (Camfield & Palmer-Jones, 2013; Machi & McEvoy, 2016; Serra, 2015).

The strategies for searching for peer-reviewed literature include using Walden University Ulrich periodical directory. The references used in the literature review totaled 261. Of the total references, 222, or 86%, of the total cited references are peer-reviewed. Total references used that were 5 years or less of the January 2018 anticipated graduation date ranging from 2013 and 2017 equaled 225 sources, or 86%. References used that were 5 years or older of the January 2018 anticipated graduation date equaled 37 sources or 14%. The literature review consists of 39 nonpeer-reviewed journal articles, which included no dissertations, 17 books, 17 industry reports, and 5 other resources, including national, state, and local government references, as well as research methodologies.

Organization Life Cycle Model

The OLC model is a conceptual framework that I used to explore successful strategies used by small business owners to maintain solvency. Several OLC models

exist. As the conceptual framework for this study, I selected the first three stages of the 5-stage small business growth model: existence, survival, and success. The model was appropriate for researchers who are working to forecast patterns of problems small businesses encounter. Researchers and business leaders' use the model to reduce major problems via implementation of key strategies throughout the life cycle stages. Figure 1 shows the 5-stages of small business growth outlined by Churchill and Lewis (1983).

Growth Stages

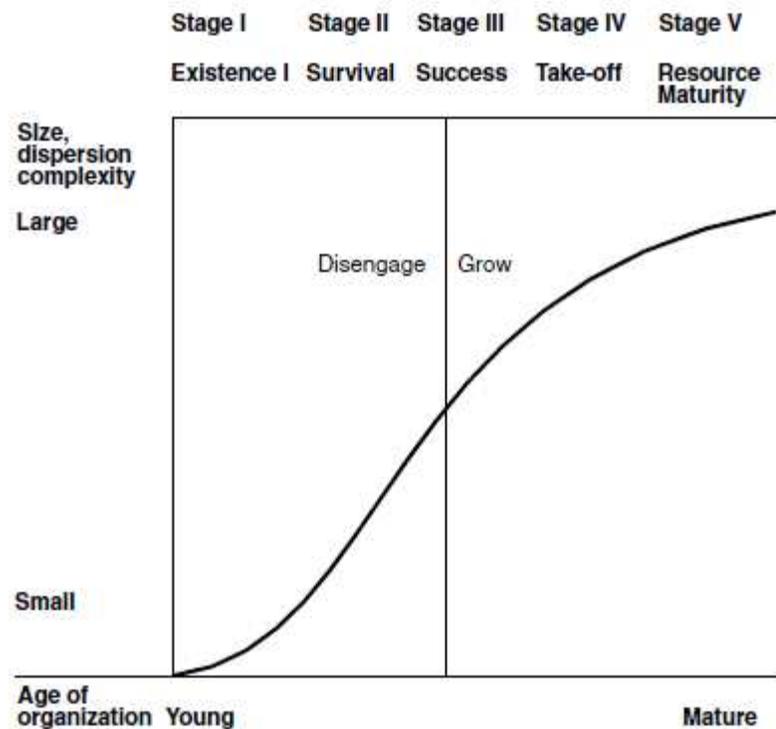


Figure 1. Five stage development models for small business Adapted from "Five-Stages of Small Business Growth," by N. C. Churchill, and V. L. Lewis, 1983, with reprinted permission from Harvard Business Review. Copyright 1983 by the Harvard Business Publishing Corporation; all rights reserved.

The overall idea of the OLC model is that a business, whether small or large, may transition through a series of stages over time in a consistent manner (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012; Lipi, 2013). The transitions mark the stages that may influence a business of any size to either fail or succeed (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012; Lipi, 2013). The OLC model is an effective aid for understanding which strategies are necessary to facilitate small business transitions through the stages of growth to reach the success phase.

OLCs of all sorts have been in existence for about 50-60 years (de Oliveira, Escrivao, Nagano, & Ferraudo, 2015). Identification of life cycles begin to emerge in the mid-1900s in the science of biology and economics (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012; Lipi, 2013). Throughout history, economic theorists have borrowed theories of the OLC from the science of biology (de Oliveira et al., 2015). The key concept of OLC model is ontogenesis (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012). Ontogenesis is the origination of predictable sequences of human developmental stages (de Oliveira et al., 2015; Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012). Ontogenesis, or morphogenesis, is the core of developmental stages of organisms, such as the time of fertilization of the egg to the organism's developed adult form. Fundamentally, life cycles models have existed throughout history in various disciplines, and is also applicable in the 21st century.

The stages in several OLC models range from three to 10 (de Oliveira et al., 2015; Lipi, 2013). General OLC models have three stages including initiation, growth, and maturity (with stagnation the fourth stage of decline) (Lipi, 2013). However, no scholarly consensus exists as to the number of distinct stages, or to what stages are most critically useful for analyzing business processes (de Oliveira et al., 2015).

Decades later, theorists begin to use the OLC models as a diagnostic tool to analyze and forecast problems in a variety of other occupations such as education, marketing, public administration, psychology, and sociology (de Oliveira et al., 2015; Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012; Lipi, 2013). Theorists continue to use the OLC model as a diagnostic tool in large organizations (Greiner, 1972), firms and companies (Miller & Friesen, 1984) and small and medium enterprises (Churchill & Lewis, 1983; Scott &

Bruce, 1987; Steinmetz, 1969). Boulding (1950) was the first recognized theorist to relate the OLC model to living organisms. Boulding (1950) connected the predictable sequences among living organisms to the developmental and transitional stages of businesses. Steinmetz (1969) is another pioneer in the OLC discussion and was the first theorist to relate the OLC model to small businesses operations. Despite points of arguments within various disciplines by different scholars, the OLC model continues to evolve overtime.

The OLC model is an example of business growth in a progressive, sequential manner, through the transitions stages (Gurianova, Gurianov, & Mechtcheriakova, 2014). However, businesses often experience non-linear, mixed-route, or indefinite transitions throughout the life (de Oliveira et al., 2015; Gurianova et al., 2014). Scholars imply that the OLC model have flexible stages that are consistent and overlap with lesser periods of random occurrence of advancements (de Oliveira et al., 2015; Lipi, 2013). Despite numerous arguments proposed by scholars regarding the components of the OLC model, in this study, I focused on the first three stages of the 5-stage small business growth model developed by theorists' Churchill and Lewis (1983). Churchill and Lewis used their model to emphasize the importance of strategy and the need for changes at each stage of development in the business.

However, there are several rival theories, and models. Stinchcombe and March (1965) introduced a social resources model. They suggested that the OLC model of a business and the resources available for survival are subject to the period and era in which the organization is formed. Likewise, Vickers (2013) introduced an alternative

perception to the OLC model called the situational confrontation model. Vickers suggested that the key problems a business encounters, and how a business confronts a crisis, determine the phases of the business's life cycle. Vickers surmised that problems are inevitable in the life of a business. However, Vickers suggested that business failure or success is not contingent upon the implementation of strategies, the size of a business, the sophistication of its strategies, the market shares, age, maturity, or management styles. Vickers implied that organizations terminate prematurely as the direct result of a lack of recognition of six substantial crises. Vicker identified six stages at which the most critical crises occur including exit, sacrifice and survival, launching, reputation and pride, achieving stability, contribution to society, and development of distinction. Vickers alternative to the OLC model is relevant in the 21st century.

Greiner (1972) introduced an evolution-revolution model and was one of the first theorists who proposed the 5-stages of growth and development framework among organizations. Greiner's evolution-revolution model contradicted a few organizational lifecycle frameworks. He suggested that businesses develop through evolutionary periods that last from 4-8 years. As a result, the evolutionary periods allow the business to develop and grow without any major economic setbacks.

Tuzzolino and Armandi (1982) developed a 5-stage small business slack-structure model, which included a conception phase, growth phase, stabilization phase, decline, and dissolution phase. The concept of slacks relates to disbursements to managerial team members to function adequately to maintain the organization (Tuzzolino & Armandi, 1982). Likewise, Scott and Bruce (1987) developed a five-stage business growth model

for small and medium enterprises, like Churchill and Lewis (2008). Conversely, Scott and Bruce suggested that business success is not linear, nor do businesses consistently transition through each stage. On the other hand, Miller and Friesen (1984) developed a 5-stage growth model included stages of birth, maturity, progression, revival, and stagnation. Miller and Friesen suggested that business growth is contingent upon information received and argued the existence of differences between successful and unsuccessful businesses. Miller and Friesen implied that successful businesses implement and acquire sophisticated strategic actions, in conjunction with mixing the transition route with both linear and nonlinear sequences; unsuccessful businesses do not. Likewise, Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) identified characteristics and causes of small business failure during the life cycle of an organizational including experience, competencies in management, and shortage and mismanagement of financial resources (Fiore et al., 2013). Other scholars have suggested, planning, marketing, management, and finances represent the common problem areas and the root cause of small businesses failing (Bodlaj & Rojšek, 2014; de Oliveira et al., 2015).

Lester and Pernell (2008) questioned many of the 4-stage life cycle models by introducing the life cycle as a nondeterministic theory. Lester and Pernell suggested organizations are ongoing, with the flexibility to migrate back and forth through the stages with no prescribed time in any one stage. Contradictory to the OLC model, Inzlicht and Berkman (2015) proposed a social-resource model, which illustrated that a business does not fail or succeed because of management or strategic deficiency issues, but rather are significantly influenced by the era during which the business exists. Several of the

early life cycle theorists agreed that a small business is more likely to either fail or succeed within the early existence phase (Church & Lewis, 1983; Miller & Friesen, 1984; Scott & Bruce, 1987). Add summary/synthesis.

While other theorists have proposed different perspectives of the OLC model, the first three stages of Churchill and Lewis small business growth model is the most suitable for this study. The first three stages include the existence, survival, and a success-growth (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). The first three stages align with the exploration of what strategies are necessary for small businesses to succeed in business beyond 2-years, and provide one of the two conceptual frameworks for this study.

The Evolution of the Entrepreneurship Theory

In what follows, I offered a critical synthesis of literature on the evolution of entrepreneurship theory, and aligned it with the topic of successful strategies microenterprise small businesses owners use to keep their business viable beyond 2 years. In their discussion of the 5-stage evolution of entrepreneurship Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) explored organizational arrangements that lead to success and survival of a business, and how other entrepreneurs can imitate the selection of successful arrangements. Arenius and Ehrstedt noted that entrepreneurship evolves through 5 stages: (a) the conception phase (b) the gestation phase (c) the birth phase, (d) infancy, and (e) adolescence.

Cantillon (2010) recognized an entrepreneur as a lucrative industrialist responsible for profitable circulation and exchange of goods and services in a cost-effective matter. Cantillon created awareness about the capability of small businesses to

adapt successfully to the dominant presence of big enterprises (Blackford, 1944). In the 1970s, the world's interest in small business ownership increased because of the conflict between big businesses. The interest in small businesses expanded within several of disciplines. Theorists have emerged with contradictory theories regarding small business and the evolution of entrepreneurship. Cantillon (2010) was a major contributor to the entrepreneurship theory viewed the entrepreneur as an individual who assumes risk and balance the amount of services and goods from the market (Parente & Feola, 2013; Schindehutte, Morris, & Kuratko, 2015). Schindehutte et al. (2015) were pioneers in entrepreneurship theory who argued that investment of resources is a form of entrepreneurship. As a result, entrepreneurship is an option by which individuals use to cope with different situations to attain a higher state of satisfaction overtime.

Schumpeter (1983) theorized the entrepreneurial theory discussion, introducing entrepreneurship as a process as of creative destruction and recognizing entrepreneurship as innovation. Schumpeter embraced the notion that uncertainty is of entrepreneurship as a critical factor behind economic development. As a result, Schumpeter identified a business owner as a risk taker who offers services or goods. Schumpeter (2006) suggested in his theory of the Schumpeterian theory of entrepreneurship that the creation of new products and production methods render other businesses obsolete. On the other hand, Kirzner (1997) offered a neo-Austrian approach to entrepreneurship theory and introduced the figure of the alert entrepreneur. Kirzner recognized the differences among entrepreneurs as differences of knowledge and information. Kirzner focused on whether a market economy is operable, and what processes lead the economy towards equilibrium.

He suggested the economy is initially in a state of disequilibrium, but entrepreneurship leads to equilibrium in the markets (Kirzner, 1997). In contrast, other scholars have argued that if there is a state of economic equilibrium then no profit or opportunities for exchange of goods and services exist (Parente & Feola, 2013). Add synthesis and summary.

Although a variety of theories could serve as a conceptual theory for this study, I decided to combine the first three stages of the 5-stages of small business growth model. I used the 5-stage evolution of entrepreneurship theory to support the overall framework of the study. I selected the 5-stage entrepreneurship theory and the first three stages of the 5 stages of small business growth model to explore successful strategies necessary for microenterprise entrepreneurs to succeed in business beyond 2 years.

Topical Foundation

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore successful strategies used in small business, microenterprise type of entrepreneurial businesses. I explored the history of the problem under investigation, in addition to how the problem has emerged through the role of entrepreneurship in small business in the United States. In the literature review, I explored the topic of entrepreneurship in relation to the theory. In addition, I discussed small business through the perspective of the entrepreneur, and addressed the challenges and failures microenterprise business entrepreneurs face in America. In evolutionary terms, entrepreneurs are the major source of organizational variation through the activities that orient the creation and operation of a business (Fairlie, 2013).

Scholars have contributed knowledge to the body of research on small businesses, but limited knowledge exist surrounding microenterprises. Gurianova et al. (2014) suggested that literature on successful strategies used in microenterprises is scarce and that the topic require more research. Distinct gaps exist in the research regarding new business strategies required throughout the entire business life cycle of microenterprises (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012). In this study, I discussed a series of investigative processes I used including an exhaustive literature search, semistructured interviews, and triangulation of data from multiple sources. The themes I developed in the literature review are relevant to the study's overall conceptual framework and research question. The research question I have design for this study is: What are the strategies that microenterprise, event management owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years?

Entrepreneurial developments within small businesses have been essential drivers of U.S. economic growth for decades (Fairlie, 2013). Historically, small business entrepreneurship has been a widely studied phenomenon, and has been the norm and culture in the United States dating back to the 18th century (Blackford, 1944; Fairlie, 2013). Particularly, entrepreneurship is an emerging research topic among historians, policy makers, and economists (Fairlie, 2013; Huarng & Riberio-Soriano, 2014). Before the 1880s, single-owner proprietors such as storekeepers, artisan/skilled workers, farmers, and backwoods peddlers were instrumental in bringing industrial enterprise to the United States (Blackford, 1944). However, as timed progressed, small business entrepreneurship significantly decreased because of the interest in large firms (Liao et al.,

2014). Large firms began to transform the world because of lucrative business opportunities and the increase in financial securities.

The understanding of entrepreneurship in small business grow both domestic and within global markets, business ownership continues to be a national priority among government leaders throughout the world (Bruton, Ketchen, & Ireland, 2013; Cho & Honorati, 2014). Companies like Google, Nike, Ben and Jerry's, SAP, Genentech, Easy Jet, and Wal-Mart are examples of entrepreneurial enterprises that began as a small business (Fairlie, 2013; Harper & Lam, 2013). On the other hand, France, Japan, and Germany are a few countries with a scarce population of entrepreneurial ventures.

Civilians undergoing small business ownership serve as a vehicle to mitigate poverty and to create economic growth, and allows for the operation and maintenance of new markets (Huang & Riberio-Soriano, 2014). Additionally, institutional leaders and government policy makers have increased the support and development of small business activity in the United States (Bruton et al., 2013; Fairlie, 2013; Huang & Riberio-Soriano, 2014).

The Looking Glass of Entrepreneurship in Small Business

Harker and Lam (2013) explored the scope of free enterprise creation and suggested that entrepreneurship extends beyond the conception of new a venture. Harker and Lam suggested the idea that entrepreneurial involvement includes preparing activities that occur before and after the creation of the business. A large segment of the literature surrounds the topic of strategic planning in small businesses. Strategic planning particularly in small and medium enterprises is critical to enhancing venture performance and overall business success (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Building a venture team is

becoming more popular among entrepreneurs, and suggested to contribute to improving the chances of entrepreneurial success (Parente & Feola, 2013; Schjoedt, Monsen, Pearson, Barnett, & Chrisman, 2013). A focus has been on decision-making strategies as a contributor to enhancing overall business success (Grichnik, Brinckmann, Singh, & Manigart, 2014). Physical and human capital strategies have gained an advantage in the small business discussion; however, it has been determined that alone it is not enough (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; de Mel et al., 2014; Debrulle et al., 2013). There has been varying perspectives shared by scholars on the factors that affect the success of small businesses. A discussion on entrepreneurship from a broad perspective may aid in the understanding of why strategies are important during specific phases of entry as aspiring business owners embark upon starting and operating an enterprise.

Defined by the Small Business Administration (2014), a small business is an established company with no more than 500 employees. Delving even further, a microenterprise is a subcategory of the small business classification and described as having less than five employees (Hertz et al., 2015). Owners of microenterprises are often the sole operators of the business. Although shared common characteristics exist among the two categories, differences are present as well (Joonas & Wadensjö, 2013). As a result, I referenced small businesses and microenterprises in the study interchangeably, and focus on microenterprises operated by entrepreneurs as business owners.

A small business is not necessarily an entrepreneurial venture created by self-employed individuals (Parente & Feola, 2013). An entrepreneurial venture is a business created either by an individual or by group(s) of people. A small business may produce

massive earnings without essentially being an entrepreneurial venture (Parente & Feola, 2013). Differences exist, in determining whether a small business can be the same or different from an entrepreneurial venture, depending on the definition used (Parente & Feola, 2013; Sedliačiková, Hajdúchová, Krištofik, Viszlai, & Gaff, 2016). The terms, microenterprise and small business assume different challenges and needs, share common characteristics and used in the same manner (Hertz et al., 2015).

More than 80% of owners of microenterprises and small businesses are freelance entrepreneurs (SBA, 2014). Approximately 1 in 10 adults in the U.S. are entrepreneurs of a microenterprise in existence for a minimum of 3.5 years (Ramos-Rodríguez, Martínez-Fierro, Medina-Garrido, & Ruiz-Navarro, 2015; Singer, Amorós, & Moska, 2015). The United States has the most nascent entrepreneurial activity (Fairlie, 2013; Harper & Lam, 2013). An awakening of interest in entrepreneurship exists. Self-employment books have increased in national sales and attention from public institutions, historians, faculty, and social scientists has grown (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Amazon.com alone has over 118,000 books geared toward small business ownership. Over 5,000 courses in entrepreneurship exist in both two and four-year education institutions in the United States (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Amid rapid economic growth, or even decline, men, women and, young adults continue to show interest in entrepreneurship (Harper & Lam, 2013).

The Looking Glass of the Entrepreneur

Microenterprises and small businesses are important in creating employment of half of the private sector in the United States (Fairlie, 2013). Small businesses create over

99% of employer-based companies and pay approximately 43% of the private workforce in the U.S. (SBA, 2014). Despite the success of microenterprises, the failure rate of startup ventures is a challenge for government and employment opportunities in the United States (Fairlie, 2013). Premature business failure affects the business owner, as well as the employees, customers, and suppliers (Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett, & Lyon, 2013). On the other hand, a business owner operating a successful business has the potential to generate new markets of innovative services and products, which may produce an endless array of job opportunities throughout the economy (Cho & Honorati, 2014; Fairlie, 2013). Furthermore, entrepreneurs rejuvenate local communities and increase tax revenues for both local and federal governments (Cho & Honorati, 2014; Fairlie, 2013).

The term microenterprise small business owner and entrepreneur share common definitions (Sedliačiková et al., 2016). Entrepreneurial theories proposed by scholars are important to understand the entrepreneur as an individual whose strategic endowments is relevant to business success.

