

2018

# Strategies to Sustain Small Businesses Beyond 5 Years

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Kayaso Wani

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Strategies to Sustain Small Businesses Beyond 5 Years

by

Kayaso C. Wani

MBA, Kaplan University, 2013

BS, Oregon Institute of Technology, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

February 2018

## Abstract

According to the U.S. Small Business Association, the failure rates for small businesses in 2014 were as high as 50% to 80% within the first 5 years of establishment. The purpose for this multiple case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners have used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Guided by entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework, and a purposive sampling method, this qualitative case study used semistructured interviews with 3 successful, small, ethnic grocery business owners in Anchorage, AK to better understand small business strategies for survival. Member checking and triangulation with field notes, interview data, business websites, customer comments, and government documents helped ensure theoretical saturation and trustworthiness of interpretations. Using pre-coded themes for the data analysis, the 8 themes from this study were entrepreneur characteristics, education and management skills, financial planning, marketing strategies and competitive advantages, social networks and human relationships, technology and innovation, government supports and social responsibility, and motivational influence. Two key results indicated the strategies needed for small business owners were entrepreneur management skills and government support for small businesses. These findings may influence positive social change by improving small business owner competence and sustainability, rising higher business incomes, providing a better quality of life to employees and their communities welfare benefiting the entire U.S. economy.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral achievement to my mother Yunia Woi (deceased) and my father Daudi Jukalu. You were victims of political instability for life, your courage and determination for continuing working hard despite enormous challenges is my inspiration. I remember when I was joining college (St. Leos College Kyegobe - Uganda) you handed all the money you had for the family and said, "This is all we have in the family for your education" now the choice is yours, you either use it carefully for your education or misuse it! My parents' definition of education was of their own version of their circumstance "*Education is what survives when all you have toiled for is lost*" thus; education was the priority in the family. My parents realized my academic potential, believed in me and cautioned, "It is not easy to be humble when you think you are so great, but being humble is the key to everybody's mind". Thank you for making me work so hard when I was little, today having the ability to work for myself is the best thing I have ever need from you, my parents. Mom, we thank God for using you to introduce the religious life in the family. When you accepted Jesus as your personal savior after the "*Bold commanding voice*", since then prayers and Jesus were the answers to everything in the family. You have always encouraged us to forgive and move forward because everything that happens in life happens for a reason from God. That God propels all of us to our potentials he already created in us by using challenges and obstacles in our daily lives. I thank God for the obstacles in my life, the cause of who I am today. I would also like to dedicate this doctoral achievement to my friends who supported me during the "tsunami" in my family.

## Acknowledgments

The success of my doctoral journey would not have been a reality without the guidance, mentoring, and incredible support from my chair: Dr. Patricia Fusch. I would also like to thank and acknowledge my previous chair Dr. Rollis Erickson with whom I started the journey. Many thanks also go to my committee members: Dr. Janet Booker and Dr. Patsy Kasen, for helping me complete the doctoral study. I would like to thank my lovely wife Deborah Wani (prayer warrior), my children: Sadarak, Flavia, Elvis, Ataya, and Faith for bearing with me the sacrifice and frustration involved in this long and challenging journey. To my mom in heaven, I thank you for making education the priority in the family and thank you for believing in me. I know you are happy and smiling at me from above. Daddy, thank you for being the Tiger in the family, your hard work nature and dedication has a great influence in my life. Thank you for being the tiger in me, working 12 hours a day, sleeping an average of 6 hours and waking up every night to study without whining was a real sacrifice. Without you as my role model, pursuing the doctoral study while working in the oil field would have been “A Mission Impossible”. Today, I have proven that with a mindset, a body subjected to a test of maximum human resilience can still survive and achieve the purpose. I am glad you are a witness to this great academic achievement in my life. Above all, I would like to acknowledge God who gave me the life, health, and strength to work long hours, persist frustrations and press forward to the finish line. With faith in God, determination and hard work, nothing is impossible. Surely, all things are possible to him that believeth (Mark 9:23).

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small business operations play a significant role in the United States economy. Small businesses account for 55% of all jobs in the United States and 66% of new jobs (U.S. SBA; *Small Business, Big Impact*, 2014). Small business owners have worked hard to take advantage of the economic downturn to improve the U.S. economy (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2011). However, small business owners still face many challenges with high business failure rates in the United States (Perry, 2012). Unfortunately, 50% of small businesses fail within 5 years (Sarasvathy, Menon, & Kuechle, 2013; Small Business Administration [SBA], 2014).

The rate of small business failures is in support of the assertion that some people embark on small business initiatives without adequate preparation (Mijid & Bernasek, 2013; Williams & Williams, 2014). Some people lack the knowledge and skills to succeed in small business venture beyond 5 years (Sarasvathy et al., 2013). The lack of knowledge and skills include business planning, entrepreneurial characteristics, motivation, resource management, human and social capital, strategic management, education and management Training, cultural capital and the link to social capital, financial capital, and geographical location. In this study, I explored the key strategies small ethnic grocery business owners used to sustain businesses from the start-up through the growth stage of the business beyond 5 years in Anchorage, Alaska. The focus was on the key factors influencing the small ethnic grocery business owners' ability to stay in business. In this section of the study, I discussed and provided the background of the business problem, purpose of this study, research question, theory framing the study, and

the importance of the study. In addition, I provide an exhaustive review of the current literature related to the business problem.

### **Background of the Problem**

Small business startups in United States failure rate range from 70% to 80% (Mason, 2013). According to SBA (2016), there are many causes for the continuous small businesses high rate failure, ranging from short- to long-term. Dahmen and Rodriguez (2014) noted that the U.S small businesses are the foundation for economic growth. The SBA (2014) defined small businesses as firms with not more than 500 employees (SBA, 2014). In 2011, there were approximately 28.2 million small businesses, 17,700 of the small businesses were in research (SBA, 2014).

According to the BLS and the SBA, approximately 50% of startup small businesses were profitable (BLS, 2014; SBA, 2014) and 50% of small businesses failed (Sarasvathy, Menon, & Kuechle 2013). The large presence of small businesses in the US economy motivated analysts to describe small businesses as the primary stimulus for job creation (Criscuolo, Gal, & Menon, 2014). Over the 10-year period, 1993 to mid-2013, about 63.4% of 23 million new U.S. jobs were because of the small businesses (SBA, 2014). However, approximately 64.5% of those enterprises failed to succeed for more than 5 years (U.S. Census Bureau [USCB], 2014a).

Criscuolo et al. (2014) noted that small business startups created jobs but lacked entrepreneurial strategies to sustain the business beyond 5 years. Further, human capital skills account for an important factor of small business success (Oberschachtsiek, 2012). Arasti, Fakhrisadat, and Narges (2014) noted that the entrepreneurship skills include (a)

planning and goal setting, (b) decision-making and human relations, (c) marketing, (d) venture launch, (e) finance and accounting, (f) growth management, and (g) management control and negotiation. Some qualities and capabilities are essential to sustain small business success that leads to identifying the problem statement (Debrulle, Maes, & Sels, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

In the United States, 80% of new small business startups fail in the first 2 years, and 50% fail during the first 5 years of operation (SBA, 2014). In 2015, the United States had 28.4 million small businesses, which represents 99.7% of the entire U.S. businesses (Kymn, 2015). Successful small businesses are important to the U.S. economy since 99% of small businesses employ 64% of the private workforce, providing more than 40% of private sales (SBA, 2016). The general business problem is that small business startups continue to fail in the United States. The specific business problem is that some small ethnic grocery business owners lack strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small ethnic grocery business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of three small ethnic grocery business owners located in Anchorage AK, with sustained businesses beyond 5 years. The findings from this study may contribute to positive social change by supporting new job creation that leads to prosperity in local communities.

### **Nature of the Study**

Researchers use qualitative methods to study social and cultural problems, experiences, and perspectives (Brod, Tesler, & Christiansen, 2009). Researchers also use a qualitative method to gain knowledge about the meanings participants ascribe to experiences (Bernard, 2013; Leko, 2014). While the numerical data is to determine and predict results, qualitative researchers use text data to find meanings (Petty, Thompson, & Stew, 2012). Quantitative research method is not suitable for exploring phenomena although researchers may use it to identify the cause of a problem. Researchers use mixed method approach to investigate holistic evidences, statistically and contextually to support the understanding of the occurrence (Ahn & Ettner, 2014). A mixed method approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative elements (Covell, Sidani, & Ritchie, 2012; Fielding, 2012; Palinkas et al., 2013), therefore mixed method is not a suitable choose for this study.

Qualitative researchers may choose from several designs such as phenomenology, narrative inquiry, ethnographic study, and case study. Researchers use phenomenological design to discover and understand the meaning of human life experiences (Englander, 2012; Letourneau, 2015). Phenomenological design is not an appropriate choice for this study because the researchers' reflexivity may become a process of constant reflection upon the interpretation of the experience and the phenomena in the study. Narrative inquiry is a view of people's experiences and methodologies of inquiring into a story based on their experiences hence lacks adequacy in addressing practical business research problems (Huber, Huber, & Steeves, 2013). Geertz (2012) described ethnography as a



systematic study of people and cultures, designed to explore cultural occurrences over a prolonged period (Petty et al., 2012). Ethnography is not an appropriate choice for this study because it is more inclusive of the researchers and considers the researchers' influence in the process that may taint the data collected.

Researchers use case study to provide a methodological flexibility through incorporating variety of values, study designs, and methods and also explores real world situations and bounds the study in time and space (Hyett, Kenny, & Kickson-Swift, 2014; Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2016 ). Researchers use the multiple-case study design to provide insight into visible facts and explore differences between cases (Yin, 2014). Yin (2012) noted the valuable use of a case study design when the focus of the research is to answer *how* and *what* questions. I used case study to explore strategies small ethnic grocery business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

### **Research Question**

What strategies do small ethnic grocery business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies did you use to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
2. What factors and conditions led to the development of your business strategies to succeed?
3. What strategies did you use to start your current business and remain successful?
4. What are the challenges you countered in developing your strategies?
5. What do you do to formulate your strategies?

6. What did you do to influence the need to initiate strategies in your business?
7. How did your business mission and vision influence the strategic process?
8. How do you implement your strategies to sustain your business?
9. What additional information can you share regarding strategies to achieve ongoing sustainability?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is entrepreneurship theory.

Entrepreneurship theory is useful for researchers to explore data for predicting and explaining a particular phenomenon (Kuechle, 2013). Entrepreneurship research is a novel academic endeavor, with roots traceable to the Irish-born banker, Cantillon, an entrenched economist (Carlsson et al., 2013). Cantillon's experience as an entrepreneur enabled him to develop a theory of entrepreneurship that in turn supported the development of construct economic theory. Cantillon began using the theory of entrepreneurship in 1775 and viewed a small business owner as an agent taking risk to equilibrate the markets and economy (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison- Laffitte, 2014; Sánchez, 2013)

Cantillon's contribution to the field of entrepreneurship gave rise to the concept of entrepreneurship's financial importance and the entrepreneur's role in commercial growth (Carlsson et al., 2013). Cantillon used the law of supply and demand to drive traditional economics, the rarer a product, the more expensive the product and conversely, supply and demand affects business decisions by influencing what small business owners purchase (Carlsson et al., 2013). Perry (2012) noted the origin of modern

entrepreneurship theory was during the 1940s and 1950s. This theory is appropriate for the study because researchers may provide insight into business, entrepreneur personal characteristics, resource management, strategic management decisions, and strategies vital for business sustainability (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). Businesses begin and grow from the established social, ethnic, and economic frameworks where economic activities and job creation potential exist (Wang, 2013). Entrepreneurship theory is the best suited for this doctoral research study because the concepts provide suitable framework for exploring the research question which includes supply and demand.

### **Operational Definitions**

The following define the terms that present-shared view of the framework related to the research:

*Balanced scorecard(BSC)*: BSC is a strategic planning and management system, used by managers to keep track of execution of business activities aligned to the vision and strategy of the business, by improving internal and external communications, and monitoring the business performance against strategic goals (Johnson, Reckers & Barlett, 2014).

*Business modeling*: Business modeling is a practice to document important assumptions for a business to generate revenue and make profit, including expenses incurred from the operations depending on strategic components and functions of the business (Leschke, 2013).

*Business performance*: Business performance is a combination of management and analytic procedures allowing managers to attain prearranged objectives for the

business. These include changes in employment, financial income, and profits (Blackburn, Hart, & Wainwright, 2013).

*Business success:* Business success refers to a firm or company with sustainable profits for at least 5 years (SBA, 2014).

*Entrepreneurship theory (ET):* ET is a descriptive element of business efforts pursued by owners and managers of large and small businesses, including the key elements of sustainability, motivation, business education, management skills, and small business related to entrepreneurship success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014; Schumpeter, 1939).

*Financial management:* Financial management is a well-organized and effective management of money, in a manner to achieve the goals of a business, analyzing and dealing with investments and money for a business to make financial decisions (Chemmanur & Fulghieri, 2014).

*Human capital:* Human capital refers to the ownership of particular experiences like knowledge, skills, abilities, and education including family ties comprising workplace practices, recognized and used by owners and managers (Quan & Huy, 2014).

*Knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA):* KSA are the business skills, experiences, trainings, education, and abilities enhancing business owner competence to operate enterprises and sustain entrepreneurship (Debrulle et al., 2013).

*Marketing strategy:* Marketing strategy is a business's strategy combining all marketing goals into one comprehensive plan, to achieve the maximum profit for sustaining the business (Mohamadzadeh et al., 2013).

*Sustainability*: Sustainability is a continuous business that has survived a minimum of 5 years or more following the initial establishment and the start-up phase (Raudeliūnienė, Tvaronavičienė, & Dzemyda, 2014; Septiani, Dewi, & Siregar, 2013).

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

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are ideas, not personally controllable by the researchers, but if the ideas did not exist, the study was not necessary (Simon & Goes, 2013). Assumptions are facts assumed true without validation from supporting evidence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Qualitative research depends on data from narratives and observations, which require understanding and collaboration between the researcher and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mishler, 1986). The research study includes several assumptions. The first assumption was that, the use of a multiple-case study, a study containing more than a single case was a suitable method to explore strategies small grocery business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Second, conducting the study in Anchorage, AK was a large enough geographical area for researchers to provide sufficient data for the study. Third, interpreting reality of data collection may occur in a variety of ways and the understanding depends on subjective interpretation. Three, participants were friendly and truthful enough to provide accurate and valid responses to the interview questions. The final assumption was that small business owners might use the results of this study to understand different strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

**Limitations**

Henderson, Kimmelman, Fergusson, Grimshaw, and Hackam (2013) noted limitations are potential weaknesses of the study. Yin (2013) added that limitations and weaknesses exist in any research study outside the scope of the researcher. The major limitation of the study was the transferability to a larger population due to small sample size (Morse, 2015a). Yilmaz (2013) stated that researchers with small sample process limit their possibility of generalizing the research findings in some situations and settings. Consequently, limitations might result from the participants' biases within the study, as the participants might not accurately recollect their lived experiences as small ethnic grocery business owners conducting businesses due to inclined racial biases and perceptions. Perceptions and beliefs might limit what we needed to know (Gioia et al., 2013). Researchers accepted and understood the limitation they were unable to control a participant's lack of knowledge. The limitations of this study also included the researcher's control of the participant's bias and the quality of the answers from the participants.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations were the characteristics and restrictions, reducing the range and defining the study limitations (Simon & Goes, 2013). Research delimitations of a study were self-imposed limitations from the scope and design of the study (Snelson, 2016). The delimitations of this study included the study population, which consisted of small ethnic grocery business owners. The findings from this study might not apply to all states in the United States because small ethnic grocery businesses vary from state-to-state due

to ethnic enclaves in multicultural cities. Since the focus was not to generalize the research findings: research delimitations with a narrow scope and boundary are appropriate (Foss & Hallberg, 2014). The final delimitation is that only three participants who are small ethnic grocery business owners in Anchorage AK, using strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years qualify for the interviews. In addition, the sample size may limit a study (Henry, 2013).

### **Significance of the Study**

Small business owners could potentially develop new business strategies for sustaining businesses beyond 5 years of operation using the results of this study. Strategies used for sustaining small businesses might contribute to increased performance and jobs creation (Losapio, 2012). An overall increase in performance and job creation in small business sectors could contribute to supporting a competitive advantage and sustainability (Iarossi, Miller, O'Connor, & Keil, 2013; Podsiadlowski et al., 2013). The contribution of this study to business practice might include adding valuable knowledge to the research continuum and enlightening the business community about the group of talented business owners, may improve economic prosperity (Boyd, 2015).

When small businesses failed, employees lost jobs, which affected incomes in families and caused stressful circumstances (Miles, 2013). Successful businesses generated benefits such as job opportunities, employee satisfaction, customer services, and timely payment of taxes (Miles, 2013). These benefits could support a positive social change from higher quality of life for employees and stakeholders in the community

Small business success could result in poverty reduction, improved standard of living, and financial security in local communities.

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

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies small ethnic grocery business owners in the food retail industry used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The literature review included an extensive analysis of the literature related to entrepreneurship theory and the key concepts identified in this theory. I furthermore discussed and analyzed the alternative opposing theories. An extensive analysis of current strategies for reducing high failure rates among these small business owners was included as well.

#### **Search Strategy**

The following types of sources were included in the literature review: Peer-reviewed articles, books, professional trade journals, magazines, and government databases used the following databases from Walden University Library: Business Source Complete, Social Science Research Network, Emerald Management Journals, SAGE Premier, and LexisNexis Academic. Peer-reviewed articles and books range from 2013-2017. The search keywords and terms included *entrepreneurship theory, alternative theories for entrepreneurship theory, complimentary theories for entrepreneur theory, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial characteristics, entrepreneurial motivation, resource management, human capital, social capital, strategic management and entrepreneurship, business failure, serial entrepreneurship, education and management training, financial capital, business plans, and geographical location.*



The literature review included peer-reviewed journal articles published less or more than 5 years old. These periodical articles, manuscripts, dissertations, and other research documents are pertinent to key concepts in my research question. Table 1 provides statistical information, including the total number of sources and the percentage of peer-reviewed journal articles.

Table 1

*Literature Review Sources by Year of Publication*

Literature type	Older than 5 years	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total %	Total no.
Peer-reviewed articles	10	25	29	20	5	2	95%	91
Non peer-reviewed articles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Books	1	0	1	1	0	0	3%	3
Other	0	0	0	1	0	0	1%	1
Total	11	25	30	22	5	2	100%	95

The literature review section consisted of an overview of small business in the United States. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), the literature review might be the base for developing interview questions for researchers to acquire knowledge by conducting credible interviews sessions to achieve data saturation. The subsequent literature review comprised of the major segments regarding the exploration of strategies small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Furthermore, the subsection regarded small business strategies included the knowledge learned about small business success, sustainability, application to solving business problems, and discussing entrepreneurship theory as a conceptual framework for the research study.

The purpose for literature reviews was mapping, consolidating, and evaluating the academic level of the research study in addition to identifying knowledge gaps to enrich the existing body of knowledge (Seuring & Gold, 2012). Small business owners might use strategies for some small business units to compete among smaller businesses (Eboreime & Adedoyin, 2013). The strategies small business practitioners lack included management, entrepreneurial expertise, and marketing strategies (Brinckmann, Grichnik, & Kapsa, 2010). The management strategy involved competent administration of resources such as human, financial, and information (Chinomona, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore what strategies small ethnic grocery business owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

### **Entrepreneurship Theory**

Entrepreneurship theory defined a small business owner as an agent taking the risk to equilibrate markets and the economy (Bula, 2012). Therefore, entrepreneurship theory helped to set relationship between opportunities and small business owner to support executives to start-up new small businesses (Martinez & Williams, 2014). Some small business owners decided on opportunities to generate wealth and involved entrepreneurship theory from new e-business formation to growth stage (Flores, Westhead, Wright & Ucbasaran, 2014). Small business owners, with technical and business skills, in addition to physical infrastructure of the Internet connecting customers were successful in businesses (Martinez & Williams, 2014). The availability of the internet worldwide often reflected increased sales, profits and jobs; therefore, markets needed secured governance infrastructure (Flores et al., 2014).