The Entrepreneur

The word entrepreneur is a multi-dimensional concept throughout the literature. The illustration of an entrepreneur is inconclusive and subjective based upon varying interpretations (Fairlie, 2013; Miskin & Rose, 2015). Furthermore, to understand that as both terms are repetitive throughout the literature, not all entrepreneurs operate microenterprise businesses, nor are all microenterprise owner's entrepreneurs. A formal description by the Small Business Administration (2014) extends the definition and

describes the word entrepreneur in a quantitative manner, depicting the individual as a small business owner with up to 500 employees assuming risk for the economy. The structure of an entrepreneurial venture may be that of either a reestablishment of an existing business or new business (Lofstrom, Bates, & Parker, 2014; Parker & Van Praag, 2012). The overall definition and description of entrepreneurship varies and continues to remain undecided among available research. Not one single definition of an entrepreneur exists throughout the literature (Sedliačiková et al., 2016). For the qualitative case study, the owner of a microenterprise is an entrepreneur that begins a privately owned small business with five or fewer employees.

Scholars have studied different aspects of entrepreneurship including why and how small business entrepreneurs become successful (Beyerlein, 2014; Cho & Honorati, 2014; Harker & Lam, 2013; Ismail, Husin, Rahim, Kamal, & Mat, 2016). Growing and sustaining a business through the variation of strategies and resources prior to starting a new venture is growing in interest among theorist (Block et al., 2015; Coleman & Karvin, 2013; Grable & Carr, 2014; Mirzakhani, Parsaamal, & Golzar, 2014).

Casson (2014) depicted an entrepreneur as an individual, not an organization or group embarking upon and coordinating activities that promote daily decision-related activities. As a result, the coordination of activities such as technology, innovation, a need for skills, knowledge, and competencies require access to more knowledge (Popescu, 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). Casson proposed the process by which entrepreneurs make predictions is, for the most part, subjective, and limits the business owner's ability to accurately forecast the success or failure of an entrepreneurial venture.

The finding gave explanation to the lack of, and need for, a theory for the entrepreneur that addresses explanation of failures and the lack of resources (Ucbasaran et al., 2013).

Entrepreneurs stabilize the economy by generating millions of jobs for people around the world (Miskin & Rose, 2015). Miskin and Rose utilized a quantitative approach to research the impact of situational variables and resulting success of 1,002 new business ventures in Washington. Among many descriptions, the entrepreneur describes an individual who undertakes social and personal risk, and provides services and goods that satisfy the needs of new and existing markets. Previous business management experience and self-confidence correlated with the productivity of outcomes of small businesses. On the other hand, the variables related to business success, did not affect the decision to start a new business venture.

Levratto and Serverin (2015) confronted previous reflections on research, and positioned self-employed individuals in an independent status as auto-entrepreneurs, who serve new and existing markets with goods and services. Auto-entrepreneurs take both personal and financial risks to accumulate a cash surplus through investments. Levratto and Serverin disagreed with Miskin and Rose (2015) on self-employed individuals. Levratto and Serverin positioned entrepreneurs as low-level activity and are members of the working poor of today with little to no economic competitiveness.

Harper and Lam (2013) utilized an in-depth longitudinal qualitative research approach to explore three businesses located in both Hong Kong and China over an 11-year period. Harper and Lam agreed with previous research and positioned entrepreneurs as risk-taking, profit-seeking individuals who organize start-up activities and bear

financial uncertainties based on the intentions of lucrative financial gain. Owners investments, resources, social networks, and opportunities actively shape, jumpstart the entrepreneurial process were the result from the study.

A new perspective of entrepreneurship introduces a spiritual enlightenment, and the foundation to creating and a new business venture (Godwin, Neck, & D'Intino, 2016; Nandram, 2016). Other theorist framed entrepreneurship as a form of job creation and a catalyst for economic productivity (Acs, Åstebro, Audretsch, & Robinson, 2016; Parker & Van Pragg, 2012; Zaki & Rashid, 2016). On the other hand, scholars have widely described the entrepreneurial process as a systematic course of action and behavior that creates community value and businesses that bridge the gap between resources and social and cultural opportunities (Beyerlein, 2014). From a different perspective, scholars have described the framework of entrepreneurship as an opportunity to create social, cultural, economic, and institutional environments (Aparicio, Urbano, & Audretsch, 2016; Arregle et al., 2015; Castaño, Méndez, & Galindo, 2015). Additionally, a notable number of scholars have described entrepreneurship as an economic process of self-owned new ventures causing creative destruction that bridges the gap of impartial equitable wealth distribution (Kirchhoff, Linton, & Walsh, 2013; Kivimaa & Kern, 2016; Mazzucato, 2013).

Douglas (2013) explored the impact of determinants on the emergences of entrepreneurship. Douglas used four entrepreneurs operating a small business in the United States from 2005-2009. Douglas surmised a positive correlation between the influences of determinants to an increase in entrepreneurial performance. Likewise,

Beyerlein (2014) utilized a sample of 820 participants who were at least 24 years old, who were either part-time or full-time students at two German universities. Beyerlein identified the influences of self-efficacy, entrepreneurial behavior, and start-up activities on the stages of change in the entrepreneurship process. Specifically, Beyerlein explored the benefits and advantages of the process of entrepreneurship. However, in contrast to Douglas' (2013) research, Beyerlein determined no significant differences.

Although a variety of perspectives and definitions exist, I only focused on microenterprise owners as entrepreneurs establishing new small businesses. In addition to a discussion surrounding the origin of the entrepreneurship process and the makeup of the individual as an entrepreneur, I explored the different types of individuals that pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Understanding the entrepreneur as an individual whose strategic endowments influence business success is critical to linking what strategies are necessary for small business owners to succeed in business (Haniff & Halim, 2014).

Types of Entrepreneurs in the Twenty-First Century

A common definition of an entrepreneur is any person assuming risk by investing materials, time, and money to acquire a business opportunity with the hope of achieving profits (Gorgievski & Stephan, 2016). Different types of entrepreneurs exist in America; however, Agarwal and Shah (2014) have identified three common types of individuals. Each of the three types, the employee, academics, and user entrepreneur have different methods in obtaining advance knowledge to create or to revitalize an existing business (Agarwal & Shah, 2014).

The Employee Entrepreneur

A long history of research exists on the employee entrepreneurship dating back to the nineteenth century. Twenty-five percent of the employee-based entrepreneur innovations are in the information technology and automobiles industries; and 80% are within the communications industry (Agarwal & Shah, 2014). An employee entrepreneur, as depicted by Agarwal and Shah (2014), is initially established in an existing business, gains industry knowledge, acquires hands-on trainings, then ventures out to launch a new product or service in the same industry. The employee entrepreneur creates and develops job opportunities from a new or existing market by transferring the technical, managerial, operational, and market knowledge from one industry to another. Agarwal and Shah provided an example of an employee who worked in the video game industry, who later used the acquired knowledge from a novel animation to create a new type of picture and video for game followers.

Becker, Knyphausen-Aufseß, and Brem (2015) suggested the employee entrepreneur is an individual who acquires limitless experience, skills, resources and, knowledge from previous work experience that is necessary to operate a business independently. After the individual obtains sufficient experience from their preceding employment, they will cease further employment and create a new venture (Becker et al., 2015).

The Academic Entrepreneur

Research is consistent on the topic of the academic entrepreneur, and dates to the 19th century with the passing of the Morrill Act of 1862 and the establishment of land

grant universities (Agarwal and Sha, 2014). Agarwal and Shah depicted the academic entrepreneur as scientist, theorist, faculty, staff, or student who initiates innovation in an academic institution, non-profit or national labs setting. More than 54% of new ventures developed by academic entrepreneurs were from biotechnology and search engine firms. An example of an innovation inspired from an academic-based entrepreneur is the creation of the first probe microscope. Paradoxically, Agarwal and Shah showed a negative link between academic entrepreneurs, market, and operational knowledge embodied in the individuals.

User Entrepreneurs

Research on user entrepreneurs expanded in 2006 across a broad range of industries (Agarwal & Shah, 2014). Agarwal and Shah depicted the user entrepreneur as an able participant in the workforce, having little to no previous industry experience in the new venture. The user entrepreneur may fulfill the unmet needs of new or existing market by creating new services and products from the ground up. Agarwal and Shah argued that user entrepreneurs lack a history of organizational, operational and production skills. An example of a user entrepreneur would be Steve Wozniak the creator and designer of the Apple computer. Prior to Steve Jobs founding Apple, Steve Wozniak was the initial entrepreneur who collaborated about the Apple computer with Homebrew computer club (Agarwal & Shah, 2014).

In conclusion, entrepreneurs are key drivers of innovation across industries, and critical to social and economic growth of local, domestic, and international economies. Often business growth utilizes a combination of alternate usage of strategies acquired

through knowledge or newly acquired skill sets used by entrepreneurs (Agarwal & Shah, 2014). Understanding the different categories of the types of entrepreneurs and the attributes embodied in the entrepreneur may aid in supporting and building a strong industrial economy (Haniff & Halim, 2014).

Attributes of Microenterprises and Small Business Entrepreneurs

Small businesses fail by the dozen amid a progressive economy. As a result, a constant demand for successful small business is critical (Harker & Lam, 2013). Little research exists on how owners, executives, and managers develop strategies for operating a successful small business (Bhat & Daulerio, 2014). Small amounts of research explore entrepreneurial characteristics that influence the success of small businesses (Joon & Wadensjo, 2013; Robb & Watson, 2012). However, a large percentage of scholars acknowledge the existences of a wide gap in entrepreneurial research. Yet equally, scholars have recognized the importance of increasing entrepreneurship opportunities in the United States to aid in increasing the strength of business operations. Furthermore, scholars in entrepreneurial research have surmised that growth and success of a new business ventures is contingent upon the skills and attributes embodied in the owner (Haniff & Halim, 2014).

Creativity and Innovation

Dhewanto, Lantu, Herliana, and Anggadwita (2015) suggested that not one single attribute influences the failure or long-term success of a business, but rather a combination of multiple attributes. Villasana, Alcaraz-Rodríguez, and Alvarez (2016) identified four dominant characteristics of successful entrepreneurs: self-confidence,

creativity, risk management, and conflict resolution. Byrd, Ross, and Glackin (2013) and Joonas and Wadensjö (2013), suggested that business failure is influenced by (a) innovativeness and creativity, (b) effective communication, (c) self-discipline and, (d) hard work are influence as critical characteristics influences the ability of an entrepreneur to operate a business successfully. Byrd et al. (2013) used the responses from 158 North American motor carriers to explore the relationship between leadership style, automobile carrier performance, and managerial innovation. Byrd et al. surmised that the survival of a business is contingent on the entrepreneurs' ability to be creative, innovative and manage those resources effectively.

Löfsten (2016) findings corresponded with Byrd et al. (2013) results. Löfsten explored the relationships between the first three years of business operations with firm survival. Löfsten employed 131 nascent Swedish technology companies that develop innovative technology patents in 16 business incubators. Löfsten revealed a correlation between firm survival and innovation. On the other hand, Berends, Jelinek, Reymen, and Stultiens (2014) employed a mixed-methodology with five Dutch manufacturing companies. Berends et al. surmised that innovative practices although rarely implemented in some businesses are critical and valuable to business, but may not be applicable for all businesses.

Likewise, Faustino and Ribeiro (2016) identified six characteristics of successful entrepreneurs that influence the success of a business. The attributes include (a) risk taking, (b) team work, (c) leadership, (d) effective communication, (e) creativity and (f)

time management. Faustino and Riberio surmised that creativity in conjunction with innovation is important in the overall survival and success of small businesses.

Financial Proficiency

Financial management is a nationwide concept, and the second most developed attributes among nascent entrepreneurs that links to entrepreneurial success (Farrington, Venter, Schrage, & Van der Meer, 2012). Farrington et al. (2012) identified 16 characteristics of owners that influence business success, which include commitment to the revelation of the vision of the business, education in financial management, effective communication and the owners' ability to be persistent through uncertainty. Sodani and Maheshwari (2016) supported Farrington et al. argument, and suggested that the contribution of creativity and flexibility are important, however, the most critical factors include proficient in financial management, constructive network system, previous business knowledge, and the ability to plan and be well organized. Sodani and Maheshwari emphasized the importance of having a business degree in financial management in conjunction to having prior business experience, linking to small business success.

Miettinen and Littunen (2013) used a qualitative research design to explore critical factors that influence businesses 5-years after initiation. Miettinen and Littunen explored 440 small businesses owners residing in Finland, and the influences of personal attributes on obtaining and managing micro financing. Miettinen and Littunen disagreed with an importance of entrepreneurs being exclusively proficient in financial management. They dismissed the concept of financial management knowledge alone

increasing the long-term success of business owners. Rather, Miettinen and Littunen suggested a link between multiple factors including; business knowledge, family history of business successors, and business-related skills and competencies, and human capital in conjunction to having financial management education and experience. O'Donnell (2014) supported Miettinen and Littunen views and suggested funding, government support and, lack of financial management experience is a critical factor in business termination. Likewise, Byrd et al. (2013) advocated that an increase in small business sustainability rates is associated with business owners acquiring knowledge and education in financial management.

The consensus among entrepreneurial research emphasizes the importance of individual attributes on business success, rather, financial management experience and knowledge was determined a critical factor in the long-term survival of a business (Berends et al., 2014; Byrd et al., 2013; Nandram, 2016). The variables influencing the survival outcomes of a business conflict among scholars, and continue to waver throughout entrepreneurship research (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013). Scholars agree that personal characteristics do not link to business survival and performance alone, but rather in conjunction with other factors (Douglas, 2013; Faustino & Ribeiro, 2016; Farrington et al., 2012). The perspective of scholars' overlaps, and viewpoint vary on entrepreneurial attributes. As a result, research on financial management and knowledge proficiency is inconclusive (Berends et al., 2014; Farrington et al., 2012; Harker & Lam, 2013; Lawrence, 2014). Therefore, the five developmental stages of the evolution of entrepreneurship theory discussed in the next section may aid the researcher in

understanding what strategies are necessary to increase the long-term success of a small business.

Five Key Stages of the Evolution of Entrepreneurialism in Small Business

I focused the literature review on the first 3- stages of the 5-stages of small business growth model, and supported by the components of the evolution of entrepreneurship theory. Arenius and Ehrstedt's (2008) evolution of entrepreneurship theory in small business explored small business transitional stages. Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) explored the activities and behavior exhibited prior to the start-up of a business to maturity, which aligns with Churchill and Lewis's model. Research focusing on numerous stages and transitions of entrepreneurship is scarce. Specifically, literature exists on the distinction of the entrepreneur as an individual prior to the initiation of a business. However, literature on the entrepreneurial process includes how entrepreneurs initiate and create new business structures, selection of activities at different stages, and how they select activities at different stages while adapting to external and internal locus (Arenius & Ehrstedt, 2008).

If a small business passes through the critical point of business failure successfully, the business may have undergone change and moved from one stage to the next of the entrepreneurial process either prior to or after the business was developed. Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) posited the transition through the stages of the entrepreneurial process as a cognitive state the business owner assumes. Research is limited on the focus of strategies needed by the entrepreneur as an owner independent from the business at each stage of the process (Block et al., 2015; Miettinen & Littunen,

2013). Scholars have researched and linked a business and the entrepreneur as one entity (Block et al., 2015). Scholars often exclude the behaviors, strategies, and abilities that direct the business toward a level of maturity and overall level of sustainability in research (Berends et al., 2014; Byrd et al., 2013; Nandram, 2016). Exploring the survival of a business is less critical than examining the strategies vital at each stage of the process that influence growth and survival of a business (Nandram, 2016).

The 5-stages of the evolution of entrepreneurship theory listed by Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) include conception, nascent/gestation, birth, infancy, and adolescence. Numerous scholars have proposed an endless number of transitional stages and start-up strategies critical to entrepreneurs starting a business. However, I only explored six key business strategies necessary for microenterprise business owners to use to keep their business viable beyond 2 years. The first stage of Churchill and Lewis (1983) small business growth model is the existence stage and aligns with the conception phase of Arenius and Ehrstedt's (2008) theory.

Stage 1a: Existence (Conception Phase)

Over 1,500 new microenterprises start every day in the United States (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2014). According to Miettinen and Littunen (2013), despite the intentions of positive business survival outcomes, several entrepreneurs fail in creating a lasting business. To enhance the likelihood of entrepreneurs surviving through the entrepreneurial process onto maturity, exploring the cognitive state of a potential entrepreneur during the initial conception stage prior to starting a business is critical.

The individual entering the stage of conception has made a conscious decision to change their professional status (Klonek, Isidor, & Kauffeld, 2014). Klonek et al. (2014) used a sample of 820 graduate students from two Universities in Germany. Klonek et al. established five discrete stages that an entrepreneur undergoes prior to adopting behaviors that lead to a prospective career option. Klonek et al. depicted the conception stage introduced by Arenius and Ehrstedt as an attitudinal and cognitive state of mind only because the potential entrepreneur has not initiated any actions toward the activities of entrepreneurship. The conception stage of the entrepreneurial process is a decisional balance that stimulated both by internal and external factors (Klonek et al., 2014). For different reasons, people reside in the pre-contemplation stage over a period because of ambiguity, or lack of intentions to pursue entrepreneurship as a career. On the other hand, other potential entrepreneurs enter the preparation stage immediately after conception and begin the process of evaluating and weighing the cost and benefits associated with starting a new venture (Klonek et al., 2014). As some individual progresses toward the second stage, the pros begin to outweigh the cons.

Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) explored data from the 2005 Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring of potential entrepreneurs, baby business owners and seasoned entrepreneurs throughout 35 different countries. The transition between stages of the evolutionary entrepreneurial process is progressive over time (Arenius & Ehrstedt, 2008). In addition, an individual making the cognitive decision during the conception stage evolves over time into pursuits of entrepreneurship as a career. The first phase

known as the conception stage of the entrepreneurial process is a collective view that includes all individuals in the workforce.

Like previous research Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) extended the perspective of the conception stage, by suggesting that self-confident individuals who identified themselves as having the necessary entrepreneurial expertise to operate a business successfully were likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities. If entrepreneurial start-ups are the major drivers of wealth creation, job opportunities, and economic stabilization, examining the necessary attributes of potential entrepreneurs prior to entering the entrepreneurial start-up process is critical. Exploration of individual perceptions and motivation into entrepreneurship and small business will follow to help aid the researcher in the understanding of what strategies are important for small business success.

Entrepreneurial perception and decision drivers. Scholars suggested that the perception related to achievement needs within the life of entrepreneurs is often compelled by success (Bembenek, Piecuch, & Sudol-Pusz, 2016). Entrepreneurs pursue the decision to launch and operate new businesses for different reasons. Among the desire to own a business, entrepreneurs have varying initial perceptions prior to entry about personal drivers and motivations, skills and experience suitable enough to operate a business long term (Grichnik et al., 2014; Haniff & Halim, 2014). The entrepreneur's initial perceptions prior to entry influence not only the critical decision to pursue self-employment, or to seek other traditional employment opportunities, but motivate the start-up strategies implemented for the small business (Grichnik et al., 2014).

Scholars have explored and assessed cognitive structuring and the influences of judgment and decision making when assessing a new business venture opportunity (Chwolka & Raith, 2012; Pleis, 2014). New business ventures develop from personal ambiguity and often under uncertain conditions (Parker & Van Praag, 2012). On one hand, individual mental model, values, norms, environment, and personal beliefs are primary contributors to the ideology of initializing a business idea (Gupta, Turban, & Pareek, 2013). Passion has been the primary motivation for individuals seeking to take over an established business or start a new one (Parker & Van Praag, 2012).

Motivation to Pursue Entrepreneurship

Numerous external and internal triggers exist that motivate individuals to enter entrepreneurship. However, I only explored a few motivations of business ownership in the study. Scholars have described the potential motivations of entrepreneurs owning a business, yet no consistent definition throughout the literature exists (Sedliačiková et al., 2016). Unlike other theorist, psychologist, Abraham Maslow (1943) suggested that humans have an internal stimulus operating system disconnected from any rewards or unconscious desire. Maslow introduced the theory of motivation, which contributed to an early understanding of how people are motivated.

Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation posited that humans are motivated to reach a level of self-actualization, but first must meet certain base needs to focus on specific goals. Each level of needs builds on each other until they the individual can focus on the higher goal. Unfortunately, unless the basic levels of needs are satisfied, the disruption during transitioning from one level to the next level is inevitable (Maslow, 1943). Often,

life experiences such as the loss of a job, other causes for unemployment, divorce, and death may cause a fluctuation and ultimate disruption in the transitions between levels. Maslow proposed five levels of needs by which people are motivated, include categories based upon its potential power and seniority, including (a) safety and security, (b) physiological; (c) belonging and affection; (d) self-actualization; and (e) esteem.

The lower stages of Maslow's (1943) pyramid of needs are deficiency needs. The biological and psychological needs are the most basic needs of an individual and are critical for survival. Likewise, these needs are like the human necessity for air, water, food, warmth, and sleep. The higher levels of Maslow's pyramid are growth needs and include a state of self-actualization, or continual process of becoming, rather than a state of perfection. Conversely, a few scholars including Maslow himself have deemed his model inaccurate in relation to his later thoughts in 1969, when he amended his model to include two more levels of needs.

Despite this, theorists have suggested that Maslow's theory is relevant and applicable in the workplace. Maslow's provided insight in understanding human motivation, management training, and personal development. Motivation in the workplace is a growing concern for managers (Lăzăroiu, 2015). Lăzăroiu (2015) provided insights into Maslow's theory that business managers carry out workplace duties through the vehicle of other people. The objective for most of business managers is to hire candidates that have the innate motivation and ability to carry out the completion of assigned activities given (Lăzăroiu, 2015; Martin & Upham, 2015; Phillips, Lee, Ghobadian, O'Regan, & James, 2015). As a result, managers are employing processes

that identify non-tangible factors such as motivation as a prerequisite for new employee hire.

Douglas (2013) argued the concept of the 21st century entrepreneur as a movement towards a post-materialistic era. Douglas emphasized spirituality as one influence on entrepreneurial motivation that results in healthier work-family balance. Nandram (2016) argued that creativity is a crucial attribute to business success. However, Nandram recognized spirituality as a coping tool a critical characteristic in business success. However, other scholars argued that Nandram's findings are subjective, consequently challenging the convictions of other non-spiritual workers in the company.

Scholars link entrepreneurial success to motivation (Gilding, Gregory, & Cosson, 2015). Specifically, scholars and policymakers are engaged in entrepreneurship research because of the contribution to economic progress. Uncovering what motivates individuals to pursue the start-up of new or reestablished business significantly adds value to entrepreneurial research (Cardon & Kirk, 2015).

Wealth creation. People start new businesses for different reasons. However, a common motivation echoed throughout the literature is often for the perceived returns and financial reward (Block et al., 2015). Nabi, Walmsley, and Holden (2013) used a quantitative research to explore leading push and pull factors from 15 graduate students from a British university, who were interested in starting a new business and those who were not. Nabi et al. recognized a connection in the desire of entrepreneurial financial freedom as a primary motivation for seeking entrepreneurship as a career choice (Nabi et al., 2013). Apart from individual business ideas, the perception of target markets and

personal characteristics the results showed similar motivations between both groups of graduate students toward a possible career choice in entrepreneurship (Joona & Wadensjo, 2013). Nabi et al. provided insight into the transition from the student to entrepreneur, which creates awareness for the need to develop entrepreneurial knowledge and skill in educational institutions. Wealth creation as a motivator has not obtained a total consensus. Kuckertz, Berger, and Mpeqa (2016) focused their research on financial freedom. Kuckertz et al. (2016) depicted that low levels of wealth creation by entrepreneurs may suppress the growth of larger paid employment sectors, limiting the available paid job opportunity. Kuckertz et al. surmised that financial freedom stiffens individual cognitive reasoning, by overlooking the high cost associated with complying with regulations for new business start-up ventures. Estimated profits of prematurely terminated businesses of entrepreneurs are often unpredictable or either unknown (Block et al., 2015). As a result, much of the research on the motivation of economic freedom in entrepreneurship is ambiguous as to whether the incentive for financial gain drives available opportunities.

Autonomy. Despite the knowledge of the lack of fixed wages, independence, and flexible schedules because of high levels of autonomy were more important incentives than wealth creation for most entrepreneurs (Caliendo, Fossen, & Kritikos, 2014; Croson & Minniti, 2012). Croson and Minniti (2012) explored the topic further by exploring the tradeoff of higher income to increased autonomy base preferences through self-employment. Croson and Minniti revealed that individuals despite the knowledge of

uncertainties of fixed wages and lower income often engaged in self-employed in exchange for perceived physical benefits.

Passion. Personality, passion, and creativity are drivers of success and have strong effects on entry into entrepreneurship decision (Caliendo et al., 2014). To explore the topic further, Caliendo et al. (2014) reviewed entrepreneurial entry and exit decisions of more than 10,000 households in Germany using the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) annual representative panel survey. Caliendo et al. provided insights into internal personal characteristics such as an individual optimistic personality that not only added to firm survival, but also influenced the pursuit of obtaining careers in self-employment.

Likewise, Cardon and Kirk (2015) posited that passion is a key factor and motivator in the pursuit of entrepreneurship that drives the very essences of the core of entrepreneurial efforts. Cardon and Kirk explored the relationship between self-efficiency and persistence on passion, by using a sample of 129 new start-up businesses from the Northwestern part of the United States. Cardon and Kirk revealed a robust interchangeable link between entrepreneurial passion and persistence in individuals seeking to launch a new business. Cardon and Kirk provided insight into varies levels of passion an entrepreneur may experience transitioning through the phases of the life cycle, that affect the overall performance and outcome of the venture.

On the other hand, Gielnik, Spitzmuller, Schmitt, Klemann, & Frese (2015) contradicted dominating perspectives in the literature on the passion that propels individuals to starts new businesses. Gielnik et al. used a sample of 136 undergraduate students registered in a business administration program at a university in Singapore that

were in the pre-launch stage of starting a new business. Through new start-up venture progression and freedom of choice, a robust connection exists through a sequence that showed that as entrepreneurial effort progresses, passion increases significantly. Gielnik et al. provided insights into the functions of behavior and antecedents of entrepreneurial passion. Gielnik et al. revealed the reverse of most dominating perspectives on passion as a driver and internal motivator.

Locus of control. According to Caliendo et al. (2014) having a heightened ability to control outcomes that were common traits associated with triggering the motivation of a variety of individuals to pursue of launching a new enterprise. Self-employed individuals often rank high in self-efficacies are over-confident in their ability to manage and create a business despite any obstacles and barriers (Caliendo et al., 2014). Likewise, self-employed individuals with increased levels of internal locus of control attribute progressive efforts in conjunction with external factors influencing the success or failure of a business (Sandberg, Hurmerinta, & Zettinig, 2013). Contradictory to predictions, Caliendo et al. suggested that after three years of being self-employed, entrepreneurs have elevated levels of internal locus of control that links to the success and survival of a small business.

In conclusion, while the common perception is that all entrepreneurs share universal traits, the motivations for entry into entrepreneurship are far more complex and variable. Maslow's (1943) initial theory of human motivation and external stimulus along with the contributions from other notable theorist on the topic may be applicable and connected with individuals seeking employment opportunities through entrepreneurship.

While individuals desire the career choice of the pursuit of entrepreneurship, few succeed in starting and sustaining the business. As a result, the source of small business failure of entrepreneurial ventures link to the lack of sufficient preparation, skills, and human capital (Haniff & Halim, 2014; Solomon, Bryant, May, & Perry, 2013). Solomon et al. (2013) suggested that specific human capital including education and training skills and previous experience, entrepreneurial endowments contribute to the overall success of a business.

Human Capital of Successful Entrepreneurs

Overtime, research in entrepreneurship has shown a robust link between the long-term success of new businesses and human capital (Hmieleski, Carr, & Baron, 2015; Rauch & Rijdsdijk, 2013). Scholars have researched the viability of human capital in entrepreneurship, while others have investigated human capital effects on profitability in entrepreneurship (Block, Hoogerheide, & Thurik, 2013; Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). Scholars have argued that human capital is critical to the overall entrepreneurship process, and is associated with the challenges of the success and growth of enterprises around the world (Nwobu, Faboyede, & Onwuelingo, 2015; Walker et al., 2013).

Across industries, human capital has multiple definitions in connection to entrepreneurship throughout the literature (Debrulle et al., 2013; Martin, McNally, & Kay, 2013). Human capital has multiple descriptions throughout the literature and centered on intangible assets that include formal education, training, parental and formal business experience, knowledge, and suitable skills are critical assets that vary among the industry type profession, age and maturity of the business (Martin et al., 2013; Solomon

et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2013). However, the perspective on human capital as a resource is inconclusive throughout the research continuum.

Education and Industry Experience

Government officials, during a congressional hearing have debated the lack of education as a contributing factor of small business that has failed (Debrulle et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2013). Likewise, when the small business administration was established the leadership recognized skills and the lack of education as a critical factor common among small business that failed (Gudmundsson & Lechner, 2013; Walker et al., 2013). Block et al. (2013) used data from a 2007 Flash Euro barometer survey to glean a population of 10,397 individuals from 27 European countries and in the United States. Block et al. (2013) explored how education in entrepreneurship and training play an integral and costly role in the growth and vitality of the human capital. The outcome of the examination of education and training prove to be effective. On the other hand, Debrulle et al. (2013) argued the link between previous industry experience and definite success outcomes were subjected to controversy in the research.

Miller, Xu, and Mehrotra (2015) explored the human capital of chief executive officers with prestigious degrees from Ivy leagues universities. Miller et al. (2015) used 444 chief executive officers from the top selected universities with a reputation for selecting candidates for their outstanding scholastic abilities, past achievements, academics, non-academic, intellect, as well as social connections and wealth of their parents. Miller et al. argued that a prestigious degree from an Ivy League university results in favorable attention from the job market and elevated positions. A robust link to

human resources in the form of high-quality training prompts and enhances the value of human capital and superior performance. More specifically, Chief Executive Officers with Ivy League undergraduate degree outperformed, with a display of superior performance, Chief Executive Officers without Ivy League degrees. Miller et al. provided insight into a different set of human capital. Miller et al. suggested that prestigious education was not just a social fad, rather a vehicle to promote more innovation, creativity, and a sense of receptiveness to new ideas. Robb and Watson (2012) and Block et al. (2013) supported Miller et al., views and with suggested that owners engaged in continuing education were less likely to experience business failure in the first five years than owners who did not, and produced 16% profit, and 60% sales.

Furthermore, education is an asset to enhance the skills needed during the startup, growth, innovation, and maturity stages. In addition, formal education promoted investigative skills knowledge regarding available business opportunities and markets, and the business startup process (Gupta et al., 2013; Haniff & Halim, 2014). Robb and Watson (2012) surmised that a high level of education and the promotion of continuing education link to a lower risk of small business failure. Robb and Watson's implications are for further research related to the effects of education to determine if college education or technical training contributes to decreasing business failure.

BarNir (2012) measured the effect of education and industry experience on the decision to start a new business. Particularly, work experience provided first-hand knowledge regarding the day-to-day functions and operations of a business venture (Parker & Van Praag, 2012). BarNir collected data from the Entrepreneurial Dynamics II

(PSED II), regarding 950 entrepreneurs residing in the United States who were in different stages in the start-up process. BarNir found that higher levels of education coupled with extensive prior industry experience is relevant and positively increases business start-up success in entrepreneurs. However, strong gender differences exist, connecting a robust positive link with industry experience to men, and higher levels of education to women, in terms of motivation to start a business.

However, not all scholars agree. Chwolka and Raith (2012) implied that formal education acquired by nascent entrepreneurs is not a robust link to business success, but rather the detailing of a business plan that increases the probability of a successful venture even before entering the market. Additionally, Farlie (2013) surmised that business work experience does not link to the increase of profitability of new start-up businesses. In retrospect, the exploration of the impact of education and industry experience in human capital is accepted. However, the influences of the value of business knowledge and skill on business success have little research (Miller et al., 2015; Stuetzer, Obschonka, Davidsson, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013).

Skill and Knowledge Base

A primary production resource of the 21st century economy is knowledge. Knowledge is an infinite and intangible resource employed through systematic use and application can generate increasing returns. Unlike other economic resources: land, labor, and capital, knowledge is both regenerative and imperishable. Scholars researching entrepreneurship in small businesses, specifically the determinants that affect business startup, make claims that skills and knowledge increase business performance (Aldrich &

Yang, 2014; Cox & Pinfield, 2014). Aldrich and Yang (2014) argued that attaining knowledge and skills necessary to successfully operate a profitable business is a life-long process that is contingent upon heuristics and effective habits. Aldrich and Yang suggested that high levels of premature business failure and unpredictability in business enterprise is the direct result of the unsystematic, fragmented, and defective set of routines. However, business failures in small business have provided an opportunity for learning (Sarasvathy, Menon, & Kuechle, 2013). Aldrich and Yang (2014) provided insight into the fact the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial learning, prior industry experience and acquiring knowledge through interaction with colleagues, family, and teachers together contributes to the overall success of entrepreneurial ventures.

In contrast, Stuetzer et al. (2013) investigated the effects of entrepreneurial skill development on new businesses. Stuetzer et al. surmised that rather than traditional human capital such as skills, an increased level of diverse industry experience, more variation in entrepreneurial skills are applicable for growing a business. However, in contrast the type of experience and education seem to have little to no significant in the development of entrepreneurial skills (Stuetzer et al., 2013).

Debrulle et al. (2013) agreed with Stuetzer et al. (2013) about the limited influence of traditional human capital on the overall success of an entrepreneurial venture. Debrulle et al. measured different environmental conditions and the effects on the start-up process by using a population of 199 start-up companies located in Flanders, Belgium. Debrulle et al. concluded that start-up businesses created in the presence of

turbulent environmental conditions decrease the usefulness of acquired skills, and consequently alter the ability of the individual to operate a business successfully.

Numerous factors may contribute to an entrepreneur terminating a business prematurely throughout any stage of the startup process. More specifically, entrepreneurs fail because of not having the necessary preparation from education and industry training, and acquired knowledge and skills sets prior to launching a new business (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; Haniff & Halim, 2014). However, an entrepreneur is more likely to successfully transition out of the conception phase to the action stage of the startup process, typically after being confident in a self-analysis of the abilities and assets to achieve and deliver sufficient resources needed to guide the business (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; Klonek et al., 2014). Resources that may aid in the success of a small business include creative funding strategies used by 90% of entrepreneurs when initiating a new business.

Funding Evaluation

Microenterprises and small business operations are critical to the U.S. economy, even though nearly 50% of the businesses fail. More specifically, the most critical aspect of the entrepreneurial process is the availability and access to start-up capital to launch and grow the new business (Parker & Van Praag, 2012). Van Caneghem and Van Campenhout (2012) suggested over 80% of microenterprises and small businesses, owners often require business capital for startup enterprises in the form of investments and working capital to generate profits and earnings. Likewise, capital structure evolves

and change over time, but remain consistent to include a mixture of equity to debt (Coad, Segarra, & Teruel, 2013; Fatoki, 2013; Serrasqueiro & Nunes, 2012).

Coad et al. (2013) and Fraser, Bhaumik, and Wright (2015) surmised that younger business owners often experience higher financial constraint. Coad et al. surmised that if formal capital is limited, due to stringent financial regulations, entrepreneurs tend to rely more on family, friends, and financial resources, such as personal savings and earnings. In retrospect, access to formal capital for microenterprises and small business has gained increasing prominence over the last few years (Fraser et al., 2015). However, the lack of priority with developing fields, policy makers, and the commercial and financial organization is staggering (Fraser et al., 2015). Without access to suitable funding for new businesses would prominent opportunities in the market, and would see limited growth; furthermore, they would not be able to survive long-term (Coad et al., 2013; Eid & El-Gohary, 2013).

Grable and Carr (2014) explored financial systems, and the problems Malaysian and Costa Rican microenterprise and small business owner's face when accessing formal capital. Grable and Carr conducted research using 124 microenterprises and small businesses residing in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and San Jose, Costa Rica. Grable and Carr revealed different stringent financial structures, policies, and regulation in both countries. Such requirements disqualified candidates that lacked suitable education levels, financial records and documents, and a proper business plan. Grable and Carr provided insights into new financial tools, the development of different strategies and communication

channels to relate information regarding credit requirements and access for new microenterprises and small businesses.

Coleman and Kariv (2013) identified critical tools to improve microenterprises and small business success. Coleman and Kariv surmised that small business owners should clearly identify and evaluate the most suitable available funding options prior to the decision to launch a new business. Prior to entry, business owners are encouraged to conduct a feasibility test that evaluates the entrepreneur's knowledge, skills, and experiences in cash flow from profit (Haniff & Halim, 2014). Incorporating a feasibility test may mitigate financial hardship and risk (Coleman et al., 2016; Coleman & Kariv, 2013).

Parker and Van Praag (2012) acknowledge that business funding is critical to start any business and important for entrepreneurs to identify suitable funding options relevant to both the need of the business and the entrepreneur. As a result, research on entrepreneurial financing include creative formal, and informal funding resources. Options include bootstrapping, crowd funding, angel investors, super angels, venture capitalists, government financing and programs, bank loans and initial public offerings (Coleman et al., 2016; Vismara, 2016). I explored two informal funding options for small business in the 21st century such as bootstrapping and crowd funding to explore the endowment activities by entrepreneurs that contribute to business success.

Bootstrapping strategies. Bootstrapping is a financing strategy commonly used among entrepreneurs in the 21st century. More than 90% of all new microenterprise and small business entrepreneurs use bootstrap as an option to finance a new venture (Nwobu

et al. 2015). There were two types of bootstrapping identified, those that involve borrowing against assets and those that do not, leaving getting money from friends and family, and using cash on hand. Much of the research contributes new start-up business activity to the financing strategy wherein entrepreneurs use out of network groups and money given by family, friends, and money from their own investments, earnings, and resources (Osei-Assibey, Bokpin, & Twerefou, 2012). Little research exists regarding entrepreneurs who continue to pursue bootstrapping strategic business approach after the startup phase of the life cycle of the business as part of an informal financial plan (Osei-Assibey et al., 2012).

Winborg (2015) explored funding strategies and challenges that microenterprises and small business owners use to secure when using bootstrapping methods. Winborg used data from 120 new microenterprises and small business founders in a Swedish university incubator to identify two types of bootstrapping, gaining capital resources with and without the need for equity or banks. Winborg suggested aggressive methods of bootstrapping reduce the amount of challenges in starting a company. Winborg provided insights into the importance of entrepreneurs developing creative strategies to obtain the necessary resources to launch new businesses. In addition, entrepreneurs were less likely to seek resources from inner personal networks and more likely to draw from weak ties and out of network groups (Fiore et al., 2013).

Grichnik et al. (2014) analyzed factors influencing entrepreneurial financing. Grichnik et al. supported Winborg with the latter suggesting that little research exist on what prompts entrepreneurs to pursue bootstrapping strategies when other funding

options are available. However, Pleis (2014) disagreed with both Grichnik et al. and Winborg suggestion of acquiring bootstrapping type of financing, rather suggested a good accounting practices is a primarily contribution to the overall health of the firm.

Crowd funding strategies. The most critical resource required for a new start up business to succeed is financing (Grichnik et al., 2014). Crowd funding is one of the newest emerging funding phenomena in the 21st century to secure funds and is an alternative to traditional funding strategies (Lin & Viswanathan, 2015; Vismara, 2016). Crowd funding originated in 2009 from an earlier concept called crowd sourcing. Crowd sourcing welcomed the public to invest both large and small contributions to online projects without compensation (Schwartz, 2015; Vismara, 2016). The purpose of crowd funding is twofold and first allowing the individual to use web-based resources to utilize the social network to raise business capital (Vismara, 2016). Second, crowd-funding strategies welcome ordinary people to share and invest in business opportunities that are more common among accredited and wealthier individuals (Lin & Viswanathan, 2015; Vismara, 2016). In 2012, President Obama signed a Jobs Act or Crowding Act to legalize equity crowd funding for startups and small businesses (García & Estellés-Arolas, 2015; Vismara, 2016).

Little peer-reviewed literature exists on the nature and long-term success of crowd funding strategies; as a result, Mollick (2014) explored factors linked with the success and failures of crowd funding operations in comparison to other funding strategies. Mollick depicted crowd funding as an individual-driven, internet-based resource that collects financial contributions. Mollick extracted data from 23,719 US residents who

raised their project goals from one of the largest and most dominating crowd funding sites, called kick-starter. Venture capitalists who fund business start-up projects typically evaluate the quality of the projects and the likelihood of the business to succeed or fail. Mollick surmised that of geography, networks of relationships, and the project's display of preparation links to a higher probability of project success (Anderson & Ullah, 2014). Mollick provided insights into the link between strategic forms of fundraising, and the failure or success of the process.

On the other hand, scholars and policymakers have criticized internet-based crowd-funding strategies as a method of securing funds for new and small businesses. Although the Jobs Act of 2012 projects limitations and permits specific exemptions of crowd funding securities transactions, scholars and policymakers implied that this method of securing funds is a platform for misappropriation, financial schemes, and loss or lack of financial returns (Vismara, 2016). Vismara (2016) surmised that crowd funding violates the Securities Act of 1933. Vismara (2016) noted the Securities Act of 1933 requires businesses, prior to selling any type of investment contracts, bonds, or share of stock to the public, to first register the securities with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or transactions result in cancellation.

In conclusion, although different perspectives exist on the funding options available to finance a microenterprise small business, a business will not reach maturity without capital backup and will prematurely fail. Consequently, the cost of premature business failure is endless and influences the entrepreneur financially, socially, and psychologically (Ucbasaran et al., 2013). In retrospect, business planning strategies prior

to evaluating suitable and available financial feasibility options prior to making the decision to pursue or reestablishment of a business is critical and may contribute to business success.

Strategic planning. To support successful strategy development of small business entrepreneurs, understanding why some entrepreneurs fail and others do not is critical. Higher sales, growth, profits, and overall quality performing companies link to successful business planning (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Primarily startup business processes and strategies are the most critical paths of planning and achieving sales and profit target (Chwolka & Raith, 2012). Whether a firm is large or small, the business startup course of actions should be specific (Liao et al., 2014). The business processes and strategies should be pragmatic, measurable, and ambitious, but attainable to any objectives established (Vykhodets & Chumachenko, 2012). Not all businesses are alike in their methods and selection of operation or structure (Ghezal, 2015).

Small business structure and operations implemented strategically will allow a business to increase productivity outcomes and mitigate system failure and malfunctions in the structure of the business (Chwolka & Raith, 2012). Likewise, much of the research links business planning to an increase in firm performance, and without implementation of planning strategies the firm may not reach full potential (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Regardless of the size of the firm, the overarching and underlining common objective for all businesses is to have the best product or service over their competitors, as well as successfully maintain profitability for a long period of time (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013; Fraser et al., 2015; Ghezal, 2015; Vykhodets & Chumachenko, 2012). A selected

few businesses will integrate multiple strategies rather than rely on a single generic strategy (Ghezal, 2015). Although the means and direction of a business may vary, the availability of possible strategies direction a business entity can adopt is endless (Rizzo & Fulford, 2012).

Numerous definitions exist over a broad range of industries for the term business strategies. In general, businesses will strategically forecast specific long-term business objectives over a three to five-year period. In the technology profession, Vykhodets and Chumachenko (2012) defined business strategy as a system of goals that aid in the management of all business operations and parameters. Generic strategies may be appropriate for small and medium-sized companies and implement at any stage of a business life cycle (Kaya, 2015). The most successful business entities can implement well- developed strategies at the early development stages (Rizzo & Fulford, 2012).

Johnson, Askar, and Imam (2013) complemented Vykhodets and Chumachenko (2012) definition of a business strategy. Johnson et al. depicted strategic business planning through a political view and surmised it as a critical business strategy used that is necessary for an entity to reach maturity. A business will ensure that a well-developed business strategy is implemented that grows the businesses profitable core (Johnson et al., 2013). A business entity can expand into the adjoining areas around the core business identity that support the entities competitive advantage (Johnson et al., 2013). Johnson et al. equated their findings to that of a well-developed business strategy to an organism. Johnson et al. likened businesses to an ameba-like structure strategically located within the market that interacts with the products or services with the customers in the

environment. Over time, the ameba-like structure (business entity) adjusts to the changes in the environment (customers) through feedback and the business entity can meet the demanding needs of the market (Johnson et al., 2013). If a business gets off course from the alignment and consistency of their established businesses identity (core), the changes in the environment will threaten to destroy the business core identity (Johnson et al., 2013). In return, growth is inevitable and presents competitors with a challenge to grow (Rizzo & Fulford, 2012).

On the other hand, Fraser's et al. (2015) definition of business strategies conflicted slightly with that of Johnson et al. (2013) and Vykhodets and Chumachenko (2012). Fraser et al. defined business strategies as a broad set of processes created over time that apply to all enterprises and involve everyone from the board of directors to the employees. Little literature exists regarding the strategies required within the first 2 years for small business owners to use to start their ventures (Wagner, Block, Miller, Schwens, & Xi, 2015). I employed the business strategy definition described by Johnson et al. (2013) and Vykhodets and Chumachenko (2012). All new created and established business entities develop different types of business strategies at different levels within the start-up process (Ghezal, 2015; Johnson et al., 2013; Rizzo & Fulford, 2012; Vykhodets & Chumachenko, 2012).

Chwolka and Rait (2012) analyzed the process of implementation of business planning of nascent entrepreneurs before market entry. Chwolka and Rait explored the relationship and outcomes of business planning and business performance. Chwolka and Rait argued whether rational decision-making when evaluating nascent entrepreneurs'

business ideas and planning help improve post-market entry and firm's market performance. Chwolka and Rait revealed that prior to market entry business planning is essential, and mitigates poor start-ups and helps to improve business results.

Likewise, Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) used a convenience sample of 210 women-led start-up firms residing in England and Wales, to explore the relationship between the impact of planning strategies of female entrepreneurs on existing product and service improvements and advertisement and promotional growth strategies. Mitchelmore and Rowley explored planning horizon strategies on the number of employees, cash flow, annual sales, infrastructure investments, new product development, and expenditures on the outcome of business performance of female entrepreneurs who indicated the desire for small business growth. Although numerous growth strategies exist, the most critical growth strategy for small businesses were noted as expanding advertising and improving existing products or services (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013).

Stage 1b: Existence (Gestation Phase)

Microenterprises and small businesses are the foundation of the economy in the United States (Harker & Lam, 2013). The classifications of these businesses together make up over 90% of total private sector jobs. Despite the increase worldwide of individuals engaging in start-up activities to start a new business, approximately 50% of small businesses fail at the gestation phase, within 2 years of initiation (Aldrich & Yang, 2014). The gestation phase is a component of the initial existence stage. The existence phase is the beginning of the growth series of gestational phases in an OLC model.

According to Arenius and Ehrstedt, during the gestation phase, individuals engage in activities aimed at launching a new firm are nascent entrepreneurs. An endless number of start-up activities exist after a nascent entrepreneur has entered the gestation stage of the business life cycle and engaged in actions associated with launching a new business.

Entrepreneurial Mode of Entry and Timing

Despite the close attention from scholars and policy makers, little research exists on the factors that establish the mode of which individuals enter entrepreneurship (Parker & Van Praag, 2012). While there is a significant lack of research on the topic (Gupta, Goktan, & Gunay, 2014), there are two primary theories on environmental and social economic constraints influencing an individual's entry mode into a business. The entry mode is one of the most critical phases of the start-up process, and can establish a business for long-term survival and success. In contrast, choosing a mode of entry selection that is contradictive to an individual's skills, assets, knowledge, and experience can increase the probability of premature business failure (Haniff & Halim, 2014).

The first and most critical strategy noted in the literature which entrepreneurs and business leaders use, is the mode of entry strategies (Bhat & Daulerio, 2014; Gupta et al., 2013; Parker & Van Praag, 2012). The mode of entry into entrepreneurship can either be from an existing business, such as that of a family business or entrepreneurial franchise or the creation of a new business venture (Bhat & Daulerio, 2014; Parker & Van Praag, 2012). Parker and Van Praag (2012) used a cross-sectional sample of Dutch entrepreneurs residing in the Netherlands to analyze determinants that effect the individuals' decision on the entry into a business. Parker and Van Praag argued the mode

of entry by entrepreneurs have distinct differences between taking over a family business and establishing a new business. Specifically, Parker and Van Pragg (2012) noted that individuals desiring to take over a family business required less formal education, transfer of tactical skills, and deployment of resources because of the dependence on the advance knowledge of their successors. The researchers implied that take over businesses required different human capital, then for individuals who desire to create a new business. While on the other hand, individuals with a higher education level had a higher probability of starting a new business even with the opportunity to reestablish a family business.

Bhat and Daulerio (2014) explored determinant factors associated with social capital and financial capital on the selection of an individual mode of entry selection. Bhat and Daulerio (2014) also explored determinants that influence an individual's decision to enter a new business or an already established business such as; industry experience, age, higher education, race, and hours worked per week. As a result, Bhat and Daulerio revealed that the modes of which some individual transitions into a business is contingent upon the sector of the business the individual selects.

Bastié, et al. (2013) are other scholars who have explored the mode of entry among business leaders. They used the System Information of New Enterprise (SINS) database to gather 20,374 new and take over French businesses that had survived for at least one month in the Netherlands. Bastié et al. (2013) suggested a positive link between social capital and the creation of a new business. Capital is associated with influencing a small business owner decision on their mode of entry into a new or established business

(Bastié et al., 2013). Capital is common among transfers within family firms, and increasingly costlier in terms of stakeholder relationships and the transfer of tangible assets. As a result, Bastié et al. surmised that takeover businesses were overall less risky and had a higher probability of using financing through a bank.

Informational Advantage

Millions of people embark upon new business ownership each year. Self-employment is both feasible and attractive to people around the world (Aldrich & Yang, 2014). New start-up businesses around the world equal the number of businesses that have failed (Seuneker, Lans, & Wiskerke, 2013). In addition to the deficiency in the preparation prior to the initiation of a new business, the number of start-up businesses that have failed contributes to the lack of knowledge in the necessary strategies require to succeed in business long-term (Aldrich & Yang, 2014).

Preceding the initiation and throughout the organization process of a new venture, an entrepreneur enters a phase of information seeking, a process of gathering necessary information needed specific to the individuals sector regarding how to operate a business. New entrepreneurs entering into new venture creation often lack a background of family business owners, career experience, and business education (Aldrich & Yang, 2014). Scholars agree that any individual embarking on a new business venture creation must acquire the necessary knowledge from different sources and resources to create a viable and profitable venture (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; Fiore et al., 2013).

Aldrich and Yang (2014) investigated how entrepreneurs gather and acquire information and the challenges encountered throughout the start-up process. Aldrich and

Yang discovered that entrepreneurial learning and acquiring knowledge is a life-long process, and associated with the growth and survival of new firms. As a result, Aldrich and Yang provided insight into the process of how entrepreneurs acquire information and the link between routines, habits, and heuristics.

On the other hand, Seuneke et al. (2013) argued the entrepreneurial learning process is not one single process, but rather a combination of influences by the individual's previous work environment and a social and cognitive process. Seuneke et al. explored the learning process of 120 farmers who started a new business on a farm in the Netherlands. Seuneke et al. discovered that entrepreneurial farmers starting non-farmer businesses acquired information through patterns of explorative and experimental learning. Seuneke et al. provided insights into the need for further development of entrepreneurship learning in the multifunctional agriculture sector.

Entrepreneurs acquire knowledge and information on how to operate a business using different resources (Popescu, 2015). No one single method exists indicating how to acquire specific industry information (Rahman et al., 2015). Additional knowledge and information required by entrepreneurs vary based upon demographics and industry.

Social Capital: Networking for Success

Network theory has gained favorable attention over the years and is more favorable in the entrepreneurial research continuum. Although measuring variables of networks are challenging, recent studies have shown that networks affect the overall entrepreneurial process (Bastié et al., 2013; Fernández-Pérez, Esther, del Mar, & Rodríguez-Ariza, 2014; Rodríguez et al., 2014). In addition, to conflicting perspective

exist; much of the literature depicts the development and effectiveness of managing the social capital relationship as crucial entrepreneurial competencies important for building wealth and the creation of jobs (Rahman et al., 2015).

Entrepreneurial social capital networks include the subcategories of formal and informal networks (Bastié et al., 2013). Informal social capital consists of families, business contacts, and personal relationships. On the other hand, formal networks consist of relationships with banks, accountants, creditors, venture capitalists, lawyers, and any trade officials (Anderson & Ullah, 2014). Furthermore, the results of social networks permit access channels of which entrepreneurs can gain a variety of resources needed to start and grow a business. Bastié et al. (2013) employed data extracted from entrepreneurs residing in the Netherlands to determine that belonging to a family business of business successors is a primary source of social capital. In addition, Bastié et al. noted that entrepreneurs use close networks to gather information to identify new and existing business opportunities. Bastié et al. provided insights into how networks enable the transfer of entrepreneurial values, increase risk-taking abilities, and catapult new and innovative ventures.

Fernández-Pérez et al. (2014) extracted data from a sample of 289 male and 211 female students who receiving research grants from Spain's Ministry of Science and Innovation. Fernández-Pérez et al. depicted that social capital motivates the creation of start-up business ventures. Fernández-Pérez et al. analyzed male and female entrepreneurial consciousness and awareness differences in evaluating business opportunities in social networks. Although Fernández-Pérez et al. suggested that social

networks help improve the business performance of businesses involved, males and females evaluate support and utilization of the resources within social networks differently. In contrast to Parker and Van Pragg (2012) findings, Fernández-Pérez et al. surmised that obstacles exist in the overall effectiveness of utilizing and building quality networking activities.

Durkin, McGowan, and Babb (2013) explored the impact and quality of social network relationships between large and small financial institutions and small business entrepreneurial enterprises. Durkin et al. surmised that over time the relationship between banks and small business enterprises have become damaged through lack of trust and confidences. Durkin et al. provided insights into the need to improve support infrastructure during turmoil.

Cooper, Hamel, and Connaughton (2012) analyzed social network research from a communicative perspective. Cooper et al. used 18 resident companies to explore the process of social network communication patterns in a university business incubator. Cooper et al. suggested that resident incubator business owners are motivated to participate in internal networking activity based on the business individual need. The perceived obstacles and motivations of communication were increasingly robust among university business incubator networking relationships. Although business incubators provide strong intellectual and material resources for resident companies, Cooper et al. surmised that lack of information about other resident companies, lack of confidence in keeping funding source information and innovations secure, and mitigating time commitment constraints aids in improving effective business network experiences.

Cooper et al. provided insights into creative and effective incubator site design that could increase business incubator networking experiences.

Stage 1c: Existence (Birth Phase)

The initiation of a start-up business is the principal objective of entrepreneurial achievement. Approximately one out of every 10 adults have started a new business in the United States (Singer et al., 2015). Despite the initiating actions of several entrepreneurs, 2-years after the conception of the venture countless businesses owners prematurely terminated the business (Yang & Aldridger, 2012). Churchill and Lewis (1983) suggested business owners in the birth phase of the OLC are often young, flexible, unstructured, and informal in management styles. The birth phase is a component of the existence stage. Systems and formal planning in the existence stage are nonexistent. The primary objective of a business residing in the birth phase is to secure resources necessary to build and launch the basic business operations to ensure the business will survive (Fiore et al., 2013).

Similarly, Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) acknowledged the birth stage as one of the most critical phases of the process because the individual's intents and actions become a reality that accumulates into a new firm. Activities after an individual has started a new business are countless. Furthermore, exploration of an approach to building a new team, in conjunction with various marketing tactics may add insight into what strategies are necessary for a small business to succeed (Bodlaj & Rojšek, 2014).

Talent and Acquisition: Building a New Venture Team

Pressures of survival and establishing legitimacy in the market are just a few liabilities and challenges facing new microenterprises and small businesses in the United States (Diehl, Toombs, & Maniam, 2013; Karadag, 2015). As a result, new entrepreneurial ventures often launch through shared efforts, rather than solo proprietor self-employed individuals alone (Cruz, Howorth, & Hamilton, 2013). Although, the topic of new venture team creation is relevant to the study research topic on successful strategies, however a considerable gap exists in the literature on the dynamics of entrepreneurial teams in relation to the organizational and corporate management teams (Schjoedt et al., 2013).

Multiple definitions of venture team exist. However, the criteria of the study consist of a small number of like-minded members with shared commitments that work together to achieve a set of common goals for the sake of the growth and success of the business. The most critical trait of a venture team is the cohesive relationship among all members, and ultimately affects the overall growth and survival of a new business (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Massenot & Straub, 2015). The recruitment process for new venture team members small business consist of base skill set and cohesive upon relationships (Anderson & Ullah, 2014). Although both are desirable, the dominate recruitment criteria for microenterprises and small business owners is team composition.

Cruz et al. (2013) explored factors that influence team membership and formation among seven entrepreneurial family teams in Honduras. Cruz et al. focused on larger and more diverse teams with different levels of commitment. Cruz et al. found the ambitions

of younger team members within a family dynamic exceed the overall business objectives of successor members in the family. In addition, Cruz et al. surmised the older generation level of commitment to the long-term involvement of the business was inevitable. As a result, Cruz et al. provided insight into the motivation of how entrepreneurship can maximize and provide quality stewardship of family wealth and well-being. However, Brannon, Wiklund, and Haynie (2013) researched the dynamics of teams for new ventures, but focused on teams limited to two members. Venture teams regardless of maturity and size, are essential to the overall growth in a business (Brannon et al., 2013). Despite this, Schjoedt et al. (2013) surmised that family-based business teams often lack the skill set necessary to ensure new business success.

Likewise, Sciascia, Mazzola, and Chirico (2013) extracted data from a sample of 199 established family businesses in Switzerland, and argued that a team built with family members only generates less entrepreneurial activity than non-family member teams. Sciascia, et al. suggested that older generations often challenge the vision and stewardship of the present generation. Sciascia et al. provided insight into the selection process of team members when building a new business team. Sciascia, et al. surmised the amount of diversity, especially in family-based team is critical to the overall success and growth of a new business venture.

Leung, Foo, and Chaturvedi (2012) identified internal factors of new venture teams, and sampled 60 high-tech firms from Singapore to investigate the dynamics of building a new team with members with shared organizational experiences. Leung et al. suggested that a team with shared organizational experiences only increases stability and

functional diversity distinctiveness. Leung et al. revealed a robust link between team members' relationships, to the overall success of family and nonfamily-based business.

Marketing

An endless array of marketing strategies exists for both small, medium enterprise's, and larger corporations, many of which are developed and implemented based upon the entity's size, market position, age, and maturity of an organization (Grissmann, Plank, & Brunner-Sperdin, 2013; McKelvey, 2016). Classic and generic marketing strategies could include anything from cost leadership, differentiation, and concentration to marketing segmentation, position, and mixes (McKelvey, 2016). Having a variety of marketing strategies is more appropriate and is the primary focus of larger corporations, rather than small and medium-sized enterprises (Bodlaj & Rojšek, 2014; Liao et al., 2014). On the other hand, SME's tend to focus on niche strategy, horizontal integration, vertical integration, and co-competition strategy (McKelvey, 2016). Marketing strategies are endless, and contingent upon the business size and maturity (Bodlaj & Rojšek, 2014). However, incorporating marketing strategies is a critical factor of business success especially during the early stages of development for small businesses (McKelvey, 2016).