Small business owners used entrepreneurship theory to express business efforts pursued as ET and involved the key elements of sustainability, motivation, business education, management skills, and small business connected with entrepreneurship success (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Small business owners have high expectations for success in establishing startups ventures with early stages being critical in success of businesses (Carayannis & Stewart, 2013). The small business owners' viewpoints were vital elements for entrepreneurship theory based on new venture capability and performance (Hu & Zhang, 2012). The owner's viewpoint was also an advanced strategic executive concept for decision-making during uncertainty, the influence for ET on short-term performances was less than long-term thus the ET for new ventures represents policies and practices that provided a basis for small business owners' decisions and actions (Doktor & Lins, 2014).

Acs et al. (2013) discussed that ET was the foundation to business creation and profitability, which included (a) conceptualization & exposure (b) business management skills (c) human capital attributions (d) sustainability strategies (e) entrepreneur profitability. In the early 1940s, small business enterprises started focusing on ET as the center of U.S. trade gravity then was with social networks of small family-owned businesses (Hisrich, 2014). During the economic growth period that started in 1945, entrepreneurship and small firm ownership increased (Cole, 1946). The new small business owners comprised of a growing college-educated pool of World War II veterans of which the character changed noticeably from the middle of the 20th century (Hisrich).

Small business owners became skilled artisans, accountants, doctors, retailers, store clerks, cobblers, sales agents, plumbers, electricians, and many other types of professionals (Cole, 1946). Kuratko (2013) noted scholars argued the nature of the entrepreneur, the definition of entrepreneurship, and the theory and environmental conditions that give rise to success and others. Moreover, Bublak (2013) proposed a combination of ideas and suggested that leadership theory was mainly consistent in cases of progressive business outlines, and production. Bublak said that the lack of strategies and persuasiveness on the part of individual business owners was the critical missing element in international entrepreneurship development. In contrast, Holloway and Wheeler (2013) recommended that many business owners often have strong leadership work ethics and demonstrate an innate capability to improve and expand business on an international foundation.

Fernandez, Malatesta, and Smith (2013) suggested that small business diversification was an important link to entrepreneurial development. Fernandez et al. maintained that the objective of inclusion of minority senior executives, with leadership strengths, was essential for acquiring small business federal contract set-asides. Parilla (2013) noted that no exceptional efficiency could implement management theory during new business startups or execution of entrepreneurship strategies for growth of new products and services. Likewise, Pellegrino, Piva, and Vivarelli (2013) counseled that management theory enabled small business startups to succeed the introduction of new products and establish a competitive advantage in the emerging business segments.

In comparison, Christensen (2013) highlighted that the best business owners succeed by listening to the customers' desires and invest aggressively in the products and services to satisfy their current and future needs. Kuechle (2013) suggested that business owners should be persistent, skillful and knowledgeable decision-makers, in order to be able to succeed. However, Chen (2013) suggested that voluntary exit was sometimes the method business owners use to sell past enterprises and launch new ones. Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013) noted that small business success was a perceptible phenomenon and that; profitability was a concrete measure of entrepreneurial success.

Ritchie et al. (2013) insisted that environmental and social forms of prosperity, along with traditional economic affluence, align theoretically with the concept of entrepreneurial profitability theory. In addition, Sarasvathy, Menon, and Kuechle (2013) urged that small business owners used entrepreneurship practices to increase the probability of commercial success. Furthermore, Ritchie et al. noted that management and small business profitability are significant elements of entrepreneurship. Aldrich and Yang (2014) maintained that the value of entrepreneurship on a large-scale has a comparison with self-employment. On a different view, Jennings, Edwards, Jennings, and Delbridge (2014) affirmed that business owners presented a biased feeling of happiness due to ownership.

Alternately, Khan and Adnan (2014) approached management theory from the standpoint of decision-making performance and reliance on set goals and objectives. However, Tourish (2014) maintained an altered view, based on transformational leadership theory and arguing that leaders were the center of stable enterprises of which

valuable activities came from the leaders, not the followers. Pellegrino, Piva, and Vivarelli (2014) suggested, researchers ought to use startups for research and experimentation (R&E) based on the ability to lead a science-based reorientation of the industry management structure, startups were weaker compared to management incumbents due to external factors provided by large mature firms and research institutions. More importantly, Pellegrino et al. (2014) stated that ET was consistent with the Schumpeterian concept of creative destruction. Besides, ET integrates research and development and supports prototype material accumulations required for innovation by established firms. Tiftik, Kılıc, and Saglam (2015) noted that leadership varied according to individual surroundings and occasional times, which make business prosper regardless of non-productivity and government contracting difficulty. Scholars referred to ET as the research of opportunities, based on origins, nature, and evolution. Leadership, as well as many other theories extended do not serve the conceptual framework of this study, neither do some classical theories that micro businesses served better having a workforce of 50 employees or fewer. However, with the profitability theory, there was a particular link with performance, productivity, success, and small business owner feasibility. In summary, a literature gap existed among small business performance, sustainability, and success beyond 5 years, which needed further clarification and resolution.

### **Alternative Theories for Entrepreneurship Theory**

The alternative theories for the entrepreneurship theory included (a) human capital theory, (b) resource-based theory (RBT), and (c) disadvantage theory.

*Human capital theory.* Researchers used human capital theory for a small business research framework as theorists embraced the concept that entrepreneurs were decision makers in human capital (Becker, 1993). Becker stated that acquiring human capital involved education, training, habits, social, and personality attributes, to improve the economic status. Moreover, Santarelli and Tran (2013) posited that there was a positive relationship between the success of start-up businesses and human capital thus business owners made decisions for hiring based on employees' human capital (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011). Addy, Bonnal, and Lira (2012) researchers agreed that, human capital theory was vital for understanding labor force and underemployment, which might improve business sustainability as business owners used knowledge to support their business activities (Wang & Lysenko, 2014).

Economists used human capital theory to examine different economic issues and determine individuals' rates of return investments at different levels of education (Fayolle & Gailly; 2015; Martin et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2014). Several researchers have suggested that a positive relationship existed between human capital, small business success and sustainability (Nason & Wiklund, 2015). McHenry (2015) scholars from different fields have determined that the human theory was suitable for multidimensional, multidisciplinary, and conceptual studies thus appropriate for the study of strategies small ethnic grocery business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. In this study, I strived to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of individuals' investment in human capital related to their business sustainability.

***Resource-based theory (RBT)***. Individual business owners have various management style and strategies to avoid barriers and acquire resources for success. Barney (1991), a strategic management specialist, published the seminal work on RBT, the second part of his conceptual framework. Barney (1991) discussed that with adequate resources small business owners could earn reasonable revenues though resources were always scarce and limited thus needed appropriate mechanism to regulate and monitor within the businesses (Day, 2014; O'Donnell, 2014). Barney built RBT on the works of scholars such as Ricardo in 1817, Porter in 1980, and Nelson and Winter in 1982, which deliberated resource-based view of the business (Barney, 2014). These earlier scholars wanted to determine the economic value of resources and anticipate the potential resources to support the success of businesses (Barney, 2014). The resource-based view of the firm was the forerunner of the RBT. Researchers used strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) to analyze the sustainable competitive advantage in businesses, before the development of RBT (Barney, 1991). Barney, the SWOT analysis model assumed all businesses have similar traits and small business owners could optimize internal strengths by responding to external opportunities.

Business owners used internal forces to find ways to regulate external threats to balance the faults within their businesses (Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014). SWOT and Resource based theory were alike in that the internal and external forces (SWOT) intertwined with internal and external resources (RBT), which were suitable tools to assess business success and sustainability (Tomczyk, Lee, & Winslow, 2013). The focus in RBT was solely on internal attributes of a small business such as business



skills, steady cash flow, and the ability to secure the required capital (Day, 2014; O'Donnell, 2014). Lonial and Carter (2015) argued that small businesses could remain resourceful, successful, and profitable to sustain their businesses, thus the success of small businesses practices depended on the owners' efforts to harmonize and sustain the steady flow of resources for business success. The strategies needed to succeed in business become critical to this research study because future potential small ethnic grocery business owner might benefit from the findings. Abdelgawad, Zahra, Svejnova, and Sapienza (2013) cautioned the application of RBT due to uncertainty in assessing internal resources of businesses, small business owners with business skills might reallocate and regulate business resources to alter the competition (Barney, 2014). In this research study, I learned the strategies small ethnic grocery business owners used to sustain their businesses by focusing on the RBT concept, of promoting businesses success and sustainability in relation to entrepreneur theory.

*Disadvantage theory.* In pursuing this research study, I ensured to gain a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon of disadvantaged small business owners in ethnic grocery businesses in Anchorage AK. Light (1979) noted that disadvantage theory has relevance to researching business failure, minorities and immigrants who were often the owners for small ethnic grocery business ought to choose from joblessness and self-employment as small-scale entrepreneurs. Light (1979) suggested, variation in small business owners' abilities were race-based, and cultural factors were responsible for creating the problems that individuals experience in business surroundings. The innovative work of Light on the disadvantage theory of entrepreneurship received

commendation and critiques from researchers (Rocha, Carneiro, & Varum, 2015). Light (1979) discussed scholars oppose the idea that small ethnic grocery business owners' values were responsible for the challenges facing the ethnicity group of small business owners (Wang, 2013).

Several researchers have suggested social forces create institutional obstacles prohibiting small business development (Bates & Robb, 2013; Chaumba & Nackerud, 2013; Lofstrom & Bates, 2013). When examined the countrywide records of small business owners, scholars provided justification for the argument that culture was a key contributor to low stages of ethnic grocery business ownership (Bates & Tuck, 2014; Casey, 2012). Boyd (2015) researchers use disadvantage theory to analyze the difficulties in the market and entrepreneurship involving strategies for business owners' success. In this research study, I understood the failures of small business owners using disadvantage theory in the phenomenon of social problems confronting the ethnic grocery business as an alternative to entrepreneurship theory.

### **Complimentary Theories for Entrepreneur Theory**

The complimentary theories for entrepreneurship theory included discovery theory and creation theory. The concept of the entrepreneurial opportunity was vital for the study and the theory of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs were individuals pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities, a situation in which the entrepreneurs acted to make profits by forming new means (Eckhardt & Shane, 2003). Although the concept of opportunity was the central part of the theories of entrepreneurship and economics, the basic source of opportunity remained an on-going debate (Alvarez & Amor, 2014; McCaffrey, 2013).

The discovery theory assumed that opportunities were objectives, hence entrepreneurs differed from non-entrepreneurs in significant ways and that decision-making context within which entrepreneurs operated was risky. Kaisch and Gilad (1991) said that the discovery theory had existing opportunities due to market imbalance thus entrepreneurs could discover the opportunities.

However, in creation theory the entrepreneurs create the opportunities in a developing and iterative search process differentiating entrepreneurs, non-entrepreneurs, and the decision making context within which entrepreneurs operation was either unclear or uncertain (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Creation theory affirmed that initiatives by entrepreneurs were critical for opportunities to materialize thus the entrepreneurs created the opportunities (Sarasvathy, 2001; Shumpeter 1934; Weick, 1979). Researchers used the discovery and creation theories to analyze the three entrepreneurial phenomena: entrepreneurial decision-making, business planning process, and decision to finance entrepreneurial venture. Discovery and creation theories generated different insight with respect to the three phenomena, suggesting that discovery and creation theories of entrepreneurship theory were complementary rather than alterative.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship combines comprehensive coverage with a wide variety of real-life cases by starting, developing, and managing venture to give entrepreneurs the tools needed to succeed in launching business enterprise in today's hypercompetitive world (Elgar, 2015). Free enterprise values such as wealth, financial progress, job creation, and launching were essential to entrepreneurship, and evolved rapidly over time (Ucbasaran,

Shepherd, Lockett, & Lyon, 2013). Likewise, economists acknowledged the work of Schumpeter (1939); however, entrepreneurship was not the subject of substantial research hence missing from standard textbooks (Kerr, Nanda, & Rhodes-Kropf, 2014).

Farashah (2013) stated that researchers advocating business owners seeking prosperity might embrace strategies that expand entrepreneurship abilities.

Entrepreneurship strategy involved human resource management, including a range of activities businesses engaged in to establish and sustain a competitive advantage process by accumulating knowledge and skills, to improve profits and develop business strategies (Jayawarna, Jones, & Macpherson, 2014). Furthermore, entrepreneurship strategy was a process used to explore small business strategies, plans, operations, and production (Nasr & Boujelbene, 2014). The focus of the study was exploring strategies small businesses used for success and sustainability based on a contextual theory called ET. The literature research included business related value activities such as strategy, experience, finance, achievement, management, and sustainability.

Small business owners needed many qualities for supporting new ventures depending on early planning, education, business experience, and capabilities (Bae, Qian, Miao, & Fiet, 2014; Duval-Couetil, 2013). Some scholars defined the process differently with emphasis on business schools though the approach recommended commercial schooling as a merely planned way of knowing aspects of distinct operations (Arasti, Fakhrisadat, & Narges, 2014; Nasr & Boujelbene, 2014). Conversely Frankish, Roberts, Coad, Spears, & Storey, 2012) argued that the role for education aspect for human capital was management of banking, trading, financial resources, and credits. Amirbekova,

Tayauova, and Chowdhury (2014) noted the majority of vital business issues affecting enterprises were establishment of financial knowledge, management, and influence on small business funding.

Acs, Audretsch, and Lehmann (2013) recommended that any accessible information was fundamental for small business owners to develop entrepreneurship skills through a spillover knowledge theory. Spillover knowledge was a part of business productivity, necessary for formation of strategic processes influencing business performance (Arasti, Zandi, & Bahmani, 2014). On the contrary, Ghobadi and D'Ambra (2013) urged that skills and abilities associated with managers and owners were the principle elements entrepreneurs required to understand the operational aspects of spillover theory fully. Furthermore, Amel and Akkari (2012) noted that expertise created obstacles on spillover knowledge during information exchange between small business owners and their employees. Consequently, the compilation of small business spillover abilities, information, and performances directly influenced the economic growth, entrepreneurship, and productivity (Amirbekova, Tayauova, & Chowdhury, 2014).

There were several definitions for entrepreneurship; nevertheless, Arasti et al. (2014) affirmed the most functional as generating creative and innovative ideas jointly with management and business skills linked to capital and resources to generate prosperity. Long ago, in 1927, Knight defined entrepreneurship simply as an investment under risk and predictable decisions about returned distributions (Astebro, Holger, Ramana, & Weber, 2014). Kerr et al., (2014) noted that in considering elements of free enterprise, ET was a vital mechanism for transforming, researching, and developing small

business. Wright and Wallis (2015) noted the description of entrepreneurship was pursuing opportunities excluding resources under control with the complexity discovery in research; entrepreneurs were individuals identifying needs.

Bae et al. (2014) advanced a parallel notion of ET as arranging, managing, and assuming business risks, otherwise, an entrepreneur was somebody sighting a marketplace opening, collecting resources, establishing, and growing an enterprise to suit that condition (Smith & Chimucheka, 2014) . The debate about early and current definitions for ET, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs need further studies to assess the characters, uses and influences on ET. Regardless of the variety of definitions, entrepreneurship and management theories matched the elements managerial skills required to manage small businesses effectively (Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al., 2014).

Several entrepreneurship components supported the new business growth procedure such as education, earlier economic activities management experience, role models to follow, government knowledge, and capitals linked to business startup (Bae et al., 2014). Some of the reviewed literature emphasized business owners gathering and connecting information for developing opportunities and strategies required for success in entrepreneurship and trade (Duval-Couetil, 2013). The skills integrated, combine knowledge and capabilities with approved environment and interests (Arasti, Fakhrisadat et al., 2014). The strategies essential for success were the business facts required to operate small business effectively for instance the relationship to entrepreneurship return on investment (ROI), was critical for profitability varying from small and medium, occasionally with a high variance (Smith & Chimucheka, 2014).

The requirement for knowledge was vital as few ventures succeeded, many failed, because of lack of understanding of ROI (Smith & Chimucheka). Frequently, businesses faced endless challenges in acquiring adequate funding from external sources (Ibe, Moemena, Alozie, & Mbaeri, 2015). These challenges existed regardless of the diverse institutions and policy initiatives initiated by the federal government to address small business funding problems (Talbot, Mac, Bhaird, & Whittam, 2015). Talbot et al stated, scholars noted that data irregularity was the primary cause of the growing business finance gap as federal credit unions function in particular geographical regions (Talbot et al., 2015).

### **Entrepreneurial Characteristics**

Small business owners needed a combination of factors to succeed, including identifying opportunities, risk-taking abilities, management, and devotion to the business (Robinson & Stubberud, 2015). The personal characteristics of an entrepreneur were the fundamental construct of entrepreneurship theory (Brown & Thornton, 2013; Casson & Casson, 2014; Kenworthy & McMullan, 2013). Schumpeter (1939) wrote that entrepreneur was unique based on particular set of characteristics and personality traits combined, leading into entrepreneurial behavior. Scholars that were more recent concur with his original assessment (Obschonka, Schmitt- Rodermund, Silbereisen, Gosling, & Potter, 2013). Similarly, earlier research indicated certain characteristics and personality traits of some individuals might provide themselves with entrepreneurship (Almeida, Ahmetoglu, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014; Shane & Nicolaou, 2013).

Distinctively, the characteristics of risk perception, self-efficacy, innovativeness, internal locus of control, and pro-activeness reveal tendencies of entrepreneurial orientation (Obschonka et al., 2013). Entrepreneurs displaying such individual characteristics and personality traits were likely to create and operate businesses that demonstrated entrepreneurial orientation on a corporate level and achieve entrepreneurial success (Leutner, Ahmetoglu, Akhtar, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014; Rosenbusch, Rauch, & Baus, 2013), leading a business performance (Anderson & Eshima, 2013; Wales, Parida, & Patel, 2013). Based on entrepreneurship theory, an entrepreneur's personal characteristics, skills, and capabilities could affect the success and sustainability of their business (Frid, 2015).

***Risk perception.*** Entrepreneurs demonstrated the aptitude for perceiving and bearing risk appropriately (Brown & Thornton, 2013). Risk perception was an entrepreneur's assessment of intrinsic risks, which were either opportunities or threats in a given situation (Podoyntsyna, Song, & Van der Bij, 2012). Entrepreneurs encounter a variety of risks in pursuing economic opportunities, thus one of the significant characteristics for entrepreneurship lies in their perception of risk (Gudmundsson & Lechner, 2013). Nabi and Linan (2013) stated either risk was an opportunity to attain a stronger positive valuation of entrepreneurship for an individual, or a negative valuation attained by viewing a risk as a threat.

Mathieu and St-Jean (2013) illustrated that entrepreneurs have a higher risk propensity and tolerance for risk than people engaged in regular employment and that risk propensity was the best indicator of entrepreneurial intentions. Douglas (2013)



discovered that high growth oriented entrepreneurs were more tolerant to risk and that bearing risk was essential to gaining profitable entrepreneurial results. Hvide and Panos (2014) used data on new businesses incorporated to discover that the more risk tolerant individuals were, the more appropriate the individuals were to start-up a new business. Conversely, the researchers moreover found that businesses created by more risk tolerant individuals were less profitable, diminishing returns, and high failure rates (Hvide & Panos, 2014).

*Self-efficacy.* Entrepreneurial self-efficacy refers to the acknowledged strength of an individual's belief in their own ability to perform the roles and task to either start a business successfully or not (Wennberg, Pathak, & Autio 2013). Self-efficacy was significant in entrepreneurship creation and expansion of business from start-up phase to operational stage (Bullough, Renko, & Myatt, 2014). The concept of self-efficacy reflected the judgment of individuals' self-reflective concept not related to individuals' skills but with judgments of what to do with available skills (Germak & Robinson, 2013). Thus, highly self-efficacious persons might tend to believe in their personal ability for starting businesses, performing tasks, working hard for success, and competing with individuals without confidence in their ability to start a business and perform a task (Mathieu & Jean, 2013).