The role of marketing within startup small businesses has gained significant attention within the research continuum over the past decades (McKelvey, 2016). Consequently, Grissmann et al. (2013) have found much conflict that exists with linking the role of strategic marketing management to business performance, and competitive advantage in different firms. Much of the literature on the role of strategic marketing in

small businesses remains inconclusive (Bodlaj & Rojšek, 2014; Grisseemann et al., 2013; McKelvey, 2016). Although countless small companies succeed past 5 years, the challenge remains for startup small businesses in the United States on the execution of how to attract and serve customers (McKelvey, 2016; Sarasvathy & Dew, 2013). Cronin-Gilmore (2012) and Grisseemann et al. (2013) agreed that small business performance is not contingent upon specific strategies, but rather upon the deployment of key resources to the most lucrative and earning potential targeted markets. In contrast, McKelvey (2016) argued the literature does not show a positive link to the actual formation and development of a company's resources to an increase in business performance, especially for small businesses. Fiore et al. (2013) conducted similar research and agreed that for small businesses to succeed marketing strategies need to extend beyond the limited resources that are available. Rather, the survival of a small business requires the owners to have internal complementary capabilities such as skills, knowledge acquired, combined with the resources in ways that imitate market conditions (Haniff & Halim, 2014).

Stage 2: Survival (Infancy Phase)

Microenterprises and small businesses vary in size, structure, management style, the number of employees, and the capacity for growth (Block et al., 2015). Several business owners prematurely terminate their business just after two years (Yang & Aldridger, 2012). The early phase is a pivotal period in the life of the business process, as the challenge of growth both financially and managerial is now in existence. The infancy phase is a component of the survival stage. Churchill and Lewis acknowledged the

business owner in a state of survival as a workable business entity. During the survival stage, Churchill and Lewis suggested the firm size rapidly increase as trained professionals now help oversee, and share in the leadership and daily management of the business. Business owners often facilitate daily operations, even if other employees are present. Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) identified the business owners in the survival state as baby business owner who have now demonstrated to the market concrete legitimacy.

The duration period of the survival stage can vary from one business to the next. Baby business owners transition in and out of the OLC, and function in the baby business owner phase longer than others (Phillips & Knowles, 2012). Arenius and Ehrstedt's (2008) design reflects the baby business owner phase as requiring an establishment of different strategies. The infancy phase involves numerous themes, and not limited to the baby business owners having knowledge of the industry and competitive nature of industry of which the baby business owner expresses interest in to improve operational effectiveness (Phillips & Knowles, 2012).

Industry and Competitive Culture Analysis

Overtime considerable attention has increased in exploring the unique relationship between overall business performances because of competitiveness (Dadzie et al., 2012). Risk and competitiveness is more prevalent in entrepreneurial type of jobs than salary-based employment (Bonte & Piegeler, 2012). The existence of a positive link between the exploitation of market imperfections that limit competition and business performance exist. On the other hand, Agbemava et al. (2016) argued the focus between the two is prematurely inconclusive because each organization is different, which does not allow the

results to quantify any relationship. Small businesses seek for either differentiation or efficiency in the broad market (Kaya, 2015).

Le and Raven (2015) argued that numerous businesses have failed prematurely because of improper structuring and catastrophic malfunctions in the organization. Dadzie et al. (2012) suggested structural equation modeling as an effective tool in evaluating the structure of small business competitive strategies on an organization's performance and market. Dadzie et al. surmised that successful competitive advantage strategies involve establishing a distinct presence prior to the early stages of business operations.

The literature on competitive advantages for large corporations is more prevalent in the research community than in small and medium-sized enterprises (Kaya, 2015). A large body of literature exist that explored gender differences among competitiveness in SME's (Bönte & Piegeler, 2012). However, very little research exists on the effects of the disadvantages and advantages of competitiveness on small and medium-sized enterprises in both male and female-owned small businesses (Kaya, 2015).

Gender gaps exist and influence the overall decision of small business ownership and organizational performance (Dadzie et al., 2012). Although gender in small business ownership is not emphasis, several countries around the world, suggest that men are more competitive and more inclined to take a risk in the creation of a business than females (Bönte & Piegeler, 2013). Among factors contributing to the overall success and growth of a small business, Gorgievski and Stephan (2016) suggested environmental condition,

business taxations, the size of a population, motivation, skill, networks, financial accessibility, and business knowledge hinders success and growth.

Stage 3: Success-Growth (Adolescences Phase)

If a venture owner can adapt to unpredictable environmental changes, and massive growth increases, the owner of the entrepreneurial business will achieve true economic health (McFarland & McConnell, 2013). Successful businesses have become the central drivers of the United States economic recovery and growth (McFarland & McConnell, 2013). On the other hand, the challenges faced during the adolescence stage are business operations that need to keep the company profitable and stable (Arenius & Ehrstedt, 2008). The adolescence phase is a component of the success-growth stage. Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) suggested the business owners in the success-growth stage have successfully navigated a new business from an elementary state into a more independent state of functioning that begins to access and fulfill the needs of the market consistently to maintain customers.

Churchill and Lewis (1983) acknowledged the business owner in the success-growth stage as obtaining success through consistent growth. Often, the internal operations of a business in the success-growth stage are stable; and have established long-term planning, office systems, formal organizational structure, and consistent routines in its workplace (Hmielski, Carr, & Baron, 2015). Churchill and Lewis, and Arenius and Ehrstedt (2008) agreed that in the success-growth stage the development of the business is expanding rapidly, for which the business owner must prepare. If the business owner can implement key strategies to stabilize the business growth, and

navigate successfully through the self-regulated adolescence phase of the start-up process, the owner may disengage from the firm, placing the business under new management or ownership and launch additional ventures. Preparing for the challenges of growth while in the success-growth stage is critical to understanding what strategies are necessary for a small business to succeed.

Preparing for and Evaluating the Challenges of Growth

The rapidly growing field of microenterprises and small businesses are important contributors of job creation in the United States. Approximately half of entrepreneurial microenterprises and small businesses in the United States succeed long-term (McFarland & McConnell, 2013). Despite recessions, environmental and managerial changes, most entrepreneurial venture functioning within the infancy stage and throughout evaluate and prepare for growth (McFarland & McConnell, 2013).

McFarland and McConnell (2013) investigated the correlation between growth of small businesses and local small business development policies. McFarland and McConnell extracted data from a 2009 survey of 556 different counties with a population of 50,000 or more, and over 3,283 municipalities with a population of 10,000 or more, received surveys. McFarland and McConnell provided insight into distinct management and operational challenges faced by small business owners throughout different stages of development. As a result, McFarland and McConnell surmised that policy maker, politicians, and local government policies must address small business challenges separate from large business to help small businesses successfully influence local communities.

Internal factors impede the growth of small businesses (McFarland & McConnell, 2013). Several small businesses lack critical internal attributes for growth. Agbemava et al. (2016) disagreed with McFarland and McConnell's (2013) perspective on growth and expansion, particularly for small businesses. Agbemava et al. identified a few successful strategies used by small business owners who displayed rapid growth in Ghana. Agbemava et al. surmised that while many companies prepare for growth and expansion, the minority of small businesses do not hire new employees throughout the growth and expansion phase of the business venture. More specifically, in low-income countries, small business entrepreneurs do not aspire to grow, nor are entrepreneurs equipped to manage larger enterprises (Parente & Feola, 2013).

Likewise, Raza, Khan, and Akoorie (2016) shared common perspectives of a growth and expansion halt specifically with small businesses. Raza et al. agreed that lack of desire to grow and expansion is the direct result of the obstacles to growth. Three percent of Schedule C small businesses in the United States hire a paid employee because of the many restrictions (Raz et al., 2016). As businesses grow, formalization and implementation of strategies limits constraints, aids in managing the business through the start-up process and become critical to the success of a business.

Failure and Challenges of Microenterprises

Small business entrepreneurs and Microenterprises are vital drivers in the creation of mainstream of jobs. Yet, 70% of microenterprise small businesses in America fail after 2 years (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013; Sarasvathy & Dew, 2013; SBA, 2014). Although unknown, failures among small businesses may provide a learning opportunity for other

nascent business owners (Sarasvathy et al., 2013), the lack of research perpetuates the astonishing high failure rates among micro and small business startup (Le & Raven, 2015; Sedliačiková et al., 2016). Miettinen and Littunen (2013) described the challenges to success for most start-up microenterprises and small businesses. Miettinen and Littunen suggested that small businesses often lack pre-entry experience, knowledge, and suitable startup strategies. Miettinen and Littunen surmised that new entrepreneurs often lack confidence, business planning, knowledge, management, skills, and specific strategies required to support a small business for the long haul. Other challenges to most microenterprises and small business include the lack of endurance, management, and leadership skills required for survival specifically during the start-up stage (Haniff & Halim, 2014).

Ucbasaran et al. (2013) surmised that lack of confidence contributed too many entrepreneurs whose business prematurely terminated. Ucbasaran et al. established premise after researching 576 small business entrepreneurs and the causes of business failure. Ucbasaran et al. revealed that less than half of the microenterprises and small business survived beyond 2 years. Subsequently, Ucbasaran et al. surmised that premature failure contributes to staggering economic conditions. Even though, entrepreneurs lacking confidence varied from the experienced business owners. Likewise, Millán, Hessels, Thurik, and Aguado (2013) contributed microenterprise and small business failure to the downturns of staggering economic conditions and government regulation restriction that paralyzes future success. Millán et al. noted that during

unpredictable economic changes, entrepreneurs limited hiring paid employees to assist with the upkeep of transactions required to maintain profitable.

Sakiru, D'Silva, Othman, DaudSilong, and Busayo (2013) conducted similar studies and surmised that leaders produce efficient companies to identify the causes of failure. Much of the research attributes the lack of available capital for microenterprises and small businesses as a primary factor for premature business failure (Haniff & Halim, 2014). Hence, undercapitalization has become the number one major challenge in maintaining sufficient capital to cover start-up cost and operations (Osei-Assibey et al., 2012). Likewise, the lack of experience and financial management has rendered a significant challenge to entrepreneurs. Particularly, the lack of management and knowledge in managing high expenses links to a decrease in profitability and sustaining a business for the long-term (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013).

A variation of perspective among scholars exists on the contributing factors of small business failure. However, no consensus to date exists in one single theory. On the other hand, scholars agreed that microenterprises and small business failure is a significant problem and poses striking consequences to the stakeholders, the owner, and economy (Gilding et al., 2015). Ucbasaran et al. (2013) surmised the failure of an entrepreneur's business not only has present repercussions, but a considerable impact even after the business has collapsed. Considering, the failures and challenges that microenterprises and small business entrepreneurs face in the 21st century in America may provide insights into what factors aid in assisting aspiring business owners on how to sustain a business beyond the critical point of the lifecycle of the company.

Transition

I included a background of the problem under investigation, and the purpose of the study in section 1. The nature of the study, research, and interview questions were included along with a discussion regarding two types of organizational life cycles (OLC) as the conceptual framework underpinning the study. Clarification of technical terms, limitations, delimitation and assumptions of the study were included in Section 1. In addition to a discussion regarding the significances of the study, I noted improvements in business practices and contribution to social change. A detailed literature review reflects insights from scholars of the value of strategies necessary for small business owners to succeed long-term. The primary objectives and contents of Sections 2 consist of the criteria for selecting participants and the roles of the researcher. A review of the research method, design, and discussion on how to conduct research in an ethical manner follows in section 2. Information surrounding the data collection process, techniques instruments, and the analysis process concludes section 2. Section 3 provides a synopsis of the study, and a presentation of the collection of data and findings rendered. I concluded section 3 with recommendations for future research.

Section 2: The Project

While microenterprises are generally small businesses that provide goods and services to their local communities, microenterprises are also significant contributors in driving economic around the world. Specifically, each year, more than 110 million microenterprises and small businesses start globally (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; Gohmann & Fernandez, 2014). Despite the increase in the creation of new microenterprises, small businesses fail at a rate of 70% after 2 years, which affects the number of available employment opportunities in the United States (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013; Phillips & Knowles, 2012; SBA, 2014). When microenterprise, event management owners have effective and successful strategies, the business is more likely to generate continual profits and survive beyond the critical years of premature business failure (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative, multiple case study was to explore the strategies that microenterprise, event management owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study design was to explore strategies that microenterprise event management owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years. The population for the study consists of owners from six different event management microenterprises located in Houston, Texas. The sample consists of one business owner from each microenterprise. Findings from this study may contribute to social change. Microenterprise owners may provide guidance on strategies they used to improve the growth and vitality of their businesses through the gain insights on proven

strategies needed to operate a business indefinitely, including insight on the best services to increase sales, profits, and market shares (Aldrich & Yang, 2014; de Mel, McKenzie, & Woodruff, 2014). If the business owners persist, they may be able to provide services that meet the needs of residents living within local communities. An increase in successful microenterprises may enhance competition in the business environment (Debrulle, Maes, & Sels, 2013). As a result, the microenterprise owners may be able to offer more local employment opportunities and contribute additional sources of income for low- to middle-class families.

Role of the Researcher

A qualitative researcher is typically involved in the entire research process. It is critical for the researcher to clarify their role in the research process. The role of the researcher in the data collection process is to collect reliable and valid data to answer the research question (Anyan, 2013; Jones, Suoranta, & Rowley, 2013; Kyvik, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). Researchers employing a qualitative methodology act as the primary collection instrument in a research study (Burgess & Wake, 2013; Collins & Cooper, 2014; Gibson, Benson, & Brand, 2013). I collected data using semistructured face-to-face interviews, audio recordings, notes from interview observations, and review of company records to explore the successful strategies used by microenterprise, event management owners to ensure the survival of their business beyond 2 years.

I have over 20 years of experience as a business owner of a wedding and special event management microenterprise. However, I am not an employee with any of the

participant microenterprises event management companies nor do I have a working relationship with the prospective participants.

The researcher's primary consideration is to adhere to and preserve the principles of the Belmont Report. The Belmont Report requires all researchers to protect the well-being of all human subjects (Adams & Miles, 2013; Brakewood & Poldrack, 2013; Mikesell, Bromley, & Khodyakov, 2013). The Belmont Report outlines the measure that should be used to protect all human subjects, as well as vulnerable populations, from potential exploitation (Akhavan, Ramezan, & Moghadam, 2013; Rogers & Lange, 2013). To ensure all human subjects are unharmed, researchers should practice the three principles of the Belmont Report protocol: (a) respecting all persons by treating everyone as an autonomous person, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice and fairness for all participants (Adams & Miles, 2013; Mikesell et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

I mitigated bias by avoiding viewing data through a personal lens; I wrote in a personal journal to bracket all personal observations, thoughts, and perspectives. Related experience can often create bias and alter the research findings (Balzacq, 2014). Likewise, viewing data through a personal lens is a form of bias, resulting in the misinterpretation of the meaning and shared experiences of the participants (Lach, 2014). Mitigation of bias is achievable; however, total elimination of personal bias is often difficult (Balzacq, 2014; Kache & Seuring, 2014; Ülle, 2014).

An interview protocol (see Appendix D) can ensure that the interview session follows a systematic process and design. An interview protocol is an effective tool to increase the validity and reliability of a study by ensuring the accuracy of the collected

data (Alby & Fatigante, 2014; Farago, Zide, & Shahani-Denning, 2013; Gorissen, Van Bruggen, & Jochems, 2013). I used the interview protocol as a guideline to keep the participants on track to garner pertinent information in the allotted timeframe. In addition, the interview protocol served as a procedural manual to help prepare me for unforeseen events that may arise during the interview exchange.

Participants

The criteria to participate in this study are business owners who have the knowledge and expertise in using successful strategies to operate an event management, microenterprise beyond 2 years. The selection of perspective participants is contingent upon the participants' ability to provide relevant information to aid in answering the research question (Jones et al., 2013; Lach, 2014; Leedy & Ormond, 2013). The eligibility criteria for participants included the following: (a) Houston, TX residents; (b) microenterprise event management owners; (c) successful for more than 2 years; and (d) adults at least 18 years of age.

Strategies for gaining access to the participants began after receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University. The prospective participants included business owners only. Instead of working through an organization to gain participants, I accessed prospective participants through my membership-based associations of business owners. The strategy included contacting potential event management business owners from International Live Events Association (ILEA) public published membership directory. The participant criteria are as followed: (a) Houston,

Texas Residences, (b) Successful microenterprise, (d) event management business owner, (e) In business, at least 2 years, and (f) at least 18 years of age or older.

After IRB approval obtain signed consent forms from the six event management business owners. I coordinated and scheduled interview dates, location and times with the confirmed event management business owners. Next, I sent an interview confirmation email with the details regarding the interview date, location and time. 24- Hours prior to the scheduled interview I sent a reminder email with details regarding the interview date, location and time. I arrived 15 minutes before the first scheduled interview to set up the two tape recorders by connecting them to a power source and placing them on the conference table, ready to use. Participants were greeted and I introduced myself upon arrival. To ensure the comfort of the participants, I implemented a short conversation prior to the interview. A signed consent form was requested if participants did not send the form before the meeting. I explained the interview protocol to each participant, which consisted of the following steps (a) introduction, (b) thank participant for participation in study (c) review consent forms and give participant a copy (d) remind participants of the purpose of the study, (e) turn on recording devices (f) ask the interview questions (Appendix D), (g) ask follow-up questions, (h) record and document given answers, (i) end recording (j) schedule the follow-up member checking date, and (k) thank the participant(s) reiterate contact numbers for follow up questions and concerns from participants. (L) end protocol.

Active membership is beneficial in the process of gaining access to potential participants through reducing the challenge of the mistrust of outsiders and unwillingness

to discuss information with a stranger (Khan, 2014; Nightingale, Sinha & Pollack, 2015; Swallow, 2014). Furthermore, my involvement in an active membership with a pool of eligible participants is furthermore beneficial in helping to establish an environment of trust, so that the participants can feel comfortable sharing information about their experience as a business owner and what strategies they used to sustain their business.

To establish a working relationship with participants within a study, researchers should make personal contact with the participants (Anyan, 2013; Collins & Cooper, 2014; McDonald, Kidney, & Patka, 2013). While implementing personal contact, I employed an ethic-of-care approach illustrated by Collins and Cooper (2014), which consisted of establishing a consistent line of communication with the participants.

In a case study design, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is crucial in building an environment of trust (Anyan, 2013; Lach, 2014; McDonald et al., 2013). I established telephone contact with each participant from the ILEA website fitting the study criteria to explain the objectives of the study. The first six event management business owners expressing interest in participating in the study received an invitation to participate in the study letter, along with a consent form to explain the details of the study, and to assist potential participants in deciding whether to take part in a study. Letters and consent forms continued to be sent to event management business owners listed in ILEA public directory (<http://www.ileahub.com>) until six potential event management business owners agreed to participate in the study.

To establish an alignment of the participant's characteristics with the overarching research question, the participants must meet the selected criterion (Jones et al., 2013;

Khan, 2014; Lach, 2014). Each participant selected to participate received the necessary insight and knowledge regarding strategies that event management owners used to succeed in business to help answer the research question.

Research Method and Design

Determining a research method and design in a qualitative research study is critical and helps the researcher answer the research questions (Jones et al., 2013; Lach, 2014; Leedy & Ormond, 2013). Three research methods exist in the research continuum that includes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013; Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). As a result, I chose a qualitative methodology and a multiple case study design for this study.

Research Method

A wide range of research methods exist, and are contingent upon the selection of a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method type of study. The use of a qualitative methodology is effective in gaining an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions, insight, experience, and regarding a phenomenon in a natural setting (Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Venkatesh et al., 2013). The qualitative methodology aligns with the objectives of exploring what strategies did microenterprise use to keep their business viable beyond 2 years.

I used the qualitative methodology over the quantitative or mixed methodology because the strategy (a) results in themes from the data, and (b) the problem requires an explanation beyond a yes or no answer (Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Mauceri, 2014). The qualitative methodology is flexible, and it requires more time collecting data (Leedy &

Ormond, 2013). However, the method is beneficial in enabling the integration of unforeseen findings. On the other hand, the quantitative methodology was not appropriate for this study because quantitative researchers employ statistical techniques to generalize patterns in relationships (Aastrup & Halldorsson, 2013). A quantitative methodology may limit an attempt to capture and understand the experiences of each participant (Gelei & Dobos, 2014; Leedy & Ormond, 2013; Mauceri, 2014). Likewise, the mixed method combines both in-depth insights and statistical data, which was not suitable for the study.

Research Design

The use of a multiple case study design was suitable for this study because the design allowed me to garner detailed information to the questions of how, why and what from multiple participants using open-ended questions. Under a qualitative methodology, five different designs exist: (a) ethnography, (b) grounded theory, (c) phenomenological study, (d) a case study, and (e) narrative (Aastrup & Halldorsson, 2013; Cronin, 2014). However, based on my selection of the qualitative methodology, three design options were available for consideration. The research designs include a case study, phenomenology, and ethnography (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Selecting a design is the second step after the appropriate research method is established (Cronin, 2014; Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Venkatesh et al., 2013).

A case study methodology consists of in-depth data gathering and is appropriate when exploring a unique concern over a fixed period (Leedy & Ormond, 2013). A multiple case study design was suitable when exploring the experiences of the strategies that microenterprise, event management owners use to keep their business viable beyond

2 years. Microenterprises owners are the principal operators of the business, with limited hired staff that assists with the day-to-day operations. I selected a multiple case study because the design was the most suitable for garnering insights from one sample from each six event management microenterprises. I considered other research design as well, such as phenomenological and ethnographic designs, which were not suitable for this study. A phenomenological design is an attempt to understand people's perceptions of a specific event (Irvine et al., 2013; Leedy & Ormord, 2013; Tomkins & Eatough, 2013). As a result, a phenomenological design was not appropriate for the study because the design requires a researcher to explore the meaning and interpretation of an individuals' experience. Likewise, an ethnographic design requires observations of people, patterns, languages, distinct cultures, and societies over time to interpret behaviors and experiences (Hampshire, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Simpson, Slutskaya, Hughes, & Simpson, 2014).

I ensured data saturation through the process of follow-up member checking of data interpretation. Data saturation can occur when no new information, coding, themes, or results emerge (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Keyvanara, Karimi, Khorasani, & Jazi, 2014). A data saturation check followed the third participant's interview to evaluate the existence of any similarities and repetition of information, codes, and themes. As a result, if data saturation is achieved conducting further interviews are unnecessary (Carcone, Tokarz, & Ruocco, 2015). Selecting microenterprise event management owners knowledgeable in the field of successful business strategies helped identify needed insights to answer the research question.

Population and Sampling

The population for the study consists of owners from six different event management microenterprises located in Houston, Texas. The sample consists of one business owner from each microenterprise. Manerika and Manerika (2013) depicted a population as the total group of people, events, or things explored. The participants are representative of the owners in the event management industry in the city of Houston, which contains a considerable number of microenterprises.

The sampling method for the qualitative case study design is purposeful. A purposeful sampling method permits the selection of information-rich cases to investigate the successful strategies used by microenterprise event management, business owners in depth (Aastrup & Halldorsson, 2013; O'Donnell, 2014; Palinkas et al., 2015). I selected a purposeful sampling method to target participants who were knowledgeable about successful strategies, and who could provide diverse perspectives on the strategies used by microenterprise event management in business that survived beyond 2 years. The information garnered from each participant may aid in answering the research question (Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014; Khan, 2014; Leedy & Ormond, 2013).

The number of selected participants consists of a sample size of six. The sample consisted of one business owner from each microenterprise who had been successful in business for more than 2 years. A researcher uses a subset of the total population to establish the number of participants for a study (Kirkwood & Price, 2013; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). The subset size must be large enough to garner information to help answer the research question, but small enough to reach data

saturation (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014; Jones et al., 2013; Patton, 2015). I selected the number of participants to include in the study by examining the sample sizes in three studies with similar context that generated the necessary information to achieve data saturation and answer the research question. Paoloni and Dumay (2015) used nine participants in a case study design to explore how capital influences women-owned microenterprises. Gordon, Hamilton, and Jack (2012) employed five respondents in a qualitative case study design to explore the relationships between entrepreneurship education delivered by higher education institutions and small-and medium-sized, growth-oriented small business owners. Jayashankar and Goedegebuure (2012) employed a qualitative case study with five participants to explore marketing strategies in child labor, self-help groups, the environment, health care center enterprises, and education groups. The average numbers of participants used throughout the three similar studies is six. Six participants represented an adequate sampling amount for conducting a qualitative analysis in this qualitative multiple case study design.

To ensure data saturation I employed follow-up member checking of the interpreted data. The process of member checking repeated after each participant's interview to ensure that the information was accurate and no new information, coding, themes and information emerged (Harvey, 2015; Houghton et al., 2013; Jonsén, Melender, & Hilli, 2013). After the third participant's interview, I conducted a data saturation check. To achieve data saturation, no repetition of data should occur, nor should no new themes, codes, and information be present (Harvey, 2015). However, data

saturation was achieved after the 5th interview, and confirmed after no new information, themes, and repetition of data emerged during the 6th interview.

I selected participants who had the knowledge needed to answer the research question (Cardon et al., 2013; Khan, 2014; Leedy & Ormond, 2013). The six participants were microenterprise, event management owners from Houston, TX, who were successful in business for more than 2 years. Recognition of successful microenterprise, event management owners is through featured success stories in magazines and local newspapers, and through the annual small business/gala award by ILEA. No formal permission or letter of cooperation is required from an organization, as all participants are the established event management primary business owners of the six different microenterprises.

Ethical Research

An informed consent process ensures each participant is fully aware of all details of the proposal (Greenwood, 2013; Knepp, 2014; Naanyu, Some, & Siika, 2014). Implementing a consent form allows participants to make the proper decision regarding the inclusion in a research study (Check, Wolf, Dame, & Beskow, 2014; Knepp, 2014; Naanyu et al. 2104). The informed consent process began with the participants responding to the letter to participate form in the proposal as shown in Appendix A. An email including an informed consent as shown in Appendix B was sent to each participant outlining pertinent details concerning the study. The informed consent form as shown in Appendix B outlined the objectives of the study, participant's rights, benefits, risks, withdrawal information, participant involvement, and compensation (Check et al.,

2014; Greenwood, 2013). As a result, participants could either deny further participation or confirm full acknowledgment of the details and participation in the study.

The procedures for any participant to withdraw from the proposal first consisted of the participant receiving an informed consent form as shown in Appendix B explaining the rights to withdrawal voluntarily without penalty (Check et al., 2014; Getz, 2014; Knepp, 2014). Participants can withdraw from the study without reason or explanation through phone, email, mail or any other forms of communication. Thereafter the participants received a thank you letter (see Appendix G) through email for their consideration and time. Within seven business days, immediately after the participant withdrawals from the study, documents and recordings specific to their case would be emailed for their disposal. Incentives for participation in a research studies are common (Arden, Nie, Perez, Radhu, & Ritvo, 2013). However, I did not offer any incentives or reward to participants participating in the research study.

The measures implemented to assure the ethical protection of each participant consisted of IRB approval 08-17-17-0191013 from Walden University Institution Review Board (IRB) confirming the acknowledgment of my obligation to uphold ethical research standards (Naanyu et al. 2014; Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). In addition, each participant was aware of every aspect concerning the proposal through the informed consent form as shown in Appendix B. Furthermore, I employed a pseudonymous coding system (e.g., EMBO1 thru EMBO6) to protect the names and microenterprises of the six participants.

A list of all the agreement documents used in the proposal is in the table of contents and hard copies of the documents are in the appendix section of the proposal. The agreement documents include: (a) an invitation to participate letter is in Appendix A, (b) an informed consent form is in Appendix B, (c) an interview confirmation letter is in Appendix E, and (d) an interview reminder letter is in Appendix F. In addition, I have included a letter of request to Harvard Business Publishing as shown in Appendix H, and a letter granting permission from Harvard business publishing to include the 5- stages of small business growth model in the study (see Appendix I).

To secure proper storage of all data and protection of the confidentiality of each participant, the collected information was stored on a flash drive and locked in a fireproof, water resistant safe for 5 years, which only I have access. The disposal of all participant information and data stored in the lockbox will commence immediately thereafter (Akhavan et al., 2013). Approval 08-17-17-0191013 from Walden University IRB confirmed that this study meets all proper ethical protection guidelines and requirements, including a demonstration of the ability to uphold maximum standards in research practices.

To protect the names of each individual and organization, no formal or company names appeared on any documents throughout the study. Likewise, to ensure confidentiality of all participants a pseudonymous code (e.g., MC1 thru MC5) was assigned to represent and replace the names and business identities. Upon initiation of the interview, I assigned and wrote a pseudonymous code on the interview questions form (see Appendix C) and interview protocol (see Appendix D) form.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data collection instrument in a study is the researcher (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Leedy & Ormond, 2013). Face-to face, semistructured interviews are commonly used among researchers of small and medium enterprise research (Bodlaj & Rojšek, 2014; Greenwood, 2013; Kim, Cavanaugh, Dallas, & Fore, 2014; Pistol & Rocsana, 2014). The data collection instrument consisted of face-to-face semi structured interviews with probing questions and follow-up member checking of data interpretation. In addition, other methods of obtaining data consisted of notes from interview observations, and analysis of company records such as internet documents, website info graphics, procedures, and trainings. The qualitative data collection process along with strict compliance to the procedures outlined in the interview protocol (see Appendix D) will help to maintain integrity and consistency of the process. Researchers use the data collection process to garner data from participants that provide insightful information to help explore the research question (Jones et al., 2013; Khan, 2014; Leedy & Ormond, 2013).

I used the data collection instruments and techniques to garner data regarding the strategies that microenterprises, event management owners use to keep their business viable beyond 2 to address the research question. The semistructured interview questions (see Appendix C), and probing questions are informal interactive discussion tools arranged in a consistent and systematic manner. The interview and probing questions are effective tools designed to help garner in-depth and rich responses from the participants (Alby & Fatigante, 2014; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Jones et al., 2013). Follow-up

member checking of data interpretation is a technique not only used to ensure accuracy, but to extract new information from each participant after the interview (Fuss & Ness, 2015; Harvey, 2015; Houghton et al., 2013).

I enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument/process through implementing an interview protocol as shown in Appendix D. The primary objective in satisfying the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument/process is remaining consistent to the interview protocol (Chan, et al., 2013; Gorissen et al., 2013). When data is accurate and true a research study has reached validly and reliability (Barry, Chaney, Piazza- Gardner & Chavarria, 2014; Gorissen et al., 2013). Follow-up member checking is a common process used to validate accuracy and the meaning of choice words of the participants (Gibson et al. 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Jonsén et al., 2013). To increase the benefits of reliability and validity of the study, I incorporated follow-up member checking in conjunction with methodological triangulation of data. In this process of member checking, I conducted the semistructured interviews with each participant. After the interview, I create a word document with each interview question and an abridged interpreted summary of the participant's responses. Next, through email each participant received a word document with a summary of transcribed responses to view for validation and representation of their original response. Finally, each participant was encouraged to email additional information and corrections of his or her responses. Cycles of follow-up member checking of data, and interpretation of data continued until no further evidence, coding, themes, and information of data emerged or was required. The table of contents list all instruments utilized in the study. Furthermore, I included

interview questions (see Appendix C) and an interview protocol (see Appendix D) in the appendix section of the study.

Data Collection Technique

Techniques used to collect data from six microenterprises, event management owners operating six different companies in Houston, TX will include multiple sources of data including face-to-face semistructured interviews with probing questions, notes from interview observations, and analysis of company records such as website info graphics, procedures, internet documents, and training records. Combining multiple sources of evidence to support the findings of a study is categorized as methodological triangulation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Gorissen et al., 2013; Namukasa, 2013). Leedy and Ormrod (2013) suggested that before the start of an interview, the interviewer should first implement the small talk technique. The small talk technique aided in accommodating the participants comfort and feel relaxed enough to share pertinent information. The next data collection techniques included observations during the face-to face semistructured interviews with notes from observations. Probing questions were followed as needed throughout the interview with key members (business owners) of each microenterprise. Each recorded interview lasted no more than 1 hour. I took in-depth interview notes along with an interview protocol (see Appendix D) to guide the interview process so that uniformity and consistency exist in the data, which included opinions, facts, and unexpected insights. The insights gained may aid into what strategies microenterprises, event management owners use to keep their business viable beyond 2 years. Pistol and Rocsana (2014) suggested that semistructured interviews are effective when a deep understanding of

participants' experiences of a phenomenon is necessary. In addition, the third data collection technique consisted of analyzing company documents such as news and magazine clippings, award recognition letters, mission statement, training records, website info graphics, and any written material describing the organization and purpose. The final data collection technique included interview observations with field notes of non-verbal cues observed throughout the dialogue exchange.

The advantage of using face-to-face semistructured interviews recorded with an audio digital recorder and analysis of company records include the following. The face-to-face semistructured interview technique and notes from interview observations can provide an accurate screening of participant non-verbal cues (Alby & Fatigante, 2014; Pistol & Rocsana, 2014; Yin, 2014). Semistructured interviews provide an active environment for the participants to have the freedom to share in an open exchange to garner rich, in-depth responses to aid in answering a research question (Alby & Fatigante, 2014; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013).

Consequently, the disadvantage of using semistructured interviews included the constraints of limited time with each participant. On the other hand, the flexibility of semistructured interviews may cause projection of bias and limits the participants from freely expressing their ideas, perspectives, and opinions about a specific topic (Alby & Fatigante, 2014; Balzacq, 2014; Pistol & Rocsana, 2014). I used a digital recorder to record the interviews to review information repeatedly. Although beneficial, using an audio recorder may result in unexpected technology malfunctions causing early termination of the interview if a backup device is not available. The advantages of

employing the analysis of company record techniques will help support the research topic under investigation. Analysis of records is an effective tool to aid in crosschecking and corroboration of documents with data from other sources, and aid in achieving verification of consistency (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Vedula, Li, & Dickersin, 2013). Consequently, analysis of company records may limit descriptive information resulting in misinterpretation of information, and therefore, generate inaccurate findings (Yin, 2014).

I used follow-up member checking after completing the semistructured interviews with the six microenterprises, event management owners to verify, confirm, and correct the accuracy of the succinct synthesis interpretation of the recorded interview transcript. The process then repeats until no additional information and new data emerged. Houghton et al. (2013) and Harvey (2015) described follow-up member checking as the participants' method of validating the accuracy of the interviewers' interpretation of a participant's responses. Achieving the maximum benefits of reliability through follow-up member checking can validate the creditability of a study (Aastrup & Halldorsson, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Jonsén et al., 2013).

Data Organization Technique

The systems for keeping track of the data in the study consisted of using an Excel spreadsheet research log, NVivo 11 Pro, removable data storage device, and a locked file cabinet (Cox & Pinfield, 2014; Lancaster, Milia, & Cameron, 2013). Data organization techniques are effective for tracking and organizing data in preparation for analysis of the data (Aastrup & Halldorsson, 2013; Jamshed, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Schmidt & Hunter, 2014). The Excel spreadsheet research log is a tool intended to track

participant pseudonymous codes, dates of data support documents distributed and received, scheduled interview dates, times and locations. NVivo 11 Pro is a qualitative data analysis tool used as a computer-aid to assist with management of data, and identifying codes, and themes (Lancaster et al., 2013). A password-protected computer and removable data storage device contained all support documents. The support documents include an (a) invitation to participate letter in Appendix A, (b) consent forms in Appendix B, (c) interview question in Appendix C, (d) interview protocol in Appendix D, (e) interview confirmation letters is in Appendix E, an interview reminder letter in Appendix F, and (f) thank you letter is in Appendix G. In addition, I included a letter requesting permission from Harvard business publishing in Appendix H, and the permission granted letter from Harvard business publishing to include the 5-stage growth model in the study (see Appendix I). Schmidt and Hunter (2014) suggested that 5 years is a sufficient length of time for a researcher to hold confidential data. Furthermore, all raw data and audio tapes was also stored securely in a locked file cabinet, and will be held for five years, during which I only have access.

Data Analysis

Torrance (2012) suggested four types of triangulation such as data triangulation, investigator triangulation, methodological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. The most suitable data analysis process for the qualitative multiple case study was thematic analysis of methodological triangulation. Implementing methodological triangulation of the data was an effective quality control process that allowed me to compare and cross-examine multiple data source to enhance the validity of analysis process (Gorissen et al.,

2013; Namukasa, 2013). The methodological triangulation sources selected for the study included interview notes to verify and check data and the examination of company documents to crosscheck facts and discrepancies.

A logical and sequential process for conducting data analysis will include five steps (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Wahyuni, 2012; Yin, 2013b). Five steps of the data analysis process exist, regardless of the implementation of classic or qualitative software (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The 5- stages consist of compiling, data-cleansing/labeling, disassembling, reassembling and interpretation/narrative. In the first compiling phase, data tabulations occurred and the data was put into order (Aastrup & Halldorsson, 2013; Yin, 2013b). Second, I listened to the interview transcripts and conducted a data cleansing by removing irrelevant data from the succinct synthesis interpretation of the recorded interview transcript. In addition, company documents and personal notes were analyzed. Followed by the development of visual aids to help to link concepts, synthesize information, and generate new ideas. In the third disassembling stage the computer aid qualitative data management software, NVivo 11 Pro was incorporated. Themes were identified and broken down into multiple clusters to label and sort the data based on concepts, ideas, and meanings. In the fourth reassembling phase, I categorized the label data into a sequential order and developed clusters (Schmidt & Hunter, 2014; Yin, 2013b). Frequencies of common responses and themes were developed using a text, word, matrix query across cases. The interpretation phase, which consisted of creating a narrative from the data in preparation for a conclusion followed (Wahyani, 2012; Yin, 2014). A cross-case analysis technique enabled me to compare each labeled category to

determine differences among the different business owners and then create new categories surrounding all the data sets. The technique was beneficial, and enriched the study through comparisons across cases (Humphrey, 2014). I also compared the labeled category with the highest frequency reference to determine differences among the different business owners and then created new categories surrounding all the data sets.

The software used for coding and identifying themes in the proposal included the use of NVivo 11 pro, data management software. The NVivo 11 pro software helped me to identify themes, analyze themes, and code and categorize data while saving time in organizing the data collected. I focused on key themes that emerged and correlated the data with the existing literature review. The key themes correlated with the established first 3- stages of small business growth model and the evolution of entrepreneurship theory conceptual framework to explore the research question. The emerging themes developed from using NVivo 11 pro software enhanced the conceptual framework grounding the study and establishing the main topic in the literature review supporting the exploration of strategies used by microenterprise, event management owners used to keep their business viable beyond 2 years.

Yin (2014) suggested five techniques for analyzing data and included: (a) time series analysis, (b) explanation building, (c) pattern matching, (d) logic model, and (e) cross-case synthesis. Testing observed pattern with existing patterns is not appropriate nor the intentions of the proposal. No observations of existing trend were necessary for examination. As a result, the time series technique was not appropriate for the study. Likewise, seeking to build or provide an explanation about a case was not suitable for the

study. Furthermore, matching trends observed in the data using either a theoretically or rival trend do not align with the purpose and the study research question. Other techniques were explored; however, the cross-case analysis was the most suitable technique because the technique strengthened the case data by comparing similarities, patterns, differences, and common themes across cases. Incorporating the procedures of a cross-case analysis of the interview data accommodated the differences and similarities of the six different business owners, one selected from six different event management, microenterprises.