Self-efficacy was a driving force for entrepreneurship to succeed (Wright & Stigliani, 2013). Smith and Woodworth (2012) stated that self-efficacy was a measure of entrepreneurial expectations of success. Entrepreneurs with higher self-efficacy, implies higher levels of confidence showing higher levels of expectation for success and

performance in efforts creating social value (Caliendo, Fossen, & Kritikos, 2014; Fayolle & Linan, 2014; Laguna, 2013). Cultural norms and practices were likely to shape individuals entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior like number of start-up attempts, innovative behavior, and positive outlook on desired business results (Wennberg et al., 2013). Furthermore, task detailing, self-efficacy and opportunity acknowledgment among small ethnic grocery business owners was significant to business performance (Gibbs, 2014). Small ethnic grocery business owners commonly have higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy and revealed positive perception of venture creation despite indicating low business performance and low levels of business sustainability (Gibson, Harris, Walker, & McDowell, 2014).

***Innovativeness.*** Historically an entrepreneur was an innovator and responsible for innovative products and services in the market (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014; Casson & Casson, 2014). Innovativeness represented creativity and experimentation of new products and services introduced to the market through research and development (Abebe & Amgriawan, 2014). Potential entrepreneurs constrained by lack of resources sometimes innovated efficiently by combining available resources accessible to solve problems and maximized market opportunities for profit (Senyard, Baker, Steffens, & Davidson, 2014). Small business owners having confidence in innovation, view innovation as a significant component of entrepreneurial mindset and intention (Ashourizadeh et al., 2014).

Kyrgidou and Spyropoulou (2013) noted that entrepreneurial abilities facilitate innovativeness, which in turn has a positive impact on business performance. Fairlie and Holleran (2012) speculated that innovativeness contribute to entrepreneurial success as

individual innovative entrepreneurs create business innovations to enhance the success of businesses (Colombelli, Krafft, & Quartraro, 2013; Obeng, Robson, & Haugh, 2014). Therefore, innovative entrepreneur seeking to pursue innovation in the early start-up stage, risks complicating the start-up process and accepting the liability of innovation for the business (Hyytinen & Maliranta, 2013).

***Internal locus of control.*** An individual with an internal locus of control believed that, the individual could influence events and their results, which referred to individuals in control of their own future and destiny (Mathieu & St Jean, 2013; Mehta & Gupta, 2014). Small business owners with the psychological characteristic locus of control played a significant role in entrepreneurial orientation, and determination to achieve success (Sanchez, 2013; Sanchez & Hernandez-Sanchez, 2014; Saud Khan, Breitenecker, & Schawrz, 2014). Internal locus of control characteristic has connection to perseverance, determination, accomplishment, and success (Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2013). Sandberg et al. (2013) discovered that internal locus of control was a key characteristic entrepreneurs displayed for contributing to their success. Thus, internal locus of control was an essential component for predicting entrepreneurial individual or team success (Kahlke, 2014). Though researchers speculated that internal locus of control did not have an important impact on entrepreneurial intentions (Saeed, Nayyab, Rashied, Lodhi, Musawar, & Iqbal, 2013).

***Proactiveness.*** A small business owner operating with a high level of personal initiative demonstrates a strong proactive characteristic trait (Glaub et al., 2014).

Proactive entrepreneurs were self-starters and had high degree of invention to pursue and

take advantage of opportunities (Lim & Envick, 2013; Tornau & Freese, 2013).

Proactiveness correlated with entrepreneurial intention, and personal attributes have a positive impact on business performance, with proactiveness ranking the highest in respect to correlation to positive business performance (Pinho & Sampio De Se, 2014).

***Entrepreneurial motivation.*** Entrepreneurial motivation was a key construct of entrepreneurship theory (Alvarez, Barney, & Anderson, 2013; Casson, 2014; Lewin, 2013), and a significant component for start-up business establishment and possible success (Chen, Liao, Redd, & Wu, 2013; Germak & Robinson, 2014). Entrepreneurial motivations have links with resources, behavior, and business performance and reveal the entrepreneurs' commitment to creating and sustaining new business enterprises (Piperopoulos & Dimov 2014).

Estrin, Mickiewicz, and Stephan (2013) urged that skills and motivations might change over the processes of starting businesses and during operations as entrepreneurs learned skills might influence their motivations. The motivational factors for individuals to pursue in starting businesses included entrepreneurial training programs, pushed out of necessity, and pulled into entrepreneurship (Nabi & Linan, 2013; Solesvik, 2013). At the beginning of this research, a systematic literature review was to ensure that the research build on an existing knowledge of motivation from entrepreneurship in the academic literature searched based on empirical studies of entrepreneurial motivation (Stephan, Hart & Drews, 2015). In the next section of the Literature Review, I presented concepts related to the motivation that created and started a new business venture.

***Entrepreneurial training programs.*** Individuals participating in entrepreneurial education programs were more motivated and became entrepreneurs compared to those with no entrepreneurial education programs (Solesvik, 2013). Fayolle and Gailley (2013) noted entrepreneurial training and educational programs strengthen entrepreneurial intentions and motivations, while serving to alleviate the lack of prior business ownership (Bruhn & Zia, 2013). Martin, McNally, and Kay (2013) meta-analytically scrutinized outcomes from entrepreneurship education research dating back to 1979 to recent, the researchers discovered a significant relationship between entrepreneurship education training and positive entrepreneurial outcomes for those receiving entrepreneurial training (Martin et al., 2013). Similarly, Sanchez (2013) discovered, entrepreneurial education has a positive impact on entrepreneurial motivation and intent among secondary students.

***Pushed out of necessity.*** Researchers from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) concludes that 30% of the entrepreneurs created their business out of necessity, and 6% believed they would still be small without employees after 5 years in operation (Poschke, 2013). Individuals pushed into entrepreneurship started new business venture out of necessity because of unemployment or underemployment (Fairlie, 2013a; Kamuriwo & Chizema, 2013; Scholman, Van Stel, & Thurik, 2014). During economic downturn and times of high unemployment, necessity entrepreneurs might have a higher average level of skills though not all those with lower entrepreneurial skills started businesses out of necessity like entrepreneurs who were victims of discrimination in workplaces (Levie & Hart 2013). Necessity entrepreneurs were most likely lacking

resources; the conclusion was consistent with the previous research indicating that necessity entrepreneurs characteristically had smaller businesses and fewer to no employees beyond 5 years (Bates & Robb, 2013).

***Pulled into opportunity.*** According to data collected from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) survey of entrepreneurs, approximately 75% of US entrepreneurs were in entrepreneurship to seize existing opportunities (Braunerhjelm & Henrekson, 2013). Some individuals also pulled into entrepreneurship to create new business enterprises by taking advantage of the potential business opportunities inside the market (Besser & Miller, 2013; Cassar, 2014). The businesses that were successful and sustainable were the results of pursuing opportunities rather than necessities (Gohmann & Fernandez, 2014). Singh and Gibbs (2013) noted researchers argued approximately 84% of the respondents indicated that discovering business opportunity preceded business creation, thus internally motivated opportunities found market requirements.

During economic downturn and times of high unemployment, necessity entrepreneurs may have a higher average level of skills though not all those with lower entrepreneurial skills started businesses out of necessity (Levie & Hart 2013). Despite little change in balance of opportunity-driven and necessity-driven entrepreneurship, there was a renewed focus on whether necessity-driven businesses were sustainable and successful. The next section of the literature review explored the role of resource management on developing sustainable entrepreneurship and described the use of resource management practices and process for entrepreneurs to navigate their business.

## **Resource Management**

Allocating and managing resources by entrepreneurs was a key construct of entrepreneurship theory (Smith & Chimueka, 2014). Smith and Chimueka, the entrepreneurship theory included managerial skills of the entrepreneurs as key component for coordinating and combining the factors needed for production. The abilities of the entrepreneurs to acquire, manage, and allocate human capital, social capital, and financial capital effectively was vital for creating and sustaining businesses (Bates & Robb, 2013; Robb, Fairlie, & Robinson, 2014). The entrepreneurship theory was appropriate for this study because researchers provided an insight into entrepreneur personal characteristics, resource management, and explore strategies, crucial to business sustainability (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). By understanding entrepreneur personal characteristics, resource management, and exploring strategies small ethnic grocery business owners might increase their business sustainability and contribute to the economy. The next section of the Literature Review focused on human and social capital aspects of the entrepreneurs.

## **Human Capital**

Human capital represents the knowledge and skills acquired by entrepreneurs through formal and informal learning, including passing down of knowledge and learned behaviors from trans generational ties (Jaskiewicz, Combs, & Rau, 2015; Jaywarna, Jones, & Macpherson, 2014). Human capital also included an entrepreneur's educational achievement, and business experience, frequently reflected in the number of years in business (Cassar, 2014; Millan, Congregado, Roman, Van Praag, & van Stel, 2014). The

factors of human capital significantly contributed to a business venture success (Baptista, Karaoz, & Mendonca, 2014; Kolstad & Wiig, 2013; Lofstrom, Bates, & Parker, 2014).

Zanakis et al. (2012) argued that entrepreneurs with years of industry related work experiences, problem solving skills and self-efficacy had a higher opportunity for business success compared to individuals starting businesses as their last alternative (Stuetzer, Obschonka, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013). Conversely, Rauch and Rijdsdijk (2013) discovered that a particular human capital had a direct negative effect on business failure rates. The entrepreneurship theory involved resource management, of which human capital with elements of education and experience was important for business success and sustainability. Thus, entrepreneurship theory was a suitable approach for exploring strategies small business owner used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

***Education and experience.*** Education plays an important role in human capital supporting entrepreneurs (Van Praag & van Stel, 2013; winters, 2013). The lack of proper business education and acumen was a major issue for small business owners' success as entrepreneurial training and business mentoring was a factor in business performance (Nunez-Cacho Utrilla & Grande Torraleja, 2013). Lofstrom et al. (2014) argued that entrepreneurs with higher levels of education achievement have more advantages and increased choices in employment salaries, upsetting entrepreneurship, though experience in higher education contributed to analytic abilities, communication skills, general business skills, and market understanding.

The lower average educational achievement level among small business owners suggested a negative effect on business success (SBA, 2013a). Van Praag and Stel (2013)



noted that small business owners with educational achievement had increased growth rate and business success, thus education was an investment in human capital (Karahana, 2013). College graduates were twice as likely to be nascent entrepreneurs compared to individuals with high school diploma (Marvel, 2013). Conversely, data based upon the 2008 Spanish Global Monitor Entrepreneurship (SGME) survey revealed education was not important in creating businesses or identifying business opportunities (Aliaga-Isla, 2015). Education was not just higher education and classroom learning, but education is also achievable through on-the-job training skills (Uy, Foo, & Song, 2013).

Supporting human capital through work experience was essential; researchers discovered a positive association with industry experience and achieving entrepreneurial results with improved performance (Cassar, 2014; Santarelli & Tran, 2013). Ortiz-Walters and Gius (2012) argued business experience correlated positively with business wealth, particularly small business owners with preceding work experience inside a family business setting which supported human capital development linked to business operation (Fairlie & Robb, 2012). Formal education and free enterprise education positively influence self-efficacy, motivation, entrepreneurial intentions, and were significant determinants of entrepreneurial success (Singh & Gibbs, 2013).

### **Social Capital**

Social capital included the existing tangible and prospective resources accessible through entrepreneurs' network of relationships to generate support (McKeever, Anderson, & Jack, 2014). Social capital played a significant role in economic development among small business entrepreneurs (Sarasvathy, Menon, & Kuechle,

2013). Congregado, and Millan (2013) stated entrepreneurial perspectives, social capital were conduits to access networks to expose potential entrepreneurs to fresh and various ideas to explore strategies as well as identify, collect, and allocate scarce resources from all levels of businesses (Efendic, Mickiewicz, & Rebmann, 2014). Therefore, social capital created value by awarding well-connected individuals inside their sphere of influence with access to intellectual, financial, and cultural resources via networks (Gedajlovic, Honig, Moore, Payne, & Wright, 2013).

Earlier researchers studied the role of networks in entrepreneurial activities and findings remain a matter of interest among researchers, including the particular roles of social capital in start-up business creation and development (Westlund, Larsson, & Olsson, 2014). Strategic initiatives ought to represent the most important line of business or cross line of business ventures planned for improving performance and innovation among regional domains (Gao, Sung, & Zhang, 2013; Qian, 2013). Estrin, Mickiewicz, and Stephan (2013) proposed that social capital in the form of entrepreneurship break existing social barriers and create new ties through networks in the local community, national, and international levels.

The concepts of social capital and social entrepreneurship from a theoretical point of view, needed attention to the research study illustrating how the prevailing positive impacts support the formation of social capital as essential for the framework occurring in the entrepreneurship theory. The strategic management pattern explained managerial performance through the links with strategy, environment, and comprehensive reference points including business performance, incorporating strategic management and business

social capital theory. Therefore, the next section focused on strategic management and entrepreneurship, which were important in business sustainability.

### **Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship**

The field of strategic management and entrepreneurship involved creating, growing, transforming businesses, and investigating the effectiveness of different attributes and actions to gain competitive advantage to achieve the business goals (Banker, Mashruwala & Tripathy, 2014). Strategic management was the continuous planning, monitoring, analyzing and assessing of all the necessities for a business to meet its goals and objectives (Mariadoss, Johnson, & Martin, 2014). Small business owners created strategies for managing external opportunities and threats in comparison to internal strengths and weaknesses, which was part of the strategic management (Mariadoss, Johnson, & Martin). Poor strategic management might be a contributing factor in small business owners' failures because of external and internal weaknesses like bad business vision (Murmman, & Sardan, 2013).

Most small businesses had mission statements explaining the reasons for being in business, their products, services, and the target consumer market. Strategic management was a continuous process businesses used to analyze internal processes and resource deliverance for products and services (Matei & Muratovic, 2013.) A strategic management process included (a) goal-setting, (b) analysis, (c) strategy formation, (d) strategy implementation, and (e) strategy monitoring (Bagire & Namada, 2013; Baroto, Abdullah, & Wan, 2012; Mwaanga, 2014).

**Goal setting.** The purpose of goal setting was to clarify the vision for the business thus, goals were crucial in considering strategic performance (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). The goals determined the focus, effort and intensity small business owners' display that was significant to the business performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). According to the goal-setting, stages included (a) defining both short- and long-term objectives, (b) identifying the process of how to achieve the objectives, and (c) customizing the process for the staff; assigning every individual a task with which to succeed (Brinckmann & Kim, 2015). In this process the goals were detailed, realistic and matching the values of the business vision. Generally, the last step in goal setting was to write a mission statement that succinctly communicated the goals to the shareholders and the staff, which was important in sustaining business.

**Analysis.** Entrepreneurs collected adequate information and data applicable to accomplish the business vision and focus on the analysis based on understanding the needs of the business as a sustainable entity, with a strategic direction and identifying initiatives for the business grow (Simon-Moya & Revuelto-Taboada, 2015). Yaun (2013) entrepreneurs should examine external or internal issues affecting the goals, objectives, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the business as well as the threats and opportunities that may arise along the path

**Strategy formulation.** The first step in forming a strategy was to review the information shown from the completion of the analysis to determine the resources a business had to reach the goals and objectives (Dimoska & Trimcev, 2012). In strategy formulation phase, objectives were set, and the means to achieve them identified through

R&D resources, though creativity was necessary (Tse, 2013). During strategy formulation phase, the critical areas surrounding products and services required attention by analyzing business strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats based on gaining competitive advantage for customers' satisfaction leading to improved financial performance and business sustainability.

***Strategy implementation.*** All the employees should understand their roles and responsibilities in the business to execution the goals according to the strategies to ensure the success of the business. The execution of the essential strategies to meet the already set objectives, all employees should comprehend their roles and responsibilities to ensure success. Suitable activities measure can provide the necessary feedback to customers with particulars to identify positive impacts and areas for change (Sołoducho-Pelc, 2013). In strategy implementation phase, businesses pay more attention to details and monitor procedures to implement quick changes as required for adaptability to attaining competitive advantage for business sustainability beyond 5 years.

***Strategy evaluation and control.*** This included performance measurement, reliability review of internal and external issues, plus correction actions accordingly. Any successful assessment of strategy started with description of the limits to reflect the goals set and the progress, measured by the actual results against the plans, while monitoring internal and external issues relative to change in the business environment (Kazozcu, 2011; Demitras 2013). The internal and external issues were continually evolving; the data in this phase was for the use of any future strategy (Kazozcu; Demitras). Strategic management focus was on achieving specific business objectives and managing them

extensively through strategic alignments, the process of connecting business strategies and goals with business units, functions, and employees (Syed, 2013). Therefore, strategic alignments made employees and business owners become aware of the work and provision of responsibilities in the workplace leading to achieving competitive advantage and improving performance. Competitive advantage, attained by Strategic planning integrates the practical areas of business through facilitating communication between business owners (Mwaanga, 2014).

Strategic management and strategic planning involved continuous process of strategic analysis, strategy creation, implementation and monitoring to achieve and sustain competitive advantages (Mwaanga). Strategic planning was critical to business success because the strategic diversity involves vision, mission and creativity where the focus was developing business needs (Mwaanga). Strategic planning was a restricted effort to produce the basic decisions and actions for shaping and guiding the nature of business and business owners were responsible for planning and directing business strategic plans (Bagire & Namada, 2013; Salkic, 2014). Strategic management was simply the planning strategies for small businesses owners to achieve their business goals thus strategic management was significant to small business sustainability. The next section of this literature review focused on small business.

### **Business Failure**

Establishing a business to be profitable had uncertainty; thus, the percentage of businesses failing to reach the end of the first 5 years was relatively high (SBA, 2014). Small business management faced more challenges currently than in the past (Jenkins,

Wiklund, & Brundin, 2014). For instance, representatives at SBA (2014) noted that the maturity of a business might add to continuous improvement, business sustainability and success. Some small business owners' lack of supervisory talents was hindering growth and success in addition to lack of adequate capital and the ability to maintain finances to prevent business failure (Kim, 2014; Marom & Lussier, 2014). Heinze (2013) concluded, inconsistent business performance, lack of focused strategies, and minimal business owner knowledge may cause business failure. Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) suggested separate causes of small business failure such as owners' passiveness that indicated lack of strategy, weak relations, inability to develop teamwork, and sustaining collaboration. Some performance failures occur more frequently such as inability to meeting dateline, incompetence to matching business expectations, and budget depletion (Garg & Garg, 2013).

Leroy, Manigart, Meuleman, and Collewaert (2015) admitted that whether Small business failures caused by financial failure or total desertion, termination of small business operations were normally final. Ucbasaran, Shepherd, Lockett, and Lyon (2013) maintained that bankruptcy was a result of business instability, poor performance, and absence of profitability. Arasti et al. (2014) noted that companies such as small businesses, independent nonemployee and startup business started afresh after bankruptcy proceedings. Leroy et al. 2015 noted that in several cases, in which business owners experience financial problems, and filed for bankruptcy, a classification of hybrid, serial, or portfolio, applies in entrepreneurship. Garg and Garg (2013) described a portfolio entrepreneur as a business owner with supplementary backup work roles, accessible as an

emotional reward when the enterprise dissolves. The next section focused on small business owners' persistence in doing business that might lead to business sustainability.

### **Serial Entrepreneurship**

Parker (2013) identified serial entrepreneurship as a successive, repeated instigation of failing ventures. Moreover, small business exits occasionally include free, protected closure pending pursuit of new entrepreneurial ventures, or retirement (Leroy et al., 2015; Meyer, 2014). Therefore, liquidation was not a continuous extensive dissolution of ownership rights (Ucbasaran et al., 2013). Consequently, a court ordered closure judgment, started with an owner or stockholders, was occasionally a method of business exit and success (Burdin, 2014). Controversially, Byrd, Ross, and Glackin (2013) stated, the lack of business credit was important, and small business success or failure depended on credit availability. Identifying financial weaknesses of a small business was a regulatory responsibility and essential for activities required for recommendation of suitable accounting practices before exit was unavoidable (Fadahunsi, 2012).

Other scholars like Debrulle et al. (2013) believed that startup businesses differed from reputable enterprises due to liability of innovation, thus increasing the vulnerability to fail. Controversially, Byrd et al. (2013) noted small business owners countrywide agreed that the main problem to growth was inadequate access to capital and that small business finance was necessary for long-term acquisition and working capital for covering fixed-asset purchase. The preventive nature of financial barriers such as the complexities of regulatory compliance was more challenging for small businesses than



for larger businesses (Cumming & Li, 2013). Small business owners used management, performance, monitoring, and transitioning from self-employment to unemployment as a way of individual perseverance. Hamrouni and Akkari (2012) stated many reasons for small business owners exit from self-employments of which poor management performance was the most outstanding reason and other reasons included lack of leadership, poor communication skills, lack of trust, inadequate planning, and lack of teamwork attainable through education and management training. The next section focused on education and management training as essentials for business sustaining business.

### **Education and Management Training**

The lack of small business education such as management and performance might cause profit-making shortage and business failure (Heinze, 2013). Singh, Corner, and Pavlovich (2014) urged constant provocation might jeopardize business success at a time when small business owners need knowledge while lacking business studies and facing looming failure. Business owners involved in continuous education have a lower risk of failure hence for a startup business to succeed, education support strategies are required (Rideout & Gray, 2013; Williams, 2014).

Rideout and Gray suggested education requirements differed for each stage of business life cycle such as (a) seed and development, (b) startup, (c) growth and establishment, (d) expansion, and (e) maturity and possible exit. Business owners should reduce operational failures by considering inclusive licensed training, and other essential business courses up to graduated education (Jones, Matlay, & Maritz, 2012). Singh et al.

(2014) argued that training small business owners might only reduce business failures, but the occurrence of failure without training was potentially painful and a distressful experience on unsuccessful owners. The consequence of failing in business might determine the desire to initiate prospects for further business startups (Heinze, 2013; Singh et al., 2014).

To some extent when businesses failure was obvious, new orders or higher business stock returns would not change the exit strategy, viewed as a badge of honor to the business (Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2013). Research on small business owners' failure indicated that failure was not only costly but a painful learning experience (Byrd et al., 2013; Jenkins et al., 2014). Consequently, failure combined with dishonor might generate some personal insights for transforming some business owners' viewpoint of conducting business (Arasti & Zandi et al., 2014; Ejrnces & Hochguertel, 2013; Li & Sun, 2013). The failure experienced might lead small business owners to losing confidence and creating financial anxiety (Jenkins et al., 2014). The pain suffered by failing small business owners relates to losing self-worth, causing individual disappointment and affecting dignity hence, many scholars and the entire society avoided acknowledging failure, yet studies included doubts about business failure causality (Marom & Lussier, 2014).

Burdin (2014) acknowledged the need for critical success strategies regarding business owners failures, based on the stages of the life cycle for small businesses failure, including abrupt notice to the worker-managed firm (WMF) and non-employer enterprise. In some cases, WMF and non-employer peculiarities were not comparable to

traditional companies through measuring a variety of their business operations, but were instead accounted for in business opening and closing statistics (Burdin, 2014). Thus, Fadahunsi (2012) expressed the need for WMF, non-employer business, and financial health assessments before and after the failure while the body of literature on the emotional aspects of economic failure and grief was unclear and inconsistent (Hutchison-Krupat & Chao, 2014). Successful business strategies included marketing, reducing expenses, getting compensation and ongoing education, linked to social capital, the vital resource reversing business losses into success thus the next section focused on cultural capital and social capital.

### **Cultural Capital and the Link to Social Capital**

Entrepreneurship includes a social process, in terms of cultural processes that highlights the role of social norms and traditions (Hopp & Stephan, 2012; Sajjad, Shafi, & Dad, 2012). Noguera, Alvarez, and Urbano (2013) stated that cultural experiences and influences depends on resource strategies affected by (a) family, (b) religion, (c) market, (d) profession, (e) state, and (f) corporation contributes. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneur is essential in the network structures of social context within a cultural (McKeever et al, 2014). Light and Dana (2013) argued, social and cultural capital promote entrepreneurship. The connection between social and cultural capital may be inherent in the concept of social capital as it depends on trust and reciprocity of network relationships (Efendic et al., 2014).

Social capital may add value to entrepreneurs in terms of network assets based on trust and social norm of reciprocity (DeClercq et al., 2013). Gedajlovic et al., 2013; Light

and Dana (2013) suggested researchers with social capital might have a harmful effect on entrepreneurship serving (a) defend mediocrity, (b) diminish objectivity, (c) encourage or enforce group conformity, and (d) limit disassociation with failing partners. The conflicting view exposes the question when does social capital serve to support, limit, or else without influencing entrepreneurial activity. Tubadji, Kourtit, and Nijkamp (2014) argued that past literature on social capital has failed to acknowledge the critical role of culture in determining the impact of social capital. The authors acknowledged the evidence supporting the significance of bonding and bridging social capital to support entrepreneurship; with disagreement that social capital fails to support entrepreneurship after losing cultural capital due to overlooking the symbiotic relationship with cultural capital (Leitch, McMullan, & Harrison, 2013). Light and Dana (2013) explored the relationship between social capital and cultural capital by studying a location in Alaska, with a population supporting the indigenous economic sector and the influential Euro-American economic sector.

Though the native Alaskan population customarily supported self-employment (fishing industry) and concurrently maintained strong social capital resources, the commercial entrepreneurship remained dominated by the outsider who were Euro-American inhabitants (Light & Dana, 2013). The two distinct sources that contributed to the divide were social conditions countering cultural assimilation, transferring cultural capital of entrepreneurship and the supportive formation of bridge relationships between the cultures, and the cultural capital of the native inhabitants' lack of support for commercial entrepreneurship within the Euro-American sector (Light & Dana, 2013).

The native Alaskan population supported the use of strong social capital to encourage participation in hunting and fishing, rather than business entrepreneurship thus cultural capital directed social capital to support culturally approved vocations (Light, Rezaei, & Dana, 2013). Jaywarna, Jones, and Macpherson, (2014) recommended prior research overstated the role between social capital and entrepreneurship, as the supportive role of cultural capital is the critical ingredient in the relationship, otherwise without cultural capital, social capital fails to support entrepreneurship (Felicio, Couto, & Caiado, 2014).

Though Light and Dana (2013) acknowledged the advantages of social capital to entrepreneurs, researchers assert the difference to the advantage in terms of identifying the boundaries of cultural capital, beyond the social capital limits. Furthermore, Light and Dana, stated that in the context of the developed world, social capital typically is evident beside cultural capital. Consequently, researchers and reviewers might attach credit for promoting entrepreneurship improperly to social capital while failing to identify the key role of cultural capital in the relationship, claiming the advantage assigned to social capital is overstated (Jayawarna, Rouse, & Kitching, 2014). The cultural influence may not be the only social capital limit as social and cultural dynamics might also affect other forms of capital, like financial capital (Casey, 2014; Foley & O'Connor, 2013).

The path to entrepreneurship affects historical context in terms of practices and results, culturally defined through historical experiences (Foley & O'Connor, 2013). Hence embedding individuals' behavior and the opportunities presented to them in the environment is necessary (Casey 2014). Bates and Tuck (2014) argued entrepreneurial

barriers faced by some minority entrepreneurs might form due to social hierarchy, distinguished by ethnicity, economic inequality, disparity, and public policy (Bates & Robb, 2015a; Reuben & Queen, 2015). Small business owners provide social mobility through cultural capital that have tangible and intangible assets not related to any financial measure. Small business owners may not achieve the long-term and short-term goals without effectively managing the financial capital. Inefficient management of finances might lead to increased business failures, as funds are need for business growth, market competition, and continuous business operation and sustainability. Consequently, the next section will focus on financial capital as an important factor for business success.

### **Financial Capital**

Entrepreneurial small business entry and sustainability depend on adequate financial capital on addition to social capital, cultural capital, and human capital (Bastie, Cieply, & Cussy, 2013; Jonsson & Lindbergh, 2013), supporting the probability of success for entrepreneurs holding the suitable expertise for the venture (Berge, Bjorvatn, & Tungodden, 2014; Martin et al., 2013). The attainment of financial resources is one the major challenges entrepreneurs face in the startup phase and growth phase prior reaching a level of sustainability in the new business ventures (Meisenzahl, 2014; Rosenbusch, Brinckmann, & Muller, 2013).

The barriers for accessing financial capital include availability of wealth to starting the business and accessibility to capital to support business entry and growth (Bates & Robb, 2013; SBA, 2013a). Businesses that have abundant financial capital or accessibility to financial capital can overcome liquidity constraints in the startup phase

tend to do better in financial performance and business sustainability (Cole & Sokolyk, 2014; Coleman, Cotei, & Farhat, 2016; Robb et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important for the success and sustainability of newly formed businesses to have an amount of capital and choose the right capital structure while effectively managing the financial resources of the business (Cole, 2013c; Robb & Robinson, 2014).

Marom and Lussier (2014) discovered the significance of financial capital as a key factor in business success or failure. Marom and Lussier noted researchers stated the variables critical for business successes include (a) capital, (b) financial control, (c) industry experience, (d) management experience, (e) planning, and (f) professional advice. Likewise, Cole and Soloky (2014) documented the importance of financial capital, especially acquiring credit from banks at the beginning of the business venture, playing an important role in business growth and sustainability. Although the recent data suggest that minority-owned businesses represent the fastest growing segment of the nation's economy (SBA, 2013a), they continue to exit firms at an alarming rate (Miles, 2013a; Singh & Gibbs, 2013). Researchers suggest that minority small business owners tend to initiate business entry with less financial capital, frequently relying heavily on small internal sources of owner equity and facing challenges to accessing external capital (Bates & Robb, 2015a; Reuben & Queen, 2015).

Financial barriers may discourage aspiring small business owners to quit their entrepreneurial pursuits before the firm reaches sustainability (Lofstrom & Bates, 2013). Small business owners find it easier to generate cash for businesses through debt obligations than through equity (Van Auken & Horton, 2015). Researchers indicate that

adults with household wealth in excess of \$100,000 are more likely to enter entrepreneurship compared to those with less wealth, but similar education and demographics (Bates & Robb, 2013; Bates & Tuck, 2014). Normally, business loans and credit from banks need individual guarantees and individual security of the entrepreneur based upon their net worth to secure funding for new ventures (Robb & Robinson, 2014). It unfavorably effects potential minority entrepreneurs representing relatively low levels of individual net worth (Bradford, 2014), which is approximately 29% of the businesses starting without financial capital (Bates & Robb, 2013), hence the need for external capital in the form of a bank loan to become an entrepreneur or further sustain entrepreneurship (Bates & Robb, 2015a). Consequently, minority businesses are undercapitalized reducing the success rate, through lower sales, profits, and employment, compared to businesses receiving adequate startup capital, and greater levels of capitalization (Cole, 2013a; Robb, Fairlie, & Robinson, 2014).

Entrepreneurial entry among minorities is influence differently through variables such as capital constraints, lower levels of net worth, and educational achievement (Bewaji, Yang, & Han, 2015; Singh & Gibbs, 2013), depending on the business field type such as low-barrier or high-barrier business (Lofstrom & Bates, 2013). Researchers use wealth to predict entry into high-barrier business (capital intensive) while demonstrating a weak relationship with entrepreneurial entry into low-barrier business (Casey, 2014). Thus, earlier researchers argued wealth is a weak predictor of business entry in low-barrier business challenging the idea that financial capital constraints significantly limit some minority entrepreneurial entry (Bates & Robb, 2013; Reuben & Queen, 2015).



Researchers categorize major industries into high and low human capital/financial capital subgroups to describe each; low-barrier industries were shown (a) personal service, (b) repair service, (c) miscellaneous service, (d) construction, (e) transportation, and (f) retail industries (Lofstrom & Bates, 2013; Wang, 2013b).

Researchers defined high barrier industries as fields in which financial capital investments are highest and include (a) professional services, (b) finance, insurance, (c) real estate, (d) business services, (e) manufacturing, and (f) wholesale (Wang, Gleave, & Lysenko, 2014). Individuals with greater access to financial capital and with a higher level of educational achievement are more likely to enter the high-barrier fields (Lofstrom & Bates, 2014). There is a positive correlation between net worth and education representing significant contributions of wealth towards supporting the entry gap in some minority entrepreneurs, who might embed educational influence as well (Lofstrom et al., 2014; Robb, Fairlie, & Robinson, 2014). Thus, the combination of lower educational achievement and lower net worth contributes significantly to lower entry rates among some minority groups in high-barrier enterprises (Lofstrom & Bates, 2013).

Among low-barrier industry enterprise, in which a larger proportion of minority entrepreneurship exists, wealth and educational achievement fail to demonstrate the same barriers to entry and sustainability (Bates & Robb, 2014; Wang, et al., 2014). Researchers discovered that human and financial capital limitations on minority small business owners provide contributing factors to small business entry and sustainability gap, operating differently between high and low barrier businesses (Bates & Tuck, 2014; Robb, et al., 2014). The high versus low barrier industry structure affects the degree of

human and financial capital impact (Casey, 2014). Discrimination is an additional factor affecting access to financial capital within financial lending institutions (Cheng, 2014; Mijid & Bernasek, 2013). Ethnicity and gender are the most important barriers limiting acquisition to bank funding in the start-up phase by minorities Yazdanfar and Abbasian (2013); however, Bates and Robb (2013) stated that despite the idea of the negative effects of financial constraints on minority entrepreneurs with limited borrowing abilities; demands for loans among minorities remain low.

Banks continue to play important roles in forming and supporting new businesses by providing the needed capital for growth and sustainability (Cole, 2013b; Cole & Sokolyk, 2014; Robb & Robinson, 2014). Nevertheless, minorities like African American business owners were almost three times likely to report for fear of denial of a loan application (SBA, 2013a). Loan results revealed, minorities like African American owned businesses were less likely to have loans approved, even after calculating creditworthiness and wealth levels (Robb & Bates, 2013; Robb et al., 2014). Consequently, black owned businesses are less likely to use credit at startup, which further reduces the probability for small business sustainability as acquiring business credit at start-up has approximately 20% to 23% higher success rate than failure in financing (Bates & Robb, 2015a; Cole & Sokoly, 2014).

Alternatively, some minorities like many African American entrepreneurs have resorted to bootstrapping techniques to mobilize their limited financial resources as compared to external bank financing (Soni & Priyan, 2013). Bootstrap financing activities are creative ways to avoid capital constraints due to a lack of wealth or

discriminatory lending practices entrepreneurs may face (Robb & Robinson, 2014). Bootstrapping activities include borrowing money from relatives and friends, using personal savings, bartering for services or goods required, as well as selling off individual items to raise money (Jonsson & Lindbergh, 2013). Malmstrom (2014) conducted a study on bootstrapping strategies of small businesses, the outcome supported the view that a number of resourcing routes of bootstrap financing activities can facilitate, manage, and overcome financial constraints (Manolova, Manev, & Gyoshev, 2014).

Entrepreneurial venture financing depends on bootstrapping and close circles (Kelley et al., 2012). The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor United States Adult Population Survey (GEM, 2012) data indicated small business owners in the United States finance business ventures primarily with individual savings (73%), followed by bank financing (16%), and family contributions (8%). Some minorities like African American entrepreneurs have low wealth and limited access to capital (Bates & Robb, 2013; Casey, 2014), thus bootstrapping to some extent remains a practical option for acquiring the necessary financial capital to fund a new business venture or sustainability (Grichnik, Brinckmann, Singh, & Manigart, 2014).

### **Business Plans**

Entrepreneurs create and formalize strategic tools in business plans during the prestart phase of the business, to analyze the feasibility of creating a startup business entity, structure, implementation, and execution (Frese & Gielnik, 2014; Simon-Moya & Revuelto-Taboada, 2015). A comprehensive detailed and well-written business plans may lessen the risk of liability of a newly established business (Germak & Robinson, 2014).

Entrepreneurs may gain valuable information about their respective product or service contribution, industry, competitors, stakeholders, customers, finances and projections, along with existing short term and long-term goals (Brinckmann, & Kim, 2015). Yaun (2013) suggested that business owners perform SWOT analysis and include it in the business plan to reveal in-depth information about the businesses and the barriers to entry in the industry.

The SWOT analysis is a critical component of any business plan and involves strategic analysis of the internal strengths and weakness of the business, versus the external opportunity and threats to the business (Yuan, 2013). The importance of SWOT analysis is for the business owners to identify risks and mitigate such risks by making strategic decisions and choices such as sales and marketing strategies, differentiating strategies, cost reduction strategies, and capital funding decisions (Casadesus-Masanell & Zhu, 2013). Business plans provide authenticity to lenders and venture capital firms for ease lending of external capital to business firms based on the contents of the reviewed business plan (Lerner & Malmendier, 2013). Blackburn et al. (2013) conducted a survey of small business enterprises to understand the factors contributing to performance and growth, the results suggested three significant factors for performance and growth (a) size and age of enterprise, (b) the importance of business strategy, and (c) the entrepreneurial characteristics of the owner (Blackburn et al., 2013).

A business plan is very important for business growth and used as a major component of business strategy (Li & Tran, 2013). Similarly, Marom and Lussier (2014) discovered that business planning and strategy have a positive relationship with business

performance and growth of new ventures. Fernandez et al., (2012) researchers noted the formulation of a business plan, quality of a business plan, evaluation according to economic, financial and commercial viability alone neither guarantees success, nor constitute a good predictor for successful opportunities for the new ventures.

Minority entrepreneurs' increase their chances for business success with a formalized business plan, the strategic decision of a minority nascent entrepreneur to formalize a business plan is positively associated with identifying market needs to better quantify market opportunities (Bryant, Kinnamon, Fabian, & Wright, 2012). Similarly, formalized business plans of some minority businesses may potentially mitigate the risk of working capital constraints (Freeland & Keister, 2016; Robb, et al., 2014), while setting the business to receive external funding from minority venture capital firms particularly geared toward financing minority businesses within minority communities (Bengtsson & Hsu, 2014; Link, Ruhm, & Siegel, 2014). One of the significant aspects in business is to identify the market by using geography and mapping the potential customers based on the concentration as a source of the market to sustain the business. The next section will focus on geographical location.

### **Geographical Location**

Geographical location is extremely important for small ethnic grocery business as the product and distribution is a critical element of the retail industry, as different types of businesses require different locations for effectiveness (Wang, 2013a). The strategic decision to locate in a particular area depends on how conducive and uniqueness the area is in supporting the startup business (Casey, 2014; Goetz & Rupasingha, 2014) versus

characteristics of other available locations which may not be conducive to supporting self-employment and growth of the business (Wang, 2013a). Consequently, small business owners have to employ strategic decisions based on the firm's respective business model to align core competencies with the newly presented opportunities within the chosen geographical market (Lechner & Gudmunsson, 2014).

The particular geographical location of the business occurring in the post launch phase plays a key role in measuring performance with respect to business growth and sustainability (Friese & Gielnik, 2014). By being in close geographic proximity to available resources, networks, customers, and community alliances, the business may counterbalance the liability of novelty by facilitating the marketing of the products or services available (Casey, 2014; Partanen, Chetty, & Rajala, 2014). Researchers explored the link between self-employment and entrepreneurship concluded that self-employment positively and strongly correlates with business creation and innovation in urban areas (Faggio & Silva, 2014).

Similarly, Battisti, Deakins, and Perry (2013) concluded that geographical location matters, for instance urban businesses has more positive response to difficult economic periods as compared to rural businesses due to the sales of the new products or services in new geographic areas to more existing customers and new types of customers. Conversely, Van Der Zwan, Verheul, Thurik, and Grilo (2013) noted that businesses in metropolitan areas are more liable to fail than in rural areas. Similarly, Freire-Gibb, and Nielsen, (2014) stated urban entrepreneurs tend to be more creative due to greater competition, and thus have greater opportunities for success. In the United States, some

minorities are spatially concentrated such as Anchorage, AK serving as a small ethnic grocery enclave for all Americans (Wang, 2013b).