Reliability and Validity

Of the research continuum, reliability and validity are a widely agreed upon term when determining accuracy in a research study (Barry et al., 2014; Gibson et al. 2013; Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014). Methodological triangulation is a tool commonly used to compare and cross-reference multiple sources of data to ensure the study is valid (Gorissen et al., 2013; Namukasa, 2013). Reliability and validity are effective in establishing truthfulness, dependability, and credibility of a study (Cope, 2014; Yin, 2013b). However, reliability and validity do not share the same meaning and rely on different tools in a qualitative study as opposed to a quantitative research method (Barry et al., 2014; Foley & O’Conner, 2013; Munn et al. 2014). As a result, reliability and validity are common concerns among qualitative researchers, but ideal criteria for striving for dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability in collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting of the data (Cope, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Yin, 2013b).

Reliability

To address the dependability in the study, I used methodological triangulation of data to compare multiple forms of data collection sources, such as analysis of company records, interview observations with field notes of non-verbal cues, and face-to-face semistructured interviews with probing questions. Employing multiple sources of data enhances the reliability of a case study (Gorissen et al., 2013; Munn et al. 2014; Vedula et al., 2013). I addressed dependability through a systematic interview protocol (see Appendix D) that ensured the interview process was uniformed and consistent with each participant. Harvey (2015) suggested follow-up member checking of data interpretation, allows each participant the opportunity to review the interviewers' interpretation, and ultimately enhances the dependability of a study. Dependability and reliability are equivalent to the definition of consistency (Munn et al. 2014). Dependability is satisfied when the same phenomenon is addressed using the same design, procedure, and protocol resulting in a similar conclusion (Munn et al. 2014).

Validity

The transferability in relation to the readers and future researchers are address by ensuring the description of the assumptions and research content is thorough. The technique ensures generalization of the research findings, enough so the reader and future researchers have the freedom to allocate the findings to another context or setting (Grant, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). I addressed the confirmability of this study through employing techniques that allow corroboration of the results of the study by others, such as follow-up member checking, tape recording the interview conversation, and Excel

spreadsheet research log. Follow-up member checking followed to allow the participant to assess the accuracy of the interpreted interview transcript until no further data, information, and codes emerge. An Excel spreadsheet research log consisted of pertinent information regarding the results of the study.

Data saturation is achievable through a small sample size of participants; allowing the opportunity for repetition and relevance of the findings (Patton, 2015). I used follow-up member checking of data interpretation for participants to review the interpreted audio-recorded transcript for accuracy. Each participant received a copy of the succinct synthesis of the responses to each question to explore for accuracy, errors or omitted information. Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested follow-up member checking as an effective tool to ensure no further information, coding and, themes emerges.

Transition and Summary

The key points in Section 2 consist of a description of the intent of the study. The rationale for selecting a qualitative multiple case study and the role of the researcher is included in Section 2. The selection of a purposeful sample of participants, and key principles for conducting ethical research while presenting the data collection instruments, techniques, organization, and data analysis tools are also included. Additionally, Section 2 concludes with an overview of the processes and techniques for assuring validity and reliability in the proposal. In Section 3, an overview of the purpose and research question, followed by the research findings and social change implications are included. In addition, recommendations for action, further research, and reflections are included in Section 3 also.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

In the United States, microenterprises a critical segment of the small business population accounts for 110 million small businesses that source new jobs (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012; Gohmann & Fernandez, 2014). The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study design was to explore strategies that microenterprise event management owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years. To accomplish the purpose of the study, the data came from business owners' interviews and personal journal notes from interview observation. In addition, I also reviewed company documents as a process to collect data. The conceptual framework that I used to ground the study was the 5-stage small business growth model and the 5-stage of the evolution of entrepreneurship theory. I used methodological triangulation of the data to compare and verify the data through member checking for accuracy and to strengthen the credibility of the study. NVivo 11 pro, a qualitative data organization software tool was used as the central research database for all data collected. The results were a complete list of all themes created using NVivo 11 pro thematic, cross-case analysis and coding of the main findings themes. The findings have implications for proven strategies to improve the growth and vitality of a business, including insight on the best services to increase sales, profits, and market shares.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question guiding this study was: What strategies did microenterprise, event management owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years?

The specific business problem was microenterprise event management owners lack the necessary strategies to succeed in business beyond 2 years. The presentation of themes from the findings was supportive of the body of information represented in the 5-stage small business growth, the 5-stage evolution of entrepreneurship conceptual framework and the literature review. The six participants answered the same eight questions and I compiled a paraphrased transcript of each participant's responses through a process of member checking to ensure authenticity and to reach data saturation. Data saturation was achieved after the fifth interview and confirmed when the sixth interview produced no new information. Three major themes support what strategies are necessary for an event management business owner to succeed beyond 2 years. All participants (100%) in the study acknowledged that (a) customer relationship management, (b) education and work experience, and (c) promotional activities were key major strategies for successfully operating a microenterprise beyond 2 years. The findings showed proven strategies that business owners used to operate a business indefinitely, including insight on the best services to increase sales, profits, and market share.

Major Themes

I used NVivo 11 pro, a computer software, to conduct thematic analysis, produce reports and charts, and to identify and analyze patterns in the data across cases. Figure 2 is a word cloud map developed from thematic synthesis from the analysis of all the data collected including participant interviews, personal journal notes from interview observations, and review of company documents.

Table 1

List of Major Themes

Themes	Source	References
Customer Relationship Management	32	105
Education and Work Experience	26	67
Promotional Activities	26	65

Figure 3 reflects a cross comparison analysis of three major themes: customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities that have emerged from the data, to the number of years' participants have been in business. The identified themes and number of years emerged from the analysis of the participant interviews, personal journal notes from interview observations and review of company documents. Using NVivo 11 pro, I created a classification called *Years in Business* based on the data provided by each participant. Both the years in business classification and three identified themes were selected and a matrix coding query was created by defining both columns and rows. As a result, a node matrix was generated.

The cross-case comparison illustration represents both similarities and differences among the three strategies participants used throughout various years in the event industry as a business owner (Figure 3). According to the data, promotional activities occurred more frequently than education and work experience and customer relationship management. Cross-cases, participants in business between 11-15 years, utilized the customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities strategy more than participants who were business owners for 16 or more years.

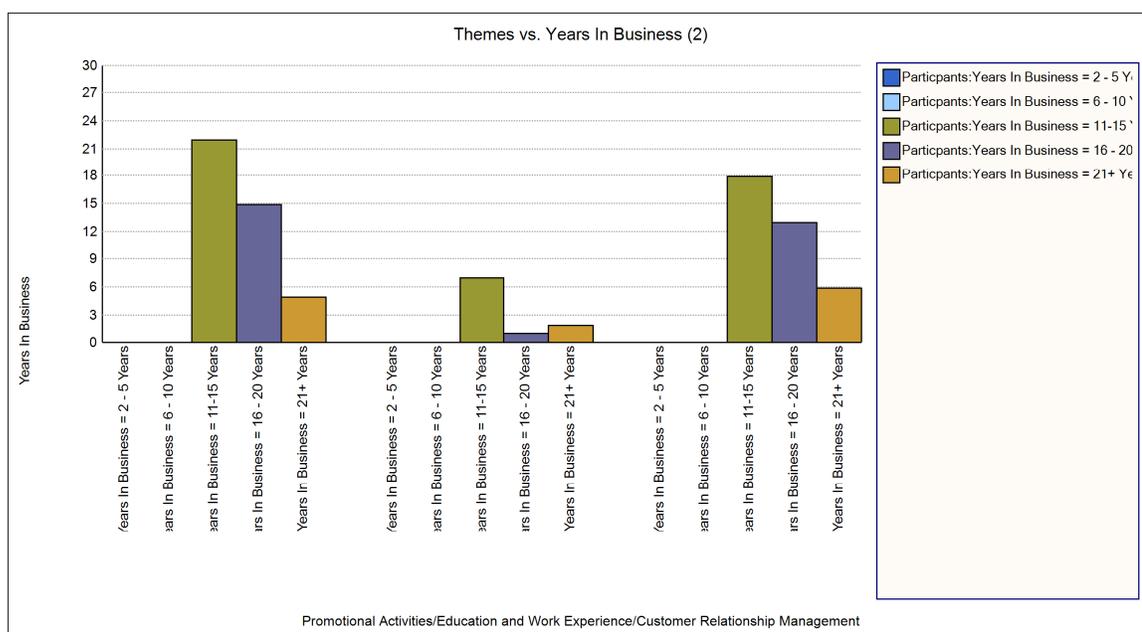


Figure 3. Cross case analysis.

Theme 1: Customer Relationship Management

The first theme to emerge from participants who offered insight into the strategies used that are necessary to succeed beyond 2 years emphasized the concept of customer relationship management. The theme customer relationship management emerged as a theme specifically from responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The findings from the study confirmed customer relationship management is a key factor in operating a viable business beyond 2 years. One hundred percent of the participants indicated that the event industry is a people based profession and managing customer relationship is an important strategy in the event management industry. Management of customer relationships varies between multiple groups, whether between family or friends, or a more formal network consisting of relationships with vendors, banks, accountants,

creditors, venture capitalists, lawyers, and any trade officials (Anderson & Ullah, 2014). The customer relationship management theme supports Bastié et al., (2013) and Rahman et al., (2015) positive link between managing business relationships and staying viable as a business owner.

EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, EMBO5, and EMBO6 all indicated that management of customers' relationships, whether the pursuit of a new relationship or maintaining an established relationship, impacts future business opportunities and is a critical strategy needed to start and grow a business long term. Bastié et al. (2013) noted that entrepreneurs use close relationships they have established with their customer base to gather information to identify new and existing business opportunities. EMBO1, EMBO 2, and EMBO5 had the highest frequency of customer relationship management occurrences out of all the participants' responses. EMBO1, EMBO 2, and EMBO5 all stated that the event industry is a visual type of business and that new business is contingent upon the success of whether you execute the clients' ideas, can verbally communicate the event vision, acquire, and implement feedback obtained successfully.

I discovered the theme customer relationship management as an effective strategy as the result of the responses from EMBO1, EMBO4, EMBO5, and EMBO6 which indicated that the only way to execute a client's event successfully was to first establish a consistent relationship. Understanding and taking out the time to get to know the customer has been a critical element to maintaining the same clientele and the initiation of new clients throughout their tenure as a business owner (EMBO1, EMBO4, EMBO5, and EMBO6). EMBO2 stated that they have been successful for so long due to the client-

centered theme based philosophy implemented within their business. EMBO1 indicated that they rely on their management of customer relationships, ongoing communication, listening to the customers' needs, and including the customer in the decision-making process. All which are core values in their business and is how they obtain 85% of their customers. EMBO4 specifically developed a two-fold customer based management approach. The first implementation of this strategy was the direct result of the participant's (EMBO4) decrease in profit margins and volume sales. As a result, EMBO4 stated that they identify what other successful business owners have implemented and duplicated to be successful, then adopt the strategy based on their specialization and target customers. Table 2 represents the aggregated findings of a text content narrowed to reflect the references and frequency of the major theme customer relationship management. The references and frequency are patterns identified and developed from the collected data. Using a text generalization query, Table 2 reflects a thematic synthesis of the importance of customer relationships management, as expressed by the study participants.

Table 2

References and Frequency of Customer Relationship Management

Source	Reference	Frequency (%)
EMBO1, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	73	47.75
EMBO2, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	26	12.66
EMBO3, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	11	19.13
EMBO4, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	21	5.57
EMBO5, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	21	24.14
EMBO6, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	15	4.30

Theme 2: Education and Work Experience

The second theme to emerge from the data emphasized the participants' experience with education and work experience for successful event management business owners. Eighty percent of the participants emphasized the concept of education and previous work experience as crucial to long-term success of an event management business owner. As a result, the findings from my study confirm education and work experience a key factor in operating a viable business beyond 2 years. My findings were supported by the works of Gudmundsson and Lechner (2013) and Walker et al. (2013) who asserted that education and work experience are pivotal fundamental elements to success, and evident as a common factor omitted among small businesses that have failed. The theme education and work experience emerged as a theme specifically from responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, 4 and 5. EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO4, and EMBO5 had the highest number of references throughout the data collected. The participants of the study agreed that education and work experience were essential to growing and operating a viable business long-term (EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO4, EMBO5). Participant EMBO3 and EMBO6 mentioned the degree and certificates they obtained from various universities; however, they did not emphasize education and work experience as a major factor or strategy for long-term success. This finding is like information Chwolka and Raith (2012) found on education and related work experience of which they stated was not robustly linked to business, but rather a detailed business plan.

EMBO1 an event business owner of 15 years had the highest reference and frequency among other participants. EMBO1 explained that success as an event

management business owner is a direct result of corporate work experience with project management and communications, in addition to working as an intern with the Social Office at the White House. EMBO1 also contribute undergraduate coursework in economic, tourism administration, events and meeting management from an Ivy League University equipped her with the knowledge about business principles, fundamentals, and theories that would aid her success in the event industry as a business owner, and the lifecycle of her business. Furthermore, EMBO1 emphasized the importance of ongoing research and reading books relevant to a specific industry and business of interest, along with participating in in-person and online training courses were critical to maintaining a balance and viable business beyond 2 years.

EMBO2 indicated that having spending 7 years within a similar company prior to business ownership was the direct result of having a better understanding and successfully operating his business of 30 years. EMBO4 contributed education from an Ivy League University as leverage to obtaining business and overall success in the event industry. EMBO4 stated that an education from a prestigious Ivy League school allotted her a platform to access A-list/ high class and celebrity target population that typical event management business owners did not have access to. Furthermore, EMBO4 mentioned that people were more prone to hire her because of her education from an Ivy League University. EMBO 5 noted that education and work experience is an important component to long-term business succeeds for industry professionals. However, EMBO5 emphasized that more importantly, credentials and degrees are not enough to sustain a clientele and attribute loyalty and customer relationship as the primary strategy to their

business success. Table 3 represents the aggregated findings of the text content narrowed to reflect the references and frequency of the major theme, and customer relationship management. The references and frequency are patterns identified and developed from the collected data. Table 3 reflects a thematic synthesis of the importance of education and work experience using a text generalizations query as expressed by the study participants

Table 3

Reference and Frequency of Education and Work Experience

Source	Reference	Frequency (%)
EMBO1, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	147	83.85
EMBO2, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	67	35.07
EMBO3, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	11	23.68
EMBO4, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	55	14.18
EMBO5, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	26	30.17
EMBO6, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	7	18.58

Theme 3: Promotional Activities

The third major theme emphasized during participant interviews highlighted the concept of implementing a variation of both paid and unpaid promotional activities. Unpaid/earned public relations activities as mentioned by the participants in the study include free advertisement through (a) word of mouth, (b) social media, and a (c) business exchange system. Paid/Purchased promotional activities consist of marketing strategy such as through an (a) website, (b) publications, (c) industry leader platforms and SEO, and (d) business branding. The promotional activities theme emerged as a topic specifically from responses to interview questions 1, 2, 4 and 6. One hundred percent of

the participants identified the use of either an unpaid or paid promotional activity as one of the most pivotal strategies in the success of an event industry professional (EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, EMBO5, EMBO6). Both the paid and unpaid promotional activities emerged from interview question 1, 3, 5, and 6. As a result, the findings from my study confirm promotional activities as a key component in operating a viable business beyond 2 years. Additionally, the finding supports the literature on McKelvey (2016) who also found that incorporating marketing strategies is a critical factor in business success especially during the early stages of development for small businesses.

Unpaid/Earned Public Relations Promotional Activities. EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, EMBO5, EMBO6 all agreed that utilizing unpaid promotional activities helped recruit new clients and establish long-term success. Marketing strategies are endless, and contingent upon the business size and maturity (Bodlaj & Rojšek, 2014). One-hundred percent of the participants noted that the event industry is a visual business and visual aids to display business goods and services are required. EMBO1, a business owner of 15 years mentioned that 85% of their marketing and promotional efforts are focused on utilizing social media and industry platforms and SEO such as TheKnot.com, Weddingwire.com, Snap Chat, Facebook and Pinterest.com to promote their business to their targeted market. EMBO1 also referenced utilizing various free opportunities that were available who offered synergistic goods and services, such as, bloggers, writers, magazines or websites, who needed content for small business owners to promote their business for free.

EMBO2 indicated that a good website combined with a strategic social media plan is required in the event industry, however, building customer relationships was the key factor to their success, and a major part of their business model. EMBO5 stated that they spent a lot of money on boosting Facebook posting, but yielded little to no new business. EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, and EMBO6 did not mention using an exchange of goods or services as a strategic plan to leverage new business. However, EMBO5 contributed word of mouth, and business exchange such as discounts on event services to clients in exchange for newspaper and magazine publication was key to their success. EMBO3 and EMBO6 did not mention advertisement through word of mouth as a key strategy to obtaining new business or success and focused their efforts on promotion through a website.

Paid/Purchased Promotional Activities. One-hundred percent of participants in the study referenced utilizing a combination of both paid and unpaid promotional activities (EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, EMBO5, and EMBO6). Having a good website was noted as the principal promotional strategy to display and showcase services and goods to the public as a critical aspect to business success in the event industry (EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, EMBO5, EMBO6). EMBO1 utilized both paid and unpaid promotional activities but stated that only 15% of her marketing plan is contributed to using branded items such as business cards, distributional items, and a wrapped car with logo to market and advertise the business. EMBO1 leveraged using some free and paid publications in high-end magazines, and industry related newspapers and magazines. However, EMBO1 noted that local high-end print magazines were not effective

promotional activities for their company and did not render new business. EMBO3 stated that majority of their new business was rendered directly a good website; however, publications in industry related magazines were key to their success.

Table 4 represents the aggregated findings of the text compiled and synthesized to reflect narrowed and generalized references and frequency of the promotional activities theme. The references and frequency are patterns identified and developed from the collected data. Table 4 reflects a thematic synthesis of the importance of promotional activities using a text generalization query as expressed by the study participants.

Table 4

Reference and Frequency of Promotional Activities

Source	Reference	Frequency (%)
EMBO2, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	97	49.43
EMBO3, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	16	35.85
EMBO4, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	89	25.47
EMBO5, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	44	44.99
EMBO6, Interview Questions/Notes/Documents	11	32.80

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings from this study illustrate a focus on processes and practices of event management business owners which contribute to the overall success of owning and operating a business beyond 2 years. The identified themes that developed from the study consist of (a) customer relationship management, (b) education and work experience, and (c) promotional activities could improve the strategies to increase sales, profits, and market share of event management businesses. Applying findings, gained from this study

to the professional practices of event management business owner's operations, will instill business strategies that are effective and help business operations indefinitely.

One hundred percent of the participants from the study indicated that customer relationship management is the most effective strategy for successful ownership and operation of a microenterprise, event management business beyond 2 years. The findings from this study added to the body of knowledge by identifying customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities as strategies used throughout event management business processes and practices, which had a profound effect, resulting from long-term success and increase sales, profits, and market shares. As a result, the findings from this study indicated that event management business owners could benefit from this study by developing and implementing key strategies early in the development of a business, which could result in insights on the best services to increase sales, profits, and market shares.

Implications for Social Change

Small businesses and microenterprises have been recognized for their contributions to economic growth (Doer, 2016). Globally, microenterprises and other small businesses represent one of the largest segments of business operations. In the U.S. microenterprises and small businesses represent 99% of the workforce population (Fiore et al., 2013; Liao et al., 2014). However, only 70% of microenterprises and other small businesses remain in business after 2 years (SBA, 2014).

Positive social change is not a direct result of the findings of this study but rather a secondary advantage of improving success rates. Improving the success rates of local

microenterprises impacts not only the business owner and their family but also those associated with or influenced by the activities of the business. Including local organizations, employees, suppliers, and the general community in which the microenterprise owner operates. However, the implications for positive social change resulting from this study may include tangible improvements to individuals, organizations, communities, cultures, and society.