Earlier researchers' suggested minorities like African American entrepreneurs face a mixture of positive and negative correlations with respect to the connection between urban geographical locations and business performance (Bates & Robb, 2014; Casey, 2014; Wang, 2013b). From a positive point of view, the strategic decision to geographer locates the firm within a mainly similar ethnic community could create distinctive opportunities to exploit for profit based on the supply and demand of the ethnic community to which the service is rendered compared to other adjacent non-ethnic communities (Hyra, 2015; Wang et al., 2014). Furthermore, the start-up capital needed is minimal for entrepreneurs serving these communities due to relatively low barriers of entry in fields such as ethnic grocery store, food restaurants beauticians, barbers, and others (Lofstrom & Bates, 2013; Lofstrom et al., 2014).

Yet, from a negative point of view, some minorities like African American entrepreneurs solely serving as an ethnic niche providers remain small due to the limited customer base of the ethnic customers served in the community (Bates & Robb, 2014). In additional, the entrepreneurs might not make enough profits because of the lower wages of the residents in the ethnic neighborhoods, affecting the prices of the products and services sold to the consumers in the community (Freeland & Keister, 2016; Sonfield, 2014). Lastly, some small ethnic grocery businesses owned by African Americans are concentrated in Black residential neighborhood with lower home values and less security

valuable assets (Rueben & Queen, 2015), thus leading to limited access to bank credit (Bates & Robb, 2013; Mijid & Bernsak, 2013).

### **Transition**

Section 1 was to introduce the study, problem statement, and the lack of knowledge on how small ethnic grocery business owners succeed and sustain their business beyond 5 years business operation. The section covered some key elements for the study including the Problem Statement, Purpose Statement, Nature of the Study, Research Question, Conceptual Framework, Significance of the Study, and Literature Review sections. Small ethnic grocery business owners have increased failure rate with 5 years business success rate of approximately 39% (SBA 2010; Smith & Tang, 2013). Earlier researchers indicated lack of knowledge about strategies required to achieve business success and sustainability among small ethnic grocery businesses beyond 5 years (Miles, 2013b). The results from the study may uncover the strategies small ethnic grocery business owners need to sustain and succeed in their businesses (Lofstrom & Bates, 2013).

Therefore, nationally reducing businesses failure rate may considerably add to the U.S. economy (an estimated \$2.5 trillion) and create nearly 12 million more jobs (Smith & Tang, 2013). Locally, these results might provide a rise in entry and sustainability for small ethnic grocery business that may further improve economic growth (Freeland & Keister, 2016), resulting into reducing unemployment rate, controlling opportunities, and decreasing government welfare (Bruton et al., 2013; Fairlie, 2013a; Gobillon et al., 2014). The literature review provided an understanding of the key constructs for the



conceptual framework on entrepreneurship theory with respect to (a) characteristics, (b) motivations and intentions, (c) resource management, and (d) strategic decisions. Section 2 includes (a) the restatement of the purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) research participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments, (h) data collection techniques, (j) data analysis, and (k) reliability and validity. Section 3 includes (a) the presentation of the findings, (b) applications for professional practice, (d) societal change implications, and (e) recommendations for action and further study.

## Section 2: The Project

The focus of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The emphasis was on small ethnic grocery business owners in Anchorage AK with sustainable record of doing business beyond 5 years. The purpose of the study included collecting data using semistructured interviews. The supplementary data collection methods included the review of business documents such as the annual reports from 2013 - 2017 and the business owners participation, operations, policies and procedures. The objective of collecting the data was to obtain in-depth understanding of the strategies to reduce high business failure rates according to Miles (2013b). The findings also provided some valuable guidance for increasing entry and sustainability of small businesses to improve the U.S. economy.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small ethnic grocery business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. The target population consisted of three small ethnic grocery business owners located in Anchorage AK, with sustainable business record beyond 5 years. The findings from this study may contribute to positive social change by supporting new job creation that leads to prosperity in the local communities.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of researchers in qualitative studies is to collect, organize, and interpret the data acquired (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013; McCusker, & Gunaydin, 2015). In

the qualitative study, the researcher is the instrument during the data collection process (Cronin, 2014; McCusker, & Gunaydin, 2015). Consequently, I was the primary data collection instrument and adhered to strict ethical principles and guidelines to protect human subjects during the research study. My role in this research effort was to create the research interview guide, contacting the potential participants, collecting data through face-to-face interviews, and analyzing the results through computer software. Other roles were to identify themes from the patterns in the data collection and presentation of the research results in Section 3. My work experience as a business consultant professional, as well as a business owner, provided exposure to various small business operations. According to the Belmont Report on Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research (1979), researchers should develop procedures to alleviate any ethical issues and secure the participants' privacy while conducting the study.

The Belmont Report includes ethical principles, such as respect for individuals, beneficence, and justice; I practiced at all times during the study. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) specified that the core principles of The Belmont Report, along with the application of an informed consent, are foundational for the assessment of risks and benefits, the choice of participants, and serve as a guide for ethical research (Palmer, Fam, Smith, & Kilham 2014). I followed the three basic principles (a) respect for individuals, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice during the study to make sure participants are comfortable. Moreover, the guidelines of the report stated that Institutional Review Board (IRB) members and staff complete educational and certification programs on

research ethics before receiving permission to conduct research studies. Consequently, I completed the required education and certification from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Protecting Human Research Participants and secured approval from Walden University's IRB prior to commencing the data collection (IRB# 11-08-17-0501346). Klitzman (2013) stated that the role of the IRB as an independent ethics committee should ensure the protection of the rights, safety, and well-being of humans subjects involved in research studies.

Researchers are the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research (Cronin, 2014; McCusker, & Gunaydin, 2015) and have to acknowledge the existence of potential bias in research (Malone, Nicholl, & Tracey, 2014). Finlay (2014) suggested researchers should know about bias and purposeful sampling containing bias in their approach (Patton, 2015). Using a slow open style process during interviewing can avoid bias and set the researcher's frame of allusion aside (Finlay, 2014).

I recognize the existence of potential bias based on my personal experience and worldview and used member checking to mitigate any potential bias as discussed by Houghton et al. (2013). Member checking increases the quality of data analyzed by the researcher and it improves the validity of the study results (Krumpal, 2013). Doody and Noonan (2013) argued that semistructured interviews are the most common type of interviews used in qualitative research because of the flexibility and open nature of the questions the researchers ask.

Conducting semistructured interviews promotes in-depth and vital information collected from participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Mitchell, 2015). Face-to-face

interviews induces more small talk, nonverbal communication, and provides more expression of the participants' humanity (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013).

Consequently, I used an exploratory case study design to interview participants through semistructured questions. Chetty, Partanen, Rasmussen, and Servais (2014) noted face-to-face interviews are useful to obtain participants' perceptions and experiences regarding entrepreneurial sustainability (Green, 2014).

### **Participants**

The participants for this study included three small ethnic grocery business owners in retail customer service with a record of sustainability beyond 5 years of operation in Anchorage, Alaska. Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) recommended at least three interviewees for case studies based on the principle of data saturation. To identify the participants, I acquired a database of active small ethnic grocery business owners from the U.S. Department of Commerce and Alaska small business development center. The list of information included the business owners' names, addresses, cities, counties, telephone numbers, and years of establishment. Through this purposeful sampling, I selected the most applicable participants providing the information required to aid in developing the explanations and insights qualified to the comprehensive research question as discussed by Khunlertkit and Carayon (2013), Robinson (2014), and Spelman and Rohlwing (2013). To gain access to the selected participants, I used telephones and direct mail, and described the purpose for the calls and enquired if they were interested in participating in the research study, as demonstrated by Taylor and Land (2014).

The participants received letters asking for their participation by mail (see Appendix C), and upon Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the study participants received letters of consent outlining the purpose of the study. On approval, I sent emails to the participants stating (a) outline of the purpose of the study, (b) request of eligibility of the participants, (c) request of availability of time to conduct a face-to-face meeting, (d) asking participants consent to participate in the study, and (e) notifying participants of the audio recording proceedings of the interview. Acquiring consent is the ethical and legal responsibility of the researchers to ensure every participant has adequate information to make some informed decisions to participate in the study (Marrone, 2016). I established a trustworthy working relationship to assist participants feel comfortable with the inquiry procedure as case study protocol involves a working relationship between the selected participants and researchers (Yin, 2014).

Frequently, working relationships takes place in the field within the participants' natural settings (Cole, 2013). Consequently, for effective research to succeed, it is critical that the working relationship ought to be ethical, truthful, objective, and with clear communication taking place between the parties (Ross, 2015; Yanchar, 2015). Gilligan (2014) speculated that the key characteristic of an ethic of care is listening via purposeful verbal communication that combines thought with emotion, and self with relationships. Consequently, I communicated via phone the voluntary nature of the study and later conducted face-to-face interviews with the participant in an ethical manner as noted by Platt and Skowron (2013). I established a trustworthy working relationship to assist participants feel comfortable with the inquiry procedure as case study protocol involves a

working relationship between the selected participants and researchers (Yin, 2014). Frequently employees interact in the workplace within the participants natural setting (Cole, 2013). Therefore, for effective research to succeed, it is critical that the working relationship be ethical, truthful, objective, and with clear communication taking place between the parties (Ross, 2015; Yanchar, 2015). For successful working relationships to exist, individuals need to develop a sense of confidence, compassion, and interaction (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013).

Common relations are bases for establishing trust and solidarity; therefore, researchers ought to build a successful working relationship while establishing rapport with the participants to achieve their trust and support (Fletcher, 2014). I organized an ethic of care strategy involving relationships with participants that was built on empathy, concern, morality, awareness, and a sense of relational community between myself and the participant as discussed by Metz (2013). Contacting the local businesses by phone was the means to gain access to the participants for this study, searching through the Anchorage local phone books was also useful to identify names and contacts of participants, in addition to using social networks such as Facebook. Researchers can identify potential study participant by using social networks like Facebook to locate participants (Back, 2013).

The initial contact was by telephone when requesting an interview with the business owners. The next step was the introduction of the proposed research and purpose, provisions of the criteria to participate, and explanation of the confidentiality and informed consent process. Elo et al. (2014) recommended researchers to conduct

introductions to the participants to assure them of their worth or value in the study and process. I made sure the participants knew the conditions of the interview procedure and addressed any supplementary questions as requested. Following the introduction was the exchange of e-mail addresses that I used to e-mail the consent form after the business owners met the established criteria and agreed to participate voluntarily. All participants who agreed to complete the interview signed the consent form stating that their participation in the study was voluntary. All the participants had the opportunity to review the informed consent letter and asked questions about interview process prior to signing. Participants also asked questions regarding the study research prior to responding by e-mail. Doody and Noonan (2013) stated creating surroundings favorable to allow the participants to feel more contented and relaxed in responding to the researchers' questions are prone to engage in further conversation when needed.

E-mail based communication has been transformed into an inclusive form of interaction (Al-Alwani, 2015). Lenters, Cole, and Godoy-Ruiz (2014) used e-mail to recruit participants with a fair blend of gender, region, year of participation, and level of training in the exploration of networking among new global health researchers. E-mail is a suitable method of communicating when participants want clarification, scheduling interviews, but not for conducting interviews in this study. The next step was acquiring consent from participants to establish the time and places for the interviews. I asked permission from the participants to record the interviews for accuracy and understanding. After the approved permission, I conducted the recording and notation of the interviews during the interview process to ensure the capturing of details and observations.



Interviews were in person not by phone, while recording to ensure retention of information for remembrance and analysis. When conducting a qualitative study interview process, to avoid biases is one of the critical objectives (Morse, 2015a). Biases may distort the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the study developed during the interview process (Ajagbe et al., 2015). To avoid any potential biases, I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A), which allowed the researcher to separate any emotions and personal feelings concerning small business strategies and get rid of personal reactions and views of the individual's responses during the interview procedure.

Small samples are suitable and acceptable for case studies (Geist & Hitchcock 2014; Molenberghs, Kenward, Aerts, Verbeke, Tsiatis, Davidian, & Rizopoulos 2014). The participants in this study took part in the interview process to explore the strategies small ethnic grocery business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Varga-Dobai (2012) noted the relationship between researchers and participants is in opposition to self and others, self is the researcher and others are the research participants. Consequently, individuals interact with friends and make new friends based on shared similarities through applications of mobile communications (Chiou & Huang, 2013). A researcher engaging participants on social networking sites may yield some significant benefits for the researcher in data collection, participants' recruitment, and gaining and maintaining participants' trust (Cote, 2013). I established a working relationship with each participant through consistent phone communication and e-mailing once participants agreed to participate in the study. Complex issues regarding data

ownership and confidentiality frequently hinder information sharing (Banfield et al., 2013). Assigning letters and numbers to participants' interview data collection facilitates confidentiality during coding and analysis for this study. All the participants were free to withdraw from completing the interview at any time without penalty. Participants experience basic ethical research risk when they participate in a study without consent and proper understanding of the purpose (Bowker, 2011). The process of the study had no predictable risks or harm to human participants. The consent form included a statement that data from the study would remain in a home safe for 5 years to protect participants' rights. I saved the data collected for this study on a computer hard drive with password protection, and in a home office drawer for safety. For this study, shredding of all hard copies and deletion of all electronic data will be the means for disposing all the data after the recommended 5-year period of storage. No names of the participants appeared on any forms, only letters and numbers used appeared to minimize the risks of exposure and protect professional reputations.

### **Research Method and Design**

The most significant component of the doctoral research process is selecting the appropriate research method to support the research question and accomplish the goals of the study (Hayes, Bonner, & Douglas, 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore strategies from the viewpoint of small business owners who are able to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years in Anchorage. Research involves details and analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Subsequently, qualitative researcher should focus on particular events by using interviews and archival data to explore the occurrence (Hoon, 2013). To

accomplish the objectives of the study, the selection of a qualitative case study is more useful to explore strategies necessary to improve sustainability and reduce small business failures (Yin, 2013).

### **Research Method**

According to the central research question, the qualitative approach is the most suitable research method for this study. Yilmaz (2013) stated that qualitative researchers explore the participants' perspectives and observations of a modern occurrence in a contextual way. The researchers in qualitative approach collect and analyze various views and perceptions using how and why questions (Yin, 2013). Researchers can establish particular emerging themes depending on the participants' conducts and thorough responses (Manhas & Oberle, 2015). The results of a qualitative investigation additionally encourage suggestions for better understanding of the participants' responses through asking some follow-up questions (Waite, 2014).

The process of the qualitative study includes selecting particular questions asked to the participants (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016). Interviews are regarded the most common form of qualitative data collection with prospective to obtaining comprehensive and quality data (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). A qualitative study moreover draws on a conceptual framework providing direction for the study (Green, 2014). Unlike the qualitative study, the quantitative approach uses a numerical data for analyzing and verifying relationships between two or more variables (Breen et al., 2014). Quantitative researchers try to eradicate biases by the use of statistical data and making deductions about a population by closed-ended questions (Poore, 2014). The deductive

approach follows objective logistical reasoning with numbers that provide core elements of analysis in support of statistical quantitative data inquiry (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013).

Furthermore, quantitative researchers ought to create a hypothesis to test for statistical significance that proves or disproves the results of the study (Ebinger & Richter, 2015). The choice of a quantitative study includes the development of a hypothesis to determine a relationship or disparity between two or more variables did not meet the needs of this study.

Mixed methods research is the third type of research method that combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Kim, Han, & Kim, 2015). Similar to a qualitative and quantitative research study, mixed method researcher collects and analyzes data to acquire a broader and in-depth understanding of the research problem (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The mixed method approach will not meet the requests of this study because of the inclusion of the quantitative approach (Maxwell, 2015).

### **Research Design**

There are many research designs; some of the most frequently used designs to support qualitative research include case study, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative (Roberts, 2013). The qualitative design approach is the most flexible of the designs available, enabling researchers to offer decisive and rational indications of the empirical information collected to comprehend an occurrence (Aborisade, 2013). Yin (2013) additionally suggested, a research design is the action for taking the researcher from one stage to the other. Consequentially, the study comprise of choosing an

investigative single case design to explore and analyze the real life views and observations of personal experiences on a specific phenomenon.

Case study design is either single or multiple cases bounded by time and place (Yin, 2013). A case study design is common among researchers and used for different kinds of research interests and topics to address the how and why research questions (Yazan, 2015; Yin, 2014). Researchers use case study design to explore, study, and describe in depth occurrence within the natural context of participants over a particular period of time (Lewis, 2015). Baškarada (2014) and Yin (2013a) stated that a case study design may be single or multiple in nature and that researchers should be practical within the participants' natural setting exploring phenomena using interactions in work environment (Moll, 2012; Yin, 2013b). Jensen, Seshadri, and Carstenson (2013) used a single case study design research to discover, researchers explore daily challenges of small business owners and highlight successes and failures within the natural context of the business (Jensen et al., 2013). Lalor et al. (2013) suggested that to attain an in-depth understanding of the research problem the researchers ought to include *how* and *why* questions, in which the researchers may identify concepts of varying information without restricting the participants' responses (Lalor et al., 2013).

Ethnography is the systematic study of people and cultures, designed to explore cultural phenomena where the researchers observe a society sharing a common culture from the point of view of the subject of the study (Cruz & Higgingbottom, 2013). Ethnography requires a study of a particular culture or group through observation, over an extended period (Abdulrehman, 2015). As suggested by Reeves, Peller, Goldman, and

Kitto (2013), the research design of this method includes the researchers analyzing shared and learned patterns of the subjects of the study including (a) values, (b) behaviors, (c) beliefs, and (d) language of a cultural group. Ethnography design is not suitable for this study because, to achieve the results, researchers immerse themselves into the daily lives of the participants to individually observe and comprehend the interrelationship between people and their surroundings in the society based on (a) cultures, (b) norms, (c) social groups, and (d) systems (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; McCurdy & Uldam, 2014). The information resulting from such observations will not help in developing some understanding and solution to the business problem. Ethnography is usually a process that incorporates extensive fieldwork over a time of years, rather than months, and is popular among anthropologists (Smyth & McInerney, 2013). Another reason for this design unsuitability for this study was the time commitment of the ethnographic design that was unaffordable to fulfilling the requirements of the doctoral study in a timely fashion.

The narrative theory is a unique research approach depending on the researchers' narrative of collected data from the study's participants based on lived and told experiences (Wexler, Jernigan, Mazzotti, Baldwin, Griffin, Joule, & Garoutte, 2014). The approach is of a story-telling nature and typically provides a chronological account of individuals' shared stories told to the researchers (Young, Marshall, Wilson, Green, Klubben, Parada, & Zhu, 2015). The information is biased and constructive in building a chronological story of the participants' lives (Deppermann, 2013). The narrative approach besides was not suitable for the needs of this study, since the research did not include documenting narrated versions of the participants' lived experiences.

A phenomenological inquiry is an interpretative, structured approach requiring researchers to find clusters of meanings within the data, and provide a report allowing readers to have necessary understanding of the lived experience (Gill, 2014).

Researchers use phenomenological design to study a phenomena viewed from lived human experiences (Kupers, Mantere, & Statler, 2013; Matua, 2015). In a phenomenological study, researchers selection of participants depend on their exposure and experiences to the phenomenon in question and finding suitable persons might be a challenge (Maoyh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). Using a phenomenological approach was not appropriate for this study, as the design was subjective and involved the integration of the researcher's and participants' collective views by exploring individuals' emotional reaction, not the purpose of the study (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixmith, 2013). For this study, the interview procedure comprised of exploration of the participants' individuals' experiences and observations depended on in-depth and detailed responses from the semistructured interview questions.

The interviewing procedure continued until the data saturation emerged when no new information or themes appeared. The goal of data saturation in qualitative research supports validity and failure to accomplish saturation affects the quality of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Another criterion required to accomplish data saturation includes securing sufficient data for replicating the study (Morse, 2015b; O'Reily & Parker, 2013). Furthermore, to achieve data saturation varies and can depend on the sample size of the population, which was not the case. Burmeister and Aitken (2012) recommended the best way to achieve data saturation is collecting extensive, intricate, and

comprehensive information from the participants without relying on the sample size of the population. Phenomenological research is better suited for qualitative study with larger sample sizes than a single sample under study (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Thus, the phenomenological design approach was not suitable for this study, as it did not align with the nature of the study to examine small business sustainability in Anchorage.

### **Population and Sampling**

For this study, I used a nonprobability purposive sampling method. Purposive sample also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective selection depended on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2013). Researchers rely on purposive sampling technique using their own judgment to choose members of the population to participate in answering interview questions with responses applicable to meeting data saturation (Patton, 2015). The population for this study consists of small business owners in ethnic grocery retail services located in Anchorage. The small business owners should have a successful and sustainability record of operation beyond 5 years. Nonprobability purposive sampling is one of the most common sampling strategies used in qualitative research and helps the researcher choose a suitable sample of the population representing the whole population (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015; McCabe, Stern, & Dacko, 2013).

Purposeful sampling also involves researchers selecting information-rich participants depending on the relevancy of their experiences and the research focus of the study (Noble, 2014). Nonprobability sampling is more convenient and less costly



(Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013; Bornstein et al., 2013; Raschke et al., 2013).

In nonprobability sampling methodology, the researchers choose the participants non-randomly based on accessibility and their expert knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Bornstein et al., 2013). The rationale for employing a nonprobability purposive strategy is because the selection of the participants will belong to a unique category of individuals with specialized knowledge of the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015; Robinson, 2014). Nonprobability purposeful sampling is an effective sampling approach adding to the credibility of the study while supporting the research problems and questions (Ajagbe, Isiauwe, Sholanke, & Oke, 2015). However, the method has some limitations because researchers place an excessive dependency on judgment and practical knowledge to identify and select participants (Shorten & Moorley, 2014).

The implications of the selection criteria can result in researcher biases or prejudices affecting their ability to measure or control the collected data (Acharya et al., 2013; Shorten & Moorley, 2014). Additionally, the researchers are incapable of generalizing the results to an entire population and estimate the sampling error (Raschke, Krishen, Kachroo, & Maheshwari, 2013). Robinson (2014) noted that purposeful sampling in qualitative research requires the selection and study of a small number of people needed to provide rich and in-depth information based on their personal experiences of the phenomena. Furthermore, a nonprobability purposive sample also includes the identification of the participants based on selected criteria and decrease biases (Smith & Noble, 2014). Consequently, the eligibility criteria for the participants

included business owners who contributed to their business sustainability and success beyond 5 years.

After identifying the participants, I sent e-mails to each one of them explaining the details about the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. Kaczynski, Salmona, and Smith (2014) further suggested that using nonprobability purposeful sampling in case studies, even if selecting small samples, would substantially increase the credibility of the research results. Therefore, the researchers may collect data with better accuracy and speed from participants producing insights and in-depth understanding of the research problems rather than forming experiential generalization (Palinkas et al., 2015). Van der Velden and Emam (2013) suggested, for researchers to generate quality information, selected sample should have information based on their personal experiences. Crocker et al. (2015) and van Hoeven, Janssen, Roes, and Koffijberg (2015) stated researchers should ensure they develop a robust criterion aligning with the research question.

Assuring that participants feel comfortable in their environments during the interview procedure is a critical aspect for acquiring quality information. Cho and Park (2013) noted that the researchers ought to provide surroundings that allow the participants to feel as comfortable and familiar as possible when answering the interview questions. Researchers should observe the most suitable interview space to ensure protection and confidentiality of the participants' responses (Harris, Boggiano, Nguyen, & Pham, 2013). In support of Harris et al.'s (2013) claims, Herring (2013) maintained

that establishing suitable surroundings to conduct research interviews encourage participants to provide more truthful responses.

By using the business's boardroom, the interviewee will also be free from any disruptions or interruptions and maintain the participants' privacy as suggested by Johnson and Esterling (2015). When using purposive sampling, the researchers may explore individual qualities of the targeted population that experienced the occurrence by collecting information-rich data (Palinkas et al., 2015). Information-rich data is fluid, rather than linear and facilitates the researchers to reach data saturation from a sample large enough to accomplish in-depth details of the central research question, but small enough to use data applicable to the study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Additionally notable, in case studies, there is no exact number in a sample necessary to accomplish data saturation (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015).

To ensure data saturation I asked the participants to explain any responses not entirely expressed to help answer further descriptive questions. I also asked additional clarification until the participants provide no more new information, thus indicating data saturation. Data saturation depends on the nature of the data source and the research question (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014). Qualitative researchers attain data saturation when an extra collection of information fails to provide new data, themes, insights, or perspectives for further synthesis for new coding (Griffith, 2013). Subsequently, the researchers could be able to replicate this study depending on the use of the same interview questions within the same timeframe. There are many types of sampling

methods researchers use such as convenience, snowball, random, and stratified samplings (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015).

A convenience sample is a non-probability sampling method, known for the easiness to access the people, therefore convenience sampling not suitable for this study because of the biases that can affect the credibility and validity of the research results (Simon & Goes, 2013). Random sampling is the indiscriminately selecting participants from a population of participants meeting the criteria for the study using small sample sizes to attain credibility, thus may require a broad sample of in-depth interviewing for a limited doctoral study (Emerson, 2015). Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique of which existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their associations, which may be suitable for this study because of the possibility that small business owners can share expediencies among themselves. However, using snowball sampling may affect the results of the study from unexpected factors like unjustifiable pressures in recruiting participants (Emerson, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Sampling in qualitative research helps researchers collect relevant data to help comprehend and describe the phenomenon of the study which goal is to attain credibility, not a large representation of samples as in quantitative research (Ishak & Bakar, 2014). Qualitative sampling strategies consist of defining the target population; sample size, sampling strategy, and sample source (Robinson, 2014). The stratification of purposive sampling needs a clear theoretical ground of sampling standard including age or gender (Robinson, 2014). Interviewing starts with providing each participant with a document to verify confidentiality of the data and to clarify the interviewing procedure in order to

support the development of a relationship with participants (James, Taylor, & Francis, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

### **Ethical Research**

Ethical research concerning human subjects ought to include sustaining the highest form of moral integrity (Haar, Norlyk, & Hall, 2013). Ethical research in human subjects includes the process of informed consent (Marrone, 2015). Informed consent is the basic principle of a research study including acquiring individuals' agreement to participate in a study (Schrems, 2014). Informed consent is as well a form of lawful policy, and an implicit social contract between researchers and the public (Kaye, Whitley, Lund, Morrison, Teare, & Melham, 2015). The purpose of the consent form is to document the researchers' intention in obtaining the highest level of integrity and confidentiality of the participants' identities (Marrone, 2015).

The consent form includes (a) primary researchers' contact information, (b) voluntary nature of the study, (c) IRB approval information, (d) study procedures, (e) risks and benefits involved with the study, (f) disclosure statements like payment, gifts or refunds, and (g) privacy disclosure of statement of researchers document retention and security for 5 years (Walden University, 2016). Researchers have a responsibility to assure that their research study adheres to approved ethical practices and standards (Vanclay, Baines, & Taylor, 2013). Therefore, I ensured the protection of the rights of the participants by preserving the collected data in a secured lock box affixed with a combination-coded padlock. Keeping the data in a secured place prevent unlawful entry, revelation, or loss of the participants' information (Harris, Boggiano, Nguyen, & Pham,

2013; Johnson, 2014). Cliggett (2013) recommended researchers make any data collected throughout a research study accessible for review that conforms to the laws and regulations governing the conduct of research.

Thus, during the 5 years, I will make the data accessible for review by the university and afterward, I will destroy all the paper documentation by paper shredder and electronic data collected by using KillDisk software to erase the information. According to Walden University's guidelines, the final doctoral manuscript will also include the Walden IRB approval number (11-08-17-0501346). Another foundation of the consent form includes a segment for the participants to decide whether to participate on the study or not and specification of their treatment during the study (Marrone, 2015). Prior to starting the study, every participant received a copy of the informed consent via email, including the benefits and risks related to the study. Rodrigues et al. (2013), along with Beskow, Check, and Ammarell (2014), noted that informed consent is a critical component of the research procedure, enabling participants to receive information about the proceedings, risks, and benefits. For participants to contribute in the study, I made sure that all the participants acknowledged the consent via return emails.

To ensure obedience to the three principles of informed consent is essential for credibility of the study (Grady, 2015). Therefore, I reviewed *The Belmont Report* (1979) on Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research created by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The purpose of *The Belmont Report* consist of the subsequent three principles applying to this study (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence treatment

of others, and (c) justice, the moral obligation to act on the basis of fairness (Rodrigues, Antony, Krishnamurthy, Shet, & De Costa, 2013). Before researchers conduct any studies involving human subjects, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Protecting Human Research Participants provides a free educational tutorial that individuals might use to fulfill the requirement for education in the protection of human research participants (NIH Office of Extramural Research Protecting Human Research Participants, 2016).

I completed the educational tutorial on January 16, 2015, Certification No: 1652023. Marrone (2015) acknowledged that *The Belmont Report* provides researchers with a framework to follow for legal and ethical protections on behalf of research participants. The model includes the following six critical elements necessary to use humans in experimental research (a) informed consent, (b) disclosure, (c) competency, (d) voluntariness, (e) risks and benefits, and (f) selection of subjects (Brody & Miller, 2013; Marrone, 2015). Drake (2013) stated that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Furthermore, participants will also have the right not to answer particular questions (Rodrigues, Antony, Krishnamurthy, Shet, De Costa, 2013). I included in the participants' debriefing process to explain the rights before permitting them to contribute in the study. I allowed participants time to ask questions and addressed concerns regarding the consent form and the nature of my study. Johnson (2014) recommended confidentiality played an integral part in protecting the participants' rights, their name, location of the study, and the participating business was anonymous. Researchers can

protect the participants by removing the existing sources of harm via the use of pseudonyms (Mattson & Haas, 2014). Essentially, ensuring that the participants' information remained protected and secured at all times was a priority goal of the researchers. As a component part of the technical process for this study, the participants did not receive any compensation or incentive for taking part in the research process and they obtained a copy of the findings of the study for their records

### **Data Collection Instruments**

Qualitative research is an exploratory procedure meant to support researchers in attaining an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind the significance, dealings, and behaviors depending on the researchers' perceptions (Cole, Chen, Ford, Phillips, & Stevens, 2014). Qualitative researchers serve as the primary instrument of scientific inquiry in the data collection process (Gatsmyer & Pruitt, 2014; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). The primary sources of collecting data in a qualitative study include (a) personal interviews, (b) focus groups, (c) observations, and (d) documentation (Yilmaz, 2013). Researchers are valuable instruments for gathering research information linked to a phenomenon (Gatsmyer & Pruitt 2014). Mansfield (2013) argued a researcher was the best source for interacting with the participants in the environment to attain the participants' in-depth understanding of their experiences and views on the research problem. I was the primary data collection instrument used to collect data in this qualitative case study.

Researchers should conduct open-ended semistructured interview questions through a face-to-face interview with the participants (Pain, 2015). Interviews were



important source providing information to researchers and are characteristically the most vital type of data collected in a case study (Singh, 2014). Prior to conducting interviews, I handed out a document detailing the interview process. Researchers use semistructured interviews for interpreting information, capturing data regarding the participants' thoughts, and making judgment (Elsawah et al., 2015).

The use of semistructured interviews was appropriate for the study as the interview protocol contains open-ended questions exclusive of limited response category, of which researchers enable to search for in-depth understanding of the responses to the questions and providing the researchers the freedom to take notes with supplementary inquiry (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, I used semistructured interviews to assure a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Using semistructured interviews are suitable for directing the interview, supporting the flexibility of participants talking freely, providing the insight to discussions and clarifying answers with follow-up questions to attain comprehensive information from a qualitative case study (Yin, 2014). The two types of data included in this multiple case study are semistructured interviews directed by open-ended questions, and review and analysis of relevant business support documents. The interviews took place at the participants' selected convenient locations and last for about 60 minutes. Researchers suggest not conducting an interview too long for fear of losing the participant's involvement. Semistructured interviews using 6 to 12 questions extends the duration for about 1 hour (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Kun et al., 2013).

There are three kinds of interviews used in qualitative research study, structured, unstructured, and semistructured interviews including open-ended questions (Rowley, 2012). Structured interviews usually require shorter answers yet include more questions compared to unstructured interviews using fewer questions. Additionally, structured interviews are similar to conversation while a structured interview question collects better information regarding the topic of the research (Yin, 2014). Researchers use the face-to-face interviews to collect detailed data that is best either recorded, through notes or combined with audio-recordings (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Conducting face-to-face interviews offers distinctive advantages such as observing social cues in the form of voice and body language, which could give the researchers additional information not easily identifiable via a telephone interview (Oltmann, 2016). Furthermore, Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, and Pedersen (2013) noted researchers using semistructured questions might capture more information for analysis.

McIntosh and Morse (2015) suggested qualitative researchers collect data for their study by using semistructured interviews comprising of open-ended questions, in order to discover new concepts and maintain validity by asking probing questions to obtain the relevant data (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Doody and Noonan recommended that researchers ensure participants are in a neutral and safe interview environment free from possible interruptions while maintaining the interviewees' privacy and confidentiality. Researchers should use open-ended questions to view the phenomenon from the participants' existing worldview without formulating any predetermined opinion in

qualitative research study (Yilmaz, 2013). Thus, the objective of using open-ended questions is to attain unbiased, detailed, and quality data (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Additional reasons for using *how* and *why* questions, demonstrate how participants should offer a varied and detailed responses to in-depth understanding of the research problem (Lalor et al., 2013). Starr (2014) suggested for researchers to explore concerns arising instinctively, participants should feel comfortable and respond freely to the questions. The semistructured interviews strike a balance between the necessity for structure and flexibility (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). According to Paine (2015); Peters and Halcomb (2015) researchers deliberately semistructure interviews with the purpose of the study in mind, to attain knowledge from the participants' interpretation of real world phenomena participants experience in their natural setting (Hermanowicz, 2013). A preliminary interview protocol, with fundamental questions for all participants, is required for a case study design (Yin, 2014). The researcher in this study used suitable case study protocol procedures to sustain participants focus on the research topic and help to accomplish reliability and validity.

The interview protocol (see Appendix A) aligned with the semistructured nature of the nine questions, which serve as a guide for collecting and describing the significance of the information (Silverman, 2013). Yin (2014) suggested the use of protocols as part of the data collection procedure. Using an interview protocol is vital to execute a case study research to maintain the researcher focus on the topic of the study throughout the interviews, thus improving the reliability of the data collection process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Yin, 2014). Before the interviewing process, the participants

will receive an electronic copy of the questions. Savva (2013) recommended participants receive a copy of the questions before the interview to have better answers and seek out explanation. Likewise, Rizo et al. (2015) point out that the researchers develop better relationships with the interviewees by receiving the questions before the interview, afterward soliciting better responses. Furthermore, Doody and Noonan (2013) noted the semistructured interviews are the most common type of interviews used in qualitative research.

Researchers can change the order of the wording of the questions based on the direction of the interview or exploring a new direction not considered in the past (Doody & Noonan). Consequently, I used the interview protocol as included in Appendix C to lessen bias and support the use of additional probing questions in areas that require more data to gain better insights into the participant responses. Consistency of interview questions is an essential protocol, and semistructured interviews will be part of the interview protocol to regulate the questions (Hood, Hart, Belgrave, Tademy, and Jones (2012). To achieve consistency, I used a semistructured interview with open-ended questions and recorded every interview on a digital recorder with all the recordings placed into an individual locked safe to protect the participants' privacy. The interview data comprised of verbatim responses from the audio recordings, while the participants have the option to having any question repeated for Clarification. Morse (2015), and Yin (2014) suggested that an individual summary of the interview will be sent to all participants with a request to member check and verify the validity and accuracy of the

representations. Zhou and Baptista (2013) stated, a researcher using data collection instruments ought to ensure the reliability and validity of the study.

Researchers should improve the reliability and validity of the collected data by using member checking, a technique used to verify the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the collected information as a truthful representation of the participants' responses (Loh, 2013). In member checking, the researcher returns to the participant with their interpretation of the responses to ensure the accuracy of the meaning (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2016). By using member checking, the researchers may reduce the potential for including erroneous data (Roche, Vaterlaus, & Young, 2015). Member checking improves the validity and reliability of the collected data (Vance, 2015). Houghton et al. (2013) suggested member checking is suitable for case study research because it provides credibility and improves reliability and validity of the data collected.

Additional to validate the information acquired from the interviews, all business owners who accepted the invitation to participate in the study and signed the consent form to participate were the individuals that voluntarily participated in the interviews. Furthermore, the business owners provided relevant business documents related to knowledge of strategies used to sustain the small businesses for my review analysis. I contacted all participants to ensure their eligibility to participate according to the participation requirements and ensured that participation in the study is voluntary in accordance to the interview protocol (see Appendix A).

All participants in the study ought to choose convenient times, dates, and places for the interviews (Kun et al., 2013; Mikene et al., 2013; & Silverman, 2013). Thus, I

allowed the participants to select convenient times, places, and locations for their interviews according to their desire. Subsequent to audio recording, the interviews and collecting the authorized relative business documents to support the interview questions and responses from the participant I cautiously reviewed every collected data. After concluding, the interviews and every recording transcribed, into a summary to provide to the participants to member check for accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability to acknowledge the information. The review of the interview summary and documents supporting the strategies used sustain small businesses will present two data collection sources for this research. Researchers use the two sources for data collection to allow the use of methodological triangulation to support the findings from the data as well as to improve the credibility and confirmability of the study (Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2014).

Methodological triangulation is a data collection instrument researchers use to ensure data validation and completion (Silverman, 2013; Wahyuni, 2012; & Yin, 2014). Hussein (2015), researchers might attain methodological triangulation of a single case study by using interview data together with data from published or unpublished business documents. Furthermore, Yin (2014) recommended researchers should note the participants' behavior, and review existing and archival documents from their businesses in form of a secondary data source to collect information regarding the research question. I used pertinent business documents as a secondary source of data including charts, graphs, schedules, websites, and other internal business documents about strategies used to sustain small businesses. The authorized business owners approved all documents for

release by implementing the letter of collaboration. Methodological triangulation uses multiple sources of evidence such as interviews, document review, and observations (Wahyuni, 2012; & Yin, 2014). I used triangulation method to improve the confirmability and dependability of the data from interviews and relevant business documents.

A case study research design uses different sources of data, thus this research study design is appropriate to use the methodological triangulation technique (Yin, 2014). Member checking is a technique used by researchers to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of participants responses (Leonidou, Christodoulides, Kyrgidou, & Paliawadana, 2015). In member checking, the researcher returns to the participant with their interpretation of the interview questions responses to ensure the accuracy of the meaning (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2016).

The interview questions are included (see Appendix C). I conducted the interviews at the participant's convenience in a neutral and professional environment free and safe from interruptions based on the interview protocol, and the provision of privacy and confidentiality. I also used Dragon Naturally Speaking speech-to-text software V13 for transcribing the recorded interviews and uploading the transcriptions and literature reviews into NVivo v11 software to analyze the data and display potential themes from the information

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection in qualitative research is the process of gathering and determining information in an established systematic approach, to enable answering and evaluating relevant questions and results (Grossoehme, 2014). Data collection methods in a case

study may include integration of purpose and insightful data through sources like (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) archival documentation (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Researchers use open-ended questions to view the phenomenon from the participants' existing worldview exclusive of formulating any prearranged ideas (Yilmaz, 2013). Interviews are important sources of providing information to researchers and the most vital type of data collected in a case study (Singh, 2014). For this study, I used semistructured face-to-face interviews involving open-ended questions. Conducting an interview might be a valuable way to gain insight and contextual information of a research problem; though with a disadvantage of time and sometimes prone to bias by the participant attempting to gratify the researcher with their responses (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In some cases, researchers may take a compassionate view of the interview process, support the participants' perspective, and yet advocate for their positions (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Therefore, I ensured that the focus is to minimize biases during the interview process.

Doody and Noonan (2013) recommended researchers ensure that participants are in a neutral and safe interview environment free from possible disruptions while upholding the interviewees' privacy and confidentiality. I conducted the interviews at the participants' conveniences in neutral and professional environments free and safe from disruptions based on the interview protocol (see Appendix A), while providing an atmosphere of privacy and confidentiality. The participants will receive an electronic copy of the questions (see Appendix C). Providing a copy of the questions to the participants prior to the interview provides ample time for preparation hence better



answers and clarification (Savva, 2013). Likewise, Rizo et al. (2015) noted researchers develop better relationships with the interviewees by receiving the questions before the interviews, consequently soliciting better responses. By providing participants with advanced copy of the interview questions, the researchers will have the ability to acquire further clarity of the information conveyed (Rowley, 2012).