In emerging markets, an entrepreneurial culture is a catalyst to subduing unemployment (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012). As a result, culture is fundamental to impacting positive social change when a path is paved for nascent entrepreneurs to launch ventures, create job opportunities and advance socioeconomic conditions of those individuals who succeed.

In relation to individuals, this study contributes to positive social change by shedding light on the perceptions and understanding of the practices and processes business owners currently use in their business model. As a result, the insights about successful strategies, if applied may increase longevity, thus having a valuable economic influence in the community they are in (providing jobs, providing a service needed), and in turn may lead to business growth. While failure provides an opportunity for learning, understanding successful strategies may reduce the potential for psychological, financial, and emotional devastation (Ucbasaran et al., 2013). An increase in the number of successful business owners who are prepared and equipped with knowledge of successful business strategies may help reduce business failure and employee turnover to thrive in the global economy. Equipped nascent entrepreneurs may increase job opportunities for

low to middle-class families, sustain and increase profitability, and provide routes for millions of people to escape poverty, and improve living conditions.

Implications for social change for organizations include encouraging entrepreneurial training programs and small business development programs to develop innovative programs that microenterprises may benefit from to increase more business opportunities.

Microenterprise business owners typically live and work in or near the local communities of which they operate their business. Concerning communities and society, the findings from this study may have a beneficial value that contributes to positive social change by providing insight into strategies that improve the environmental quality and visibility of more successful microenterprises within local communities. Small businesses and other subsets contribute as much as 70% of the world's pollution (Cronin-Gilmore, 2012). The result of an increase in successful microenterprises may cause business owners to improve environmental quality. Local environmental sustainability initiatives may generate cleaner environments composed of business owners utilizing less waste and more effective reuse/recycling of resources.

In the analysis of the findings from this study, event management business owners attempted to link customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities to achieve success of the overall goal and mission of the business that increases the probability of the lifecycle of an event management business indefinitely. Additionally, the findings from this study reflect the positive effect of customer relationship management, along with education and work experience, and

promotional activities have on microenterprise outcomes. The confirmation of participants EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, EMBO5 and EMBO6 illustrated the importance of customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities. As a result, an increase in more successful businesses that provide a variety of services may also improve businesses better meeting the needs of residents living within local communities.

The application of proven strategy is necessary as gleaned from the event management business owners in Houston, Texas, and may be transferable to any microenterprise, small business, and other organizations. An increase in successful microenterprises may also enhance competition in the business environment (Debrulle et al., 2013). Thus, successful microenterprise owners may be able to offer more local employment opportunities and contribute additional sources of income for low- to middle-class families.

Further, the social improvements from this qualitative multiple case study encourage strong partnerships working in unison with local community business development groups, governmental and non-governmental interest groups to improve radically transforming of microenterprise strategies for helping microenterprise business owners with plans for long-term business improvements, and new business practices. Furthermore, the findings from this study can provide a starting point for discussion on how nascent microenterprise owners may use the new insights to implement a roadmap with successful transitional strategies necessary throughout the lifecycle of their business.

Finally, nascent business owner may establish lasting and effective business procedures, processes, and systems within their own firms.

Recommendations for Action

The overall objective of this study was to explore what strategies did microenterprise event management business owners used to succeed beyond 2 years. The findings from this study support strategies microenterprise event management business owners use to operate and manage a microenterprise is also critical to the success of other organizations and local communities. Participants: EMBO1, EMBO2, EMBO3, EMBO4, EMBO5, and EMBO6 confirmed that a lack of customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities exist within the event industry amongst event management professionals and business owners. Therefore, the findings from this study support the following recommendations as thus, small business and microenterprise business owners should consider the findings to benefit their own businesses. Business development groups such as (a) the American Management Association, (b), the Service Corps of Retired Executives, (c) business consultants, (d) the Small Business Administration and Small Business Develop Centers, and (e) the Centers for Entrepreneurship Management may find the results of the study helpful. The findings of this study might be disseminated as a resource or as a business course for business owners at various stages throughout the lifecycle at business conferences, training at business development centers, business schools and Universities.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for future research are twofold and may aid both in the improvements of microenterprise event management and small business strategies used to keep their businesses viable beyond 2 years. The data collected included semistructured interviews, notes from interview observations, personal journal notes, and review of company documents can be extended for future research. Likewise, future research on the event industry and on small business and microenterprise ownership should consider continuing the exploration of what strategies impact business startup and the overall success of business owners.

The limitations of this study were restricted to a qualitative multiple case study research design with a population of event management, microenterprise business owners only from Houston, Texas that had been successful for a minimum of 2 years. A different type of research method and design may present an opportunity for future research and may reflect different findings, perspective, and insight. The study did not include start-up business owners or businesses that have failed. Exploration of various populations may present different findings and should be explored. The event management business owners in this study had a variety of industry specializations, background experience and managed various small and large types of events, which also provides an opportunity for future research. Houston, Texas has over 260,000 small businesses, however, the degree of business strategies used by both small and microenterprise, and event management business owners may differ based on other cities within and outside of the state of Texas.

Reflections

The purpose of this study was to explore what strategies did microenterprise event management business owners used to succeed beyond 2 years. Mitigation of bias is achievable; however, total elimination of personal bias is often difficult (Balzacq, 2014; Kache & Seuring, 2014; Ülle, 2014). Therefore, the probability of a researcher encountering the challenges of personal biases or preconceived ideas increases as a researcher conducts a study with a topic of personal interest. Likewise, the related experience can often create bias and alter the research findings (Balzacq, 2014). Prior to data collection, I began to write and bracket all personal observations, thoughts, and personal perspectives regarding the progression and findings of this study. Reviewing the content of my personal notes after the data analysis process was intriguing to discover the studies outcome was different than what was initially expected. However, the ongoing personal note taking and bracketing progress was a beneficial process implemented that allowed me to freely express my thoughts and ideas, and at the same time be open to all possibilities resulting from this study. More so, I visualized the progression and regression of the changes in my thinking patterns after conducting the study.

As a researcher in the DBA process although fully supported by my chair, SCM and URR, the process remained ambiguous until after the completion of the study. Initially, I expected some resistance in participation after prospective participants were informed that I was an event management professional. However, I experienced a totally different response, as participants were eager to participate in the study and share their successes. All event management business owners were seasoned, innovative,

professional and knowledgeable about the event management industry and successful business operations. Conducting interviews and speaking one-on-one with each individual business owner was informative, insightful and interesting. Although a written plan was in place on how I would conduct and analyze the data, the process was initially ambiguous. Unfortunately, I conducted my data collection process just prior to one of the most horrific and devastating events in the life of our country, hurricane Harvey. Without any knowledge of the forthcoming events of a natural disaster in the city of Houston, I proceeded to complete the data collection, data analysis process, and write-up of my study. However, 90% of the participants involved in the study were directly and severely affected by the hurricane Harvey. Although I have no knowledge of the severity of the impact of hurricane Harvey on each participants' business, I am hoping that each successful business owner will be able to rebuild their business over time. Furthermore, while I too was temporarily displaced due to hurricane Harvey, anticipation, resilient, determination to finish, and perseverance was vital and key to completing this study.

Conclusion

Small business entrepreneurs and Microenterprises are vital drivers in the creation of mainstream of jobs. Yet, 70% of microenterprise small businesses in America fail after 2 years (Miettinen & Littunen, 2013; Sarasvathy & Dew, 2013; SBA, 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore what strategies microenterprise event management business owners used to succeed beyond 2 years. Microenterprise event management owners encounter various challenges daily of remaining viable throughout the lifecycle of a business. Scholars agreed that microenterprises and small business challenges is a

significant problem and poses striking consequences to the stakeholders, the owner, and economy (Gilding et al., 2015). Failures among microenterprises and small businesses may provide a learning opportunity for other nascent business owners (Sarasvathy et al., 2013); the lack of research perpetuates the astonishing high failure rates among microenterprises and small business startup (Le & Raven, 2015; Sedliačiková et al., 2016).

Microenterprise event management owners use customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities as a primary strategy to address some of the daily challenges in achieving the company overall goal and mission. The findings of this study indicate that event management microenterprise owners must implement these strategies throughout the lifecycle of their business to operate effectively within the event industry. Event management microenterprise owners in this study used the customer relationship management, education and work experience, and promotional activities strategy daily to manage the best services to increase sales, profits, and market shares.

The findings from the study indicated microenterprise; event management owners also use innovative methods such as customer relationship management, education, and work experience, and promotional activities to meet the overall daily needs of the business. Considering, the challenges that microenterprises and small business entrepreneurs face in the 21st century in America may provide insights into what factors aid in assisting aspiring business owners on how to sustain a business beyond the critical point of the lifecycle of the company.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in the Study Letter

Date

Company Name

Company Address

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of my doctoral research proposal at Walden University, I would like to invite you to participate in a research study. I am conducting to explore the strategies microenterprise event management owners use to succeed in business. I contacted you to participate because you are a small business owner from Houston, TX. Participation in the research study is voluntary, and will be confidential. Please read the enclosed consent form carefully and ask any questions that you may have before acting on the invitation to participate. To achieve the objectives of the research proposal, your participation depends on satisfying certain criteria in addition to being the owner of a microenterprise. The basis for the selection include being microenterprise, event management owners from Houston, TX, and successful in business for more than 2 years.

Please indicate your willingness below by bolding the correct highlighted response and return the letter via email. I will contact you again to email consent forms outlining the details of the research proposal, and to set up the personal interview. I anticipate the total time required for each interview will span no more than one hour. The Interviews will be audio recorded and participants will have the opportunity to review the interpreted transcribed interview for accuracy prior to inclusion in the proposal. I

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

Sincerely,

Tamika E. Haynes

I will / will not participate in the project.

Appendix B: Consent Form

My name is Tamika E. Haynes, a doctoral student at Walden University, conducting a research study on small business. I am also an event management business owner in the Houston area, with 20 years of experience in the event industry. I obtained your information from [REDACTED] public membership directory on their website at [REDACTED]

The research study is about what strategies did business owners use to succeed in business beyond two years. The selection criteria consist of the following; (a) participants must be an event management business owner of a small business, (b) at least 18 years of age, and (c) have had a successful business for a minimum of two years in (d) Houston, TX. I am contacting you to invite you to participate in a study on successful microenterprise entrepreneurs in Houston, TX, because you meet the research study criteria.

This form is part of a process called “informed consent”. The consent form will provide you with detailed information about the study before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of the study is to allow me the opportunity to explore what strategies did microenterprise business owners have used to succeed in business beyond two years.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an audio recorded face-to-face interview. The interview may last up to 1 hour.
- Participate in the face-to-face interview at your office location.
- Review your interview transcript for accuracy and provide feedback if necessary.
- Supply company documentations such as success stories, training documents, newspaper or magazine clippings, and any documents in support of your success as a business owner.

Here are 4 sample interview questions:

- How would you describe the strategies that you have used in the past to make your business successful?
- Why did you choose those strategies?
- How would you describe the strategies that you are currently using that have resulted in your success?
- How did you develop the strategies that made you successful?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

The study is on a volunteer basis. You are free to stop your participation in the study at any time. I will respect your decision concerning your participation in the study. If you decide not to be in the study you will not be treated differently by anyone at Walden University. Neither will any current or future business relationships be negatively impacted. You may also choose to ignore any question(s) that you feel you are not comfortable answering or feel are too confidential.

Risk and Benefits of Being in the Study:

No harm or risk is associated with participating in the study. I will only focus on your experience with strategies that you have used to succeed in business beyond two years. Your experiences with successful strategies and the insights gained from the study may contribute to increasing survival rates of microenterprises in Houston, TX and around the world. Confidential information or any trade secrets will not be requested. There are no benefits to participants participating in the study. However, your participation is appreciated.

Potential Conflict of Interest:

I am the owner, lead event Planner, and designer of [REDACTED]. You may have already known that I am a part of the [REDACTED] or as an event management business owner in the Houston area. However, my role as a researcher is separate from my business ownership role. I have intentionally separated my role as an event planner to function as the researcher of this study. As a result, I am committed to protecting the well-being and minimizing exposure to any form of potential exploitation because of the study. Although I am a potential competitor, no future working relationship is negatively impacted because of the study. There are no likely conflicts of interest that presently exist. However, as a plan to minimize any potential forms of conflict, I have intentionally chosen to discontinue my event management business operations and role as an event planner until I have completed my doctoral degree.

Compensation:

No compensation is offered to participants in the study.

Confidentiality:

The information you provide will be kept confidential. I will not use or include your information such as your name or company name that could identify you in any documents of the study. Furthermore, your decision to participate in the study will not be revealed to anyone at ILEA and your identity will remain completely anonymous.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher, Tamika E. Haynes, will provide you a copy of the consent form for your records. I am available via email at [REDACTED] or via telephone at [REDACTED] to answer any questions that you may have. Furthermore, if you want to privately discuss any additional information regarding your rights as a participant in a study, please contact Walden University's Research Participant Advocate on 612-312-

1210 or email irb@waldenu.edu. Walden University's approval number for the proposal is 08-17-17-0191013 of which will expire on August 16th, 2018.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you would like to participate in this research study, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Printed Name of participant _____

Date of Consent _____

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Date of Interview: _____ Code Assigned: _____

1. How would you describe the strategies that you have used in the past to make your business successful?
2. Why did you choose those strategies?
3. How would you describe the strategies that you are currently using that have resulted in your business being successful?
4. How did you develop the strategies that made you successful?
5. How would you describe the strategies that you used, but found to be unsuitable for your business?
6. How did you identify the strategies that you did not need to succeed?
7. How do event, management business owners effectively manage strategies that are important for continued success?
8. Can you offer any additional comments that would help the study?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview: _____ Code Assigned: _____

1. Introduce self to participant(s).
2. Introduce the research topic.
3. Thank the participant for taking the time to respond to the invitation to participate in the study
4. Present consent form, go over contents, and answer questions and concerns of participant.
5. Give participant copy of consent form for review.
6. Turn on recording device.
7. Follow procedure to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification; note the date and time.
8. Begin interview with question #1. The interview will span approximately 1 hour for responses to the interview questions, including any additional follow-up questions.
9. Remind the participant of the purpose of the proposal is to explore start-up strategies of microenterprise entrepreneurial business owners used to succeed in business beyond 2 years.
10. End interview sequence; discuss the follow up member checking process with each participant.

11. Thank the participant(s) for their part in the study. Reiterate contact numbers for follow up questions and concerns from participants.

End protocol.

Appendix E: Interview Confirmation Letter

Tamika E. Haynes

Date

Participants Name

Company Address

State, ZIP Code

Subject: Interview Confirmation Letter

Dear (Participant Name),

I am sending you the email to confirm a 1:1 interview regarding start-up strategies used by successful microenterprise entrepreneurial business owners on (date) , at (time) , located at (location) . If you would like me to clear up any concerns or questions regarding the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me at **281-315-6053** or send email at **Tamika.haynes@...**.

I am looking forward to our meeting.

Sincerely,

Tamika E. Haynes

Appendix F: Interview Reminder Letter

Tamika E. Haynes

7134 Bristol Ridge Drive

Houston, TX 77095

Date

Participants Name

Company Address

State, ZIP Code

Subject: Interview Reminder Letter

Dear (Participant Name),

I am sending you an email to confirm a 1:1 interview regarding start-up strategies used by successful microenterprise entrepreneurial business owners on (date) , at (time) , located at (location) . If you would like me to clear up any concerns or questions regarding the interview, please do not hesitate to contact me at 281-315-6053 or send email at Tamika.Hay.

I am looking forward to our meeting.

Sincerely,

Tamika E. Haynes

Appendix G: Thank You Letter to Participants

Tamika E. Haynes

7134 Bristol Ridge Drive

Houston, TX 77095

Date

Company Name

Company Address

State, ZIP Code

Subject: Thank you for your participation

Dear XX,

I would like to thank you for participating in the research study on start-up strategies used by successful microenterprise entrepreneurial business owners. I appreciate your time, help, and candidness in answering all the interview questions. The knowledge emerged from the proposal which you have contributed to may mitigate the failure rates during the first two years, and improve the overall success rates of microenterprise businesses. Furthermore, reduce challenges and seek to improve the growth potential and profitability of small business managers around the world. The study may allow entrepreneurs to formulate and implement strategies and interventions that may mitigate potential barriers relevant to start-up businesses. Through a systematic action plan consisting of business know-hows on preparation and awareness, and ultimately stimulate economic growth and hence, improve the economy's well-being and standards of living. Additionally, the study may act as a corrective tool for future

business models carrying out similar research. As well as further assist small business managers and entrepreneurs on how to eliminate or manage the challenges that cause business failure.

Once again thank you for your time, consideration, and participation in the research study.

Sincerely,

Tamika E. Haynes

281-315-6053

Appendix H: Letter of Request to Harvard Business Publishing

Copyright Permissions Service

309 19th Ave S

65L Wilson Library

Minneapolis, MN 55455

Dear XXXX,

I am a student at Walden University working on my doctoral degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Entrepreneurship. I am conducting a study on successful strategies small businesses, particularly microenterprise owners used to succeed in business beyond two years. Small businesses are significant to the U.S. economy, and represent 99.7 % of the workforce population in the U.S. Although small businesses are successful in achieving nationwide recognition, and contributing to economic growth, only 70 % of small businesses remain after two years. The lack of insight and inability to develop the required strategies needed to succeed in business beyond two years has negatively affected the owners' ability to continue operations indefinitely. The widespread interest in research on business strategies is the result of large numbers of small business owners embarking upon new business ventures that failed, which have negatively affect the number of available employment opportunities in the United States.

The purpose of the qualitative study is to explore successful strategies microenterprise, event management owners use to succeed in business beyond two years.

By identifying proven and successful strategies needed, the insights gained may aid Government and non-governmental interest groups responsible for small business development in the radical transformation in new business practices, strategy, and the implementation of long-term business improvements.

I would like permission to use Lewis and Churchill (1983) five-stage model of small business growth (1983) model (see Figure attached) only as a visual representation to support the conceptual framework in my research proposal. The model is appropriate as it forecast patterns of problems small businesses encounter, and suggests the reduction of major problems is achievable through implementation of key strategies at each stage of the life cycle as the business grows over time.

For questions or concern, I can be reached through email at

████████████████████ or via telephone at ██████████

Sincerely,

Tamika E. Haynes

Enclosure: Churchill (1983) five-stage of small business growth model

Appendix I: Letter of Permission to use Churchill and Lewis (1983) Model



[Redacted]

Permission request to Include Churchill and Lewis (1983) 5-stage model in my Research Study

Reply-To: [Redacted]
To: [Redacted]

Fri, Oct 21, 2016 at 4:08 PM

Please type your reply above this line.

Conversation CCs (if any):

Your request (283271) has been updated. To add additional comments, reply to this email.

[Redacted] (Harvard Business Publishing)

Oct 21, 1 7:08 EDT

Dear Tamika,

Thank you for your email and we sincerely apologize for the delay in response.

Please note that as long as the requested HBR article exhibit is only being used to fulfill the class assignment in the pursuit of your degree, permission would be granted at no charge as long as the material is fully cited (see following).

Reprinted with permission from " Five Stages of Small Business Growth" by Neil C. Churchill and Virginia L. Lewis. Harvard Business Review, May 1983. Copyright 1983 by the Harvard Business Publishing Corporation; all rights reserved.

If the thesis is later published in a book or distributed as training material, however, then there may be a royalty charge for use of the HBP material that would be based on how much material is used and the print run.

Good luck with your dissertation.

Regards,

[Redacted signature block]

phone: [Redacted]

Fax: [Redacted]

hbr.org | harvardbusiness.org | hbrp.harvard.edu

Appendix J: The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Certification