Yin (2014) researchers must ensure the collection of data aligns with the research question, participants should comprehensively understand the study, and the background of the study for the data collection techniques to obtain accurate results (Cridland et al., (2016), Mikene et al., (2013). I explained the background, purpose, potential benefits of the study, and expectations of the participants. Furthermore, requested all participants to provide business documents authorized by the business executive decision makers, supporting the businesses strategies used to sustain their businesses such as websites, and other internal records.

According to Cridland et al. (2016); Kun et al.(2013); and Mikene et al.(2013) recommended all participants received notifications in writing as well as verbally, assuring participants of the participation being voluntary and the interviews conducted according to their request of convenient date, time, and location. There were two data sources for this research study provided by the interviews and document review and analysis in addition to reflexive journal notes, internal business records and external information such as websites, annual reports and other documents available for public use. Using two or more data collection sources improved the ability to perform methodological triangulation to support the results from each source, as well as

enhancing the credibility of the data and confirmability of the study (Houghton et al., 2013; Petty et al., 2012b; Yin, 2014). Triangulation was data collection techniques that increase the study accuracy, validity, and credibility. I used triangulation method as a data collection technique according to Tibben (2015).

Qualitative data provides the researchers records of participants' statements (Yilmaz, 2013). Interview is the most common techniques to collect data in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). The advantage of using semistructured interviews as a data collection source is the ability to prepare the interviews in a focused way to address the case study topic honestly (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, Yin suggested that to comprehend the participants' explanations of responses to questions needs the perception of the interviewers that might have a disadvantage due to their personal biases influence on the interviewee responses. I avoided every personal bias from influencing the interview procedure and understood the participants' explanations attentively and objectively to recognize the interview responses. The advantage for semistructured interviews is the short time required to conduct the interview, allows the participants to stay fresh while providing meaningful information on the research topic (Cridland et al., 2016). The processing of data from a semistructured interviews require less time than the unstructured data collection as the researchers are indebted to analyze all the collected data (Cridland et al.). Additionally, scope creep adds irrelevant information about topics outside the research study that may cause an increase in time requirement to collect the desirable data for responding to the research question (Kun et al., 2013; Mikene et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Cridland et al suggested, the processing of data from a semistructured

interviews require less time than the unstructured data collection because the researchers include the responsibility to analyze the collected data.

After the participants agree to participate in the study, I scheduled the times and select convenient places to conduct the interviews according to the participants' availability and preferences (Cridland et al., 2016; Kun et al., 2013; Mikene et al., 2013). During the interview, every participant obtained the background information about the purpose of the study, the amount of time requested for the interview, and the methods used to ensure confidentiality of data. All participants received a participant agreement, which becomes effective immediately the participants sign the participant consent forms. The Belmont Report (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) provides guidelines to assist the researchers to inform all participants about the confidentiality of the study (Cridland et al.; Soares et al., 2015; Yin, 2014). I used *The Belmont Report* as a guide to inform the participants about maintaining their confidentiality. All participants received a copy of the consent form for their records.

Cridland et al. (2015) acknowledged interviews are instrumental in understanding an individual opinion, attitude, experience, process, and value. Qualitative data can originate from interviews, observations, and documents (Gelhorn, 2016). Additionally, qualitative data provides the researchers a record of participants' statements (Yilmaz, 2013). Besides, interviews are the most common method of collecting data in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). As a researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection to use semistructured interviews with open-ended questions as a data collection technique via an audio recorder to record the participants' responses. Direct

participation by the researcher with the collection of data from interviews and other sources of evidence was a significant function in case study research (Yin, 2014). The researchers function as active instruments in the process of information gathering, predominantly during qualitative interviews (Mikene et al., 2013).

The researchers use the face-to-face semistructured verbal interview process to collect data to provide meaning, understanding, and explanations rather than regarding the participants as agents to retrieve facts (Staller, 2010). Researchers used open-ended semistructured verbal interview questions to capture data from the participants regarding their opinions, understandings questions, and judgments (Elsawah et al., 2015).

Furthermore, researchers used the face-to-face semistructured interview process for providing a relaxed environment, promoting participants' relaxation, thoughtful responses, and more insight (Cridland et al., 2016; Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wines, & Frels, 2013).

Researchers conducted expert review of the interview protocol before providing the formal interviews (Silverman, 2013). Another objective for the researchers using face-to-face interviews was the ability to collect comprehensive field notes jointly with the audio-recordings (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). Conducting face-to-face interviews included observing social cues in the form of voice and body language, which revealed additional information not easily identifiable via telephone interviews (Oltmann, 2016). Based on the advantages for semistructured, open-ended interview questions for qualitative case studies, I used a semistructured interview process with open-ended interview questions to conduct an expert review of the interview

protocol with small ethnic grocery business owners in Anchorage AK for this case study. The experts' review of the interviews protocol was a valuable technique to improve the interview questions by using the experts' responses (Wahyuni, 2012; Yin, 2014). Researchers used pre- interview to provide an opportunity to tweak the interview questions and ensuring the clarity and alignment with the research question (Birt et al., 2016). As a researcher, I conducted a pre-interview with the small business owners who were eligible and familiar with the strategies used to sustain their businesses.

Researchers use member checking in multiple case studies to provide reassurance about dependability, credibility, and transferability of the research data (Houghton et al., 2013). Researchers should understand the bulky of information shared with participants and that member checking was a prerequisite to a qualitative research study, as participants needed less time to validate the summary of the interview interpretation for accuracy (Åstedt-Kurki, 2015; Sorsa & Kiikkala, 2015). According to Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) participants conducting member checking after a significant lapse of time might limit their ability to recall their responses and the meaning intended during the interview process. I ensured that a minimum time lapse from interview conclusion awaiting member checking occurred between 3 to 5 days. The researchers using semistructured face-to-face interviews should encourage the establishment of trust between the researchers and the interviewees to attain truthful and straightforward responses from the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Singh, 2014).

To ensure the validity of the interview responses regarding strategies used for sustaining small businesses I acquired permission from the business owners to obtain

internal documents supporting the business sustainability strategies. The documents included access to private websites or any other internal documentation the business owners found relevant to the interview questions. Preceding to the interview I reminded the participants, the business owners that they granted my request to acquire the data in support of the interview responses regarding strategies used to sustain the businesses and that the collection of the documents is immediately after the interviews. I used NVivo v11 to organize, code the information, and attained any relationships between the interviews and the documents to determine the themes after collecting the documents. Furthermore, I entered any reflective journal notes into NVivo to further improve the coding and themes that might result from the analysis and maintain an Excel spreadsheet of all codes and themes for review and analyzes.

According to Yin (2013) and Ajagbe et al. (2015), archival records include (a) books, (b) journals, (c) personal records, (d) earlier research, (e) websites, (f) online materials, (g) mass media communications, (h) government documents, and (i) semi-government documents provided reliable information for the data collection process. Baškarada (2014) suggested that the use of multiple data collection sources supports the use of triangulation and facilitates the establishment of the trustworthiness of the research results. All data sources might contribute to the researchers' understanding of the phenomena (Patton & Johns, 2012). Conversely, there might be disadvantages for using archival documentation such as (a) untrustworthiness of the information omitted by researchers (b) failure to address critical issues on the research study, or (c) providing imperfect information (Yin, 2014).

Researchers might improve the generality of the research results and minimize the limitations of the archival documentation by reformulating the research questions accordingly (Verleye, Gemmel, & Rangarajan, 2014). Similarly, the findings of the study ought to demonstrate similarity based on the varied, documentation, procedural, and ethical rigor conducted during the data collection methods supporting conceptual framework and research questions (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). For this study, I used the documentation provided by the business owners (participants) to support relevance to the research problem and member checking to improve the quality of the synthesis of recorded information. Researchers involved participants by using member checking to review the interpretation of the reported responses to the interview questions for errors of omission and advice on any errors in the statements for the accuracy of the data to confirm the validity (Loh, 2013).

Vance (2015) recommended researchers provided interview summaries to the participants at the end of the study, although Lincoln and Guba (1985) urged researchers reviewed the transcribed responses at any convenient time of the consultation process but not only at the end of the interview sessions. Subsequent to the interview procedure, I used member checking to validate the accuracy and meaning of the data collected, credibility, and validity of the information recorded during the interviews. Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2013) along with Houghton et al. (2013) recommended member checking as the most reliable and vital alternative to establish credibility, validating, and reliability of the collected data. Furthermore, qualitative researchers regularly use (a)

member checking, (b) triangulation, (c) thick description, (d) peer validation, and (f) external audits to maintain the correctness of the data (Elo et al., 2014; Loh, 2013).

I obtained unpublished business documents as a secondary data source to aid in triangulation method as stated by Gorissen, van Bruggen, and Jochems (2013). The open-ended semistructured interview were for recording, reviewing and transcribing through software and responses given back to the participants for further clarity as discussed by Morse (2015). Furthermore, Coombs, Crookes, and Curtis (2013) added open-ended semistructured interview was for obtaining any new supplementary information to reach saturation (Perkins, Columna, Lieberman, & Bailey 2013). The final transcript needed loading into NVivo 11 software for coding and descriptions, and themes to aid understanding the nature of the phenomenon (Zamawe, 2015).

### **Data Organization Technique**

Researchers use data collected to define the direction of the research results available and establish the quality of the study (Oun & Bach, 2014). Gibson, Webb, and Lehn (2014) recommended researchers use software such as NVivo v11 to organize the data into codes and themes. Davies, Reitmaier, Smith, and Mangan-Danckwart (2013), researchers use personal journals to record all information about the study; reflective journals were written documents created to record and reflect on observations and responses to situations, for exploring and analyzing ways of thinking. As such, I developed and maintained a password-protected electronic data log through Microsoft word to classify the data before starting the coding phase.



Researchers used a journal to promote reflective thinking on events and experiences during the research process (Constantinou & Kuys, 2013; Morse, 2015a). Reflective practice included critical thinking, self-monitoring, and directing (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Reflective journals were appropriate for taking notes during the interviews in the study (Shek & Wu, 2013). Thus, reflective journal was a suitable method for the researchers to explore further experiences from the participants about the study (Davies et al., 2013).

Researchers may use individuals' journals to facilitate the potential to identify the interviewees' thoughts and emotions while addressing the research problem (Cowan, 2014). Naber and Wyatt (2014) noted that personal journals are also used to improve critical thinking skills for describing, analyzing, and evaluating the data collected to improve the information for the research problem (Naber & Wyatt, 2014). I ensured that all the raw data collected is stored and securely protected in a locked box with a combination-coded padlock for 5 years, then later removed and destroyed by a paper shredder for hard copies and software KillDisk for electronic data.

### **Data Analysis**

Researchers use data analysis to collect relevant data to support the conceptual framework of a study followed by coding, discovering, identifying themes, and organizing themes into the intended study of the phenomenon (Silverman, 2013). Data analysis includes examining and interpreting data leading to the identification of themes to answer the existing concepts and overarching research questions (Davidson, Paulus, & Jackson, 2016). A qualitative researcher explores, examines, or discovers new perceptive

relating to phenomena (Morse, 2015). Sotiriadou, Brouwers, and Le (2014) suggested that the analysis and interpretation of data with qualitative software analysis tool improves the reliability of the analyzed and recorded data. I used NVivo<sup>®</sup> software to analyze all participants' response based on the audio recordings and the research notes as suggested by Zamawe (2015).

Edwards-Jones (2014) pointed out data analysis involves the understanding of analytical insights and conceptual clarification exclusive of bias and conciliation of the data. The next section will discuss triangulation, a research method for managing bias and analyzing the collected data. A researcher uses triangulation to compare multiple data sources to draw conclusions (Cope, 2014). Researchers achieve triangulation through the process of striving to provide rich data and unbiased results of a study (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Triangulation and increasing the confidence, strength, and validity of a study is achievable through decreasing biases by providing multiple perceptions and methods involving triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Heale & Forbes, 2013). According to Black, Palombaro and Dole (2013), the methods of triangulation include (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) methodological triangulation, and (d) theoretical triangulation. Heale and Forbes, researchers choose the type of triangulation depending on the objective of the study, methodological triangulation is suitable for case study research to reinforce validity and verify data (Yin, 2013b).

Methodical triangulation improves credibility with the use of multiple data sources to authenticate data and making sure data is complete for compilation and analysis (Houghton et al, 2013). To ensure the credibility of a case study, the use of

methodological triangulation may provide a better understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Researchers use methodical triangulation for acquiring more insight into the research problem, minimizing inadequacies and inconsistencies caused by using one data source (Anney, 2014). Thus, methodological triangulation is a suitable analysis technique when researchers use interviews and multiple data collection methods to analyze businesses' internal and external documents (Mata & Portugal, 2015). I used multiple data sources to analyze themes between small ethnic grocery businesses thus; the use of methodological triangulation is suitable for this study.

Computer assisted qualitative data analysis is a significant part of research projects (Davidson et al., 2016). The purpose for researchers to use the NVivo<sup>®</sup> program is to facilitate coding, organizing, and placing the data into themes (Zamawe, 2015). Additionally researchers use NVivo software to assist in analyzing interview transcripts and facilitating data management (Castleberry, 2014; Cridland et al., 2016). I used auto-coding feature within the NVivo software to identify and link similarities in data with propositions and emerging themes as well as reviewing the data manually for redundancy, checking for accuracy, and identifying themes within the data. Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wine, and Frels (2013) suggested researchers using face-to-face interview process should establish, maintain relationship with the interviewee, and understand the context of interviewees' experiences including maintaining flexibility in conversation, using slowdown approach, team process effectively, and summarizing the interview process. Qualitative research presumes the analysis of the participants' interpretation is typical to the time, culture, circumstances, and researchers conducting the analysis (Frels

& Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). A thoughtful, cautious approach regarding individual interpretation is essential to avoid influencing the participant responses linked to their times, cultures, and circumstances. I avoided discussing personal information or experience in the small ethnic business industry because researchers use NVivo software to determine themes from the interview research questions.

The results of this study may benefit researchers using NVivo software by recognizing themes, researchers may use NVivo software to search and identify themes during the data collection occurcy subsequent to inputting the data. The next step was to cautiously review the data analysis and manually check the data from NVivo to ensure accuracy, validity, and reliability as recommended by Castleberry (2014). Researchers use triangulation in analyzing the data, thus improving the analysis of the data during clarification and reduction of researcher bias to ensure the accuracy of all data (Black et al., 2013). The study used triangulation to match the themes and interview terms with the provisions of the data analysis. Researchers use coding to identify themes from the interview transcriptions and other collected data to reach saturation to ensure reliability, validity, and credibility of the study (Yin. 2014). Codes are the structure framework of the analysis suitable to the research question, and themes are ordinary trends and patterns of fundamental importance linking the data together (Braun & Clarke, 2013, Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). A Researcher discovers new themes in the literature through using vital repetitive analysis of the thematic expressions and coded themes (Young, 2016). I used an Excel spreadsheet to present the data collected and started checking patterns using transcripts, the output from NVivo 11 software, and other relevant documents to

determine the comprehensive meaning of the data. The data analysis process includes the interpretation of the data collected by dissemblance, segmentation, categorization, and rearrangement of the data to find relations and drawing inferences within and between the data set (Soares et al., 2015). I used an initial deductive approach to begin the analysis of the central research question of this study and continuously compare and code every data to identify categories and core concepts.

The three participants (small business owners) were identifier assigned (P1, P2, P3, and business coding of B1, B2, B3). Researchers use coding to ensure the participants and businesses privacy. Researchers analyze the data collected against the conceptual proposal, basis for the study and research question (Yin, 2014). The researchers initiate the start of analysis based on theories or ideas of which the data supports or confirms the theories (Fingeld-Connett, 2014). According to Ahlstrom and Ding (2014), researchers correlate the data by analyzing the data comparative to constructs of entrepreneurship theory as data results correlate to provide strategies (Aspromourgos, 2014). The conceptual proposition of this study is small business owners lack strategies to sustain their businesses over 5 years. O'Reilly and Parker (2012), and Yin (2014), suggested researchers should analyze the data collected carefully by reviewing and generating theories from the data. I analyzed the data carefully to ensure proper answers to the central research question.

Researchers use NVivo software to help in coding text and rearranging the data into group codes and related categories through uploading data to computer assisted qualitative analysis data software (CAQDAS). One can use (CAQDAS) not only to

speed up searching, sorting, coding, and retrieving data but also to indicate the conclusions of the analysis using frequency of codes or themes to present evidence for the researchers considering rival interpretations (Silverman, 2013). A researcher also uses NVivo software to reduce individual bias and provide increased transparency of personal thoughts about specific interviews, participants, or topics as a form of reflective journals (Finfgeld-Connett, 2014). Yin (2014) recommended researchers to study the outputs from computer-assisted tools to comprehend emerging patterns and themes. By reviewing and comparing different codes, I interpreted, categorized the data into themes and also compared and contrasted the themes to the propositions identified in the literature review. Researchers create thematic maps to help in the analysis of the data conducted to filter the particulars of each theme to narrate the story of the analysis (Esmailia, Cheraghi, & Salsali, 2013). Upon completing to identify and review the process, I made comparisons between the data to generate a thematic map.

According to Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013), thematic analysis is common in qualitative research for identifying themes from the data analysis process. I used the following six steps in sequential process for data analysis purposes (a) familiarizing with the data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) producing the report as argued by Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, and Redwood (2013) and Vaismoradi et al. (2013). Researchers comparing the themes identified from the data analysis of the interviews and document reviews to the themes from the literature review and conceptual framework may provide a correlation of the study results against the literature review results

(Sotiriadou et al., 2014). A researcher uses NVivo v11 software to assist in coding and determining themes from the interviews input of the data, internal documents, and reflexive journals (Zamawe, 2015). Consequently, I searched to find and review external documents such as annual sales, business websites, and stockholder reports to collect and input into NVivo v 11 that might provide additional codes and themes. After identifying the codes and the themes, I linked NVivo v11 to the themes, interviews, internal and external documents, and reflexive journal notes, to the conceptual framework of this study. I used the Yin's 5-step analysis that includes the study's question, proposition, analysis, data links, and interpretation (Yin, 203a). The compiling phase involved organizing the data in order to create a database, while disassembling phases entailed breaking down the compiled data into fragments and labels. The reassembling process involved in clustering and categorizing the labels into sequence of groups. The interpretation stage involves in creating narratives from the sequences and groups for conclusions (Fusch, 2015).

The recommendation for conducting further reviews was to improve the data collection procedure for the researchers through capturing of accurate and relevant information essential for a detailed analysis (Zhou & Baptista, 2013). The active process of creating and constructing themes happened following the coding phase. Searching for themes includes reviewing the coded data for identification of the similarities and overlapping of the codes and generating overarching themes and subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In case of any overlapping theme, I merged into one theme; unidentified themes placed into a miscellaneous category for further analysis or removal. Braun and

Clarke noted miscellaneous themes unfit into the universal analyzed data might need removal should the information fail to support the purpose of the research question. The reviewing of themes was a repetitive process ensuring necessary quality checking by mapping the developing themes to the coded data to establish whether the theme works in relationship to the data (Ward, Furber, Tierney, & Swallow, 2014).

The purpose for the thematic analysis was to make sure each theme connected rationally and significantly to aid in drawing the initial conclusions of the conceptual framework and research problem of the study for additional validity by using triangulation. Researchers achieved triangulation through the process of striving to provide rich data and unbiased results of a study (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Triangulation and increasing the confidence, strength, and validity of a study was achievable through decreasing biases by providing multiple perceptions and methods involving triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Heale & Forbes, 2013). The types of triangulation included methodical, theory, data, and researcher (Denzin, 1978). Methodological triangulation was suitable for case study research to reinforce validity and verify data (Yin, 2013b). Methodical triangulation improved credibility with the use of multiple data sources to authenticate data and making sure data was complete for compilation and analysis (Houghton et al, 2013). In 2011, Bechara and Van de ven added another triangulation method called philosophical triangulation, used by researchers, which involved supplementary efforts and rigor essential for supporting the research question (Joslin & Müller, 2016).

Researcher chooses the type of triangulation depending on the objective of the study. I used a methodical triangulation, the most commonly used form of triangulation



to study the research problem according to Heale and Forbes (2013). Methodical triangulation involves two classifications, within-method and between or across-method triangulation. Within-method included the use of two or more methods when studying the phenomenon under investigation (Denzin, 1978). Conversely, between or across-method triangulation, involved the use qualitative and quantitative data collection methods in a study hence not appropriate for this study (Gibson, 2016). Additionally, Denzin suggested methodical triangulation entails the cross-referencing of internal consistency to accomplish external and convergent validity to enable the researcher substantiate the research study. According to Anney (2014), and Heale and Forbes (2013) researchers use methodical triangulation to attain more insight into the research problem to minimize inadequacies and inconsistencies found by using one data source to determine the validity and credibility of the study. This study consisted of using methodical triangulation through integrating two or more methods to validate the data. I analyzed, compared and contrasted the responses from the semistructured interview process, archival documentation, business owners, and annual report to complete the triangulation process.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are essential components of all research (Konradsen, Kirkevold, & Olson, 2013). A qualitative researcher addresses the validity and reliability of a study when planning the design, analyzing results, and interpreting the findings (Yin, 2014). Research studies have numerous significant elements, but the rigors with which the researchers conduct the studies are a priority to support the quality of the research

findings (Houghton et al., 2013). Frequent concepts used to support the rigor of a qualitative research study include credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability (Wamba, Akter, Edwards, Chopin, & Gnanzou, 2015). Qualitative research study depends on subjective, interpretive and contextual data that makes the findings scrutinized and questioned thus researchers need to ensure the reliability and validity of their research findings as explained in the next section.

### **Reliability**

Reliability in qualitative research is the extent to which researchers consistently produce stable and dependable findings (Zohrabi, 2013). Dependability of the study refers to the consistency of the data achieved by providing transparency during data collection, coding, and analysis, to ensure readers may trace the results (Wamba et al., 2015). Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2013) discussed that reliability was one of the fundamental elements involving the data and the findings in any research study. To assess the credibility of qualitative research study necessitates evaluating the reliability of the study's findings to support the soundness and integrity of the conclusions (Nobel & Smith, 2015). Researchers used instruments in qualitative study to obtain reliability through repeatability or dependability of measurement (Foley & O'Conner, 2013). The concept of reliability in qualitative research was for the researcher to achieve dependable results, reflecting stability of the data (Houghton et al 2013), as well as minimizing errors and bias in a study (Sandelowski, 2015).

Researchers used member checks to permit the participant to approve, authenticate, and explain the accuracy of the data collected to verify the data's credibility,

as well as the rationality of supplementary interviews (Nelson et al., 2014). Member checking included verifying the participant's insight based on the researcher's interpretation of the responses to the interview question (Vance, 2015). The purpose for researchers to use the NVivo© program is to facilitate coding, organizing, and placing the data into themes (Zamawe, 2015). According to Zamawe, the NVivo© software was also used by researchers to increase efficiency, improve accuracy and interpretation of the data through searching by electronic means and sorting data to obtain accurate and reliable results. Furthermore, researchers using NVivo© software may work more methodically and thoroughly than during the usual data analysis process (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

Though The NVivo© software enhances the pace and accuracy of data analysis process, the software program is not 100% accurate (Zamawe, 2015). Consequently, I reviewed the end manual assessment of the data to reduce the omission of the key words and sentences to report any supplementary accuracy. Codes are the structure framework of the analysis suitable to the research question, and themes were ordinary trends and patterns of fundamental importance tying the data together (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

I conducted the coding procedure through creation of a master list subsequent to methodological review of the participants' responses. The review included identifying words used regularly, key terms, and phrases representing information about the research question and conceptual framework. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2013), the words and phrases were critical aspects in the qualitative research study. Starting with the

master list, I sorted the initial codes into a simpler order or clusters by using a color-coded scheme to identify the words, key terms, and phases. The researchers use color-coded themes to track and control the data for interpretation, easy highlight of the themes, and sub-themes to aid researchers in the transition stages from research content to the data analysis (Hall et al., 2015). According to Rowley (2012), researchers analyze and review the initial data. Consequently, I continued conducting several more reviews of the data content to identify any omissions of the significant themes and subthemes.

Researchers use triangulation and audit trails to confirm reliability (Anney, 2014; Zohrabi, 2013). Methodical triangulation improves the reliability of the study by using multiple data sources to ensure the collection of comprehensive data in response to the research question (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Anney and Zohrabi noted that the audit trail included a thorough review of the investigation process including the data collection, analysis methods, and how the different themes emerge from the findings acquire. Yin (2013b) noted researchers support the reliability of the findings by using methodical triangulation from multiple sources of data. The multiple data collection methods included, collecting data from the semistructured interviews, unpublished business documents, and researchers used member checking to allow methodical triangulation to improve the reliability of the study (Park, Chun, & Lee, 2016). I used multiple sources of data to support the reliability of the findings of this study.

Furthermore, Ramthun and Matkin (2014) stated that researchers use data triangulation to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. Triangulation involved the use of variety of sources of research data like interviews, focus group discussions,

participant observations, and archival documents (Anney, 2014; Foster, Hayes, & Alter, 2013). Prior to researcher reaching data saturation, the researcher strived to assure validity by processing the collected data used to assess the accuracy of the participant's interpretation of the views and experiences for the research phenomenon (Tuohy et al., 2013). Reaching data saturation increased the reliability and validity of the research study (Frambach, Van der Vleuten, & Durning, 2013). Consequently, the concept of data saturation demonstrates content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015a). Thus, the researchers ensured to achieve data saturation, to improve the quality of the research results (Houghton et al., 2013). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is achievable through the interview method and the number of interviews determined by the quality of responses received. Data replication implied the participants' responses were common but not essentially comparable (Morse, 2015b). I achieved data saturation by interviewing multiple participants via asking semistructured questions and collecting detailed information from their perspectives until the responses no longer provide any more new data.

### **Validity**

The validity of a study relates to the extent to which the research instrument accurately reflects the underlying issue or phenomenon intended to be measured (Long, 2015). Therefore, validity referred to the suitability of the tools, processes, and data collected used for analyzing the research question (Leung, 2015), linked to honesty, authenticity, and credibility of the research data (Leonidou, Christodoulides, Kyrgidou, & Paliawadana, 2015). Validity referred to the integrity, credibility, transferability, and

confirmability of the findings of the data collected (Houghton et al., 2013). Validity also provided the rational of claims, implications, and conclusions discovered in the research study (Leighton 2016). Thus, I used the information to check and verify that the study meets the requirements of validity and reliability.

Data saturation occurs when the ability for acquiring collection of data provided no more additional new information and further coding was no longer feasible (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2015). According to Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014), the researchers' probability to reach data saturation increased by using document review from secondary sources, document for review were found in the public domain (Silverman, 2013). Interviews provided much of the data collected for this study and the public information available on the business websites as well as the documents provided by the businesses participating. To reach data saturation was vital as reaching data saturation increased the dependability and validity of the research study (Frambach, Van der Vleuten, & Durning, 2013). Thus, I interviewed three participants until no additional new information occurred, gave each participant a copy of the summary of their interview to review and member check to verify the validity and accuracy of the interview before starting the data analysis.

**Credibility.** Credibility is the self-assurance and acceptance of the results (Anney, 2014). Elo et al. (2014) discovered that creditability determines whether the information resulting from the findings of the study was reasonable and supports the ideas drawn from the participants. Therefore, credibility was a process including participants scrutinizing the analysis and the results of the collected data for assessment

to determine whether the analysis and the findings accurately reflect the participants lived experiences (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Mclaggan, Bezuidenhout, & Botha, 2013).

Researcher in qualitative research study can set the rigor of inquiry by using sampling strategies, triangulation, members checking, conducting interviews, and employing peer-examinations (Anney, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). The suitable way to ensure credibility in the study was through triangulation, and member checking. Using member checking, the participants read the transcription of interviews to ensure credibility and accuracy of the record (Houghton et al., 2013). Researchers in qualitative study used prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking to improve the credibility of a study (Black, Palombaro, & Dole, 2013). Consequently, I ensured credibility in this qualitative research study by conducting (a) triangulation (b) member checks, and (c) prolonged engagement as discussed in the subsections below.

**Triangulation.** The triangulation of data was using multiple theories, materials or methods to obtain corroborating evidence in a research study (Onwuegbuzie, & Byers, 2014). Yin (2014) stated that researchers used triangulation strategy with multiple sources of data to provide research study with credibility. Marshall and Rossman (2014) noted triangulation was an essential strategy to ensure data interpretation was credible and suggested qualitative research study researchers conduct member checks and used triangulation to improve the validity of the study. To ensure creditability of the qualitative study, I used triangulation to mitigate bias by cross-examining the integrity of the participants' responses through data triangulation involving the use of interviews,

participant observation, and business documents. A researcher used triangulation for comparing multiple data sources and drawing conclusions and triangulation used different sources of data to support accurate analysis (Cope, 2014; Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2014). To ensure credibility of a completed case study, the use of methodological triangulation might provide a better comprehension of the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Consequently, I used methodological triangulation and member checks for this study as stated.

**Member checking.** The researchers returned to the participants with their interpretations of the interview questions responses for acknowledge and assurance of the accuracy of the meaning (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2016). According to Rowley (2012), researchers ought to request the participants to review the verbatim transcription of their interview. To ensure member checking was suitable for this research study, I reviewed the information on the transcript reviews that required the participants to review the verbatim transcription of their interview. Harper and Cole (2012), researchers used member checks to provide a more efficient validation than verbatim transcription as member checks ensured the interpretation of the researchers were accurate and truthful compared to verbatim (word-to-word) transcription. I conducted member checking by including the voices of respondents in the analysis and interpretation of the data to eliminate bias when analyzing and interpreting the findings. Member checks involve sending back the analyzed and interpreted data to the participants to evaluate the interpretation and suggest possible changes.



**Prolonged engagement.** Qualitative research data collection required the researcher's complete involvement in the participants' world to gain an insight into the context of the study (Bitsch, 2005). The researcher's extended time in the field improved the trust of the respondents and provided a greater understanding of participants' culture and context (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). I ensured complete involvement to acquire the participants' insight of the study by having enough time in the field to improve trust of the respondents and provide a better understanding of participants' culture and circumstance.

**Transferability.** The quality and rigor of qualitative research study depended on dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Black et al., 2013; Soares et al., 2015). In qualitative study, transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative research were applicable to other contexts (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013); however, transferability was frequently to the reader to decide. Transferability necessitates a researcher to provide vivid explanations of every research process from data collection, context of the study, and finalization of the report (Soares et al., 2015). Thus, I provided detailed explanations of the research process, the context of the study, and a final report meeting the requirements of transferability. In qualitative research, transferability was vital for the findings of the study to have meaning for persons and readers not participating in the study (Cope, 2014).

Using transferability as a method to determine the exchange of researchers' results, link their concluded study to other similar contexts while maintaining the meanings and deductions of their independent study (Black et al., 2013; Elo, Kaariainen,

Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen, & Kyngas, 2014). Qualitative studies are qualified for transferability standard when the findings generate meaning to others not involved in the study and might relate their experiences to the results (Cope, 2014). The applicability of the findings to other occurrences and circumstances confirmed the transferability of the results related to the phenomenon (Sousa, 2014).

Moreover, transferability of the findings besides highlights substitute alternatives to the researchers on how the concepts and theories of the study could apply to other settings (Elo et al., 2014). In addition, Tong, Chapman, Israni, Gordon, and Craig (2014) stated naturalistic inquirers ought to show general results by providing adequate textual information of the fieldwork observations to enable the confident transfer of the results. I gathered detailed explanation of the phenomenon being investigated to allow a holistic understanding of the issues linked to the research problem. The study included the use of purposive sampling and use of data collection and analysis techniques for assessment of the transferability of the research results including transcribing participants' responses, coding and organizing data, conducting triangulation processes, and presenting the results in a logical and repeatability manner to determine the generalizations of the study (Anney, 2014; Sousa, 2014).

Researchers use semistructured interviews for interpreting information, capturing data about the participants' thoughts, and making judgments (Elsawah et al., 2015). Furthermore, researchers also use semistructured interviews to suit the requirements of the study when the interview process contains open-ended questions exclusive of fixed response categories, to seek a comprehensive perceptive of the answers to the questions

and providing the researchers the freedom to follow-up with additional inquiries (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The interview protocol for this study was in Appendix A. Using software for qualitative data, analysis improved the portability of the qualitative data (Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016). The transferability of this study's findings to explore the strategies small ethnic grocery business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years could have application to numerous other small businesses. To ensure the transferability of potential future research, I would kept detailed notes, record all interviews, and use NVivo 11 software to support the analysis of the data and helped in describing the context of the research study

**Confirmability.** In qualitative research study, confirmability refers to the ability to demonstrate the research data represents the participants' responses and not the researchers' biased perspectives (Cope, 2014; Hussein, 2015). The purpose for this study was to provide adequate information without bias, reflecting the participants' views. According to Houghton et al., (2013), methodological triangulation provided confirmation of comparisons found in diverse data collection sources. Researchers used Methodological triangulation and NVivo 11 software to help in confirmation of the quality, transferability, and reliability of all data. According to Houghton et al., researchers closely link confirmability to dependability in referring to the neutrality and accuracy of the data. Maintaining an audit trail in data collection and analysis demonstrates accuracy in confirmability and comprehensive records of the approaches employed (Wamba et al. (2015). Confirmability builds on the audit trail involving the use of field notes, personal notes, and journals (Zitomer & Goodwin, 2014). I kept a complete

audit trail of data gathering, member checking findings, analyzing the process, and conclusion to ensure confirmability.

Researchers ensure confirmability by enlightening the interpretation of the data collected during the study and supported the research results and not individual biases (Rapport, Clement, Doel, & Hutchings, 2015). Furthermore, Nura (2014), noted that confirmability was the extent to which others substantiate results of the study, comprehensible and succinct record keeping plus data preservation were essential components of research validity (Jones, 2014). Cope (2014) noted confirmability depended on the report of conclusion, interpretation, and illustration that the result was directly from study data.

The confirmability in this study was by the detailed audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity, the practice of making personal biases and roles known according to Black et al. (2013). As a previous business owner and a consultant for 10 years in small business retail, customer service there was a commonality with the research topic. The Confirmability during the report of the research results provided quotes from the participants to portray each emerging theme (Cope, 2014). According to Houghton et al., confirmability was by audit trail rigor attainable by outlining the decisions made throughout the research process. Thus, I used the audit trailing to establish rigors of a study by providing the details of data analysis and some of the decisions leading to the results.

**Dependability.** The term dependability implied the steadiness of data over similar circumstances (Anney, 2014). Dependability involved evaluating information resulting

and construing from the participants of the study in a rational and traceable approach (Cuthbert & Moules, 2014). Dependability was similar to the concept of reliability in quantitative research in which the qualitative researchers used dependability to imply the stability of the research data (Houghton et al., 2013). A research study was dependable when another researcher agreed with the decision trails at each phase of a research process (Cope, 2014).

Researchers address of dependability, an audit trail of field notes, memo writing, and reflexive notes were suitable (Charach et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). Furthermore, dependability included the use of an audit trail concept for analyzing the inquiry process and establishing trustworthiness of the research results (Jones, 2014). Audit trails was a methodical and logical record-keeping procedure for all the researchers' events and conclusions through validating the collected, organized, and analyzed information post data saturation (El Hussein, Jakubec, & Osuji, 2015; Jones, 2014).

Researchers used Audit trail rigor to outline the decisions made during research process as basis for achieving the methodology and interpretation judgments (Houghton et al., 2013). I provided the transcripts from the participants' narrative contributions during the interview sessions and asked the participants to verify the accuracy. According to Reilly (2013), memberchecking involved testing the data, analyzing categories, interpreting and concluding with participants supplying data as a significant process to insure truthfulness and validity. Anney (2014) noted judging dependability of a study needed a detailed evaluation of the participants for extended periods to identify, learn,

and provide clarification of any changes. The audit trail also involved establishing confirmability of the study (Anney, 2014). To ensure dependability of the study, I used a journal to document all personal and field notes, recorded the participants' responses, and provided copies of the transcribed audio recordings of the interviewees for member checking purposes.

Prior to researchers reaching data saturation, the collected data to evaluate the accuracy of the participants' interpretations of their views and experiences of the research phenomenon needed assurance (Tuohy et al., 2013). Consequently, the concept of data saturation revealed content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015a). Data saturation was the point at which the researchers failed to identify any more new themes or information to support the research phenomena (Oun & Bach, 2014). According to Houghton et al., researchers ought to assure achievement of data saturation, to improve the quality of the research findings. Reaching data saturation increased the dependability and validity of the research study (Frambach, Van der Vleuten, & Durning, 2013). According to Fusch and Ness, researchers could achieve data saturation though using the interview method and the number of interviews depended on the quality of responses received. To ensure achieving data saturation, I interviewed multiple participants by asking semistructured questions and to collect detailed information from their perspectives until the repetition of answers failed to generate any more new data or themes. Data replication implies the participants' responses were common but not essentially similar (Morse, 2015b). I achieved data saturation by interviewing three

participants, asking semistructured questions and collecting detailed information from their perspectives until the responses no longer provided information that was new.

### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to explore the strategies small ethnic grocery businesses used to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Section 2 included detailed information on, the review of the role of the researcher; participants; research method; design; population and sampling; ethical research; data collection, analysis, instruments, techniques, reliability; and validity on addition to examining dependability, transferability, creditability, and confirmability to ensure the reliability and validity of qualitative research. I also described how to mitigate researcher bias, discussed regulate interviews by using appropriate protocols, and noted the criteria to choose eligible participants appropriate for my research question.

Section 3 focused on the presentation and analysis of the findings of the study; highlighted the applications to professional practice, and implications for social change. This section also incorporated recommendations for future action based on the results of the study and identified options for future research by reflecting on the issues related to the research problem.

In Section 3, I presented my findings relevant to the research question: what strategies do small business owners need to sustain their business beyond 5 years? After I conducted the interviews and analyzed the documents, I transcribed and coded the themes to compare the findings with the literature reviews, supplementary sources of the data, and the conceptual framework. I articulated how the results could affect social change as

well as behaviors and made recommendation for further action needed for improving the practice in business to ease the limitations. Prior to the conclusion of the study, I included a reflection of my experience during the DBA Doctoral Study Process, and discussed my individual biases, ideas, or values that I might have about the study, which could affect the participants or the interview situation.



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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Small business owners have provided vital economic development and job creation in the United States (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). The failure rate of small businesses was as high as 50% to 70% in 2015 (SBA, 2015). Approximately, 47% of jobs created by small businesses disappeared due to business failure (Haltiwanger et al., 2013); thus, exploring strategies small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years was significant for this study. I conducted nine semistructured open-ended questions to interview three small ethnic grocery business owners with at least 5 years of experience in the operation within Anchorage, Alaska to gain ideas and insights for the data collection. Researchers used the semistructured questions to allow the participants to exchange their knowledge and perception, and used triangulation to facilitate validation of data through cross verification from interviews and secondary source of documents (Yin, 2014). I ensured triangulation methodology to analyze the data sequentially and logically to identify the findings and drew the conclusions.

Based on the conceptual framework, entrepreneurship theory, literature reviews, and data collection, I established eight coding themes associated with strategies required for the small ethnic grocery stores business sustainability. These themes were (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education background and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (e) social

networks and human relationships (f) technology and innovation, (g) government supports and social responsibility, (h) motivation. I conducted member checking and used triangulation method to ensure data saturation, reliability, and validity of the study results. When the data was saturated, my analysis revealed key strategies in the responses to the research questions. The results from this study might enhance small business owners' competence and sustainability. Though the multiple case studies for the three small ethnic grocery stores in Anchorage, Alaska might not represent small businesses in the entire industry, I have provided some critical thinking and ideas for further study of the problem. In Section 3, I outlined a detailed description of the outcomes of the study that included the presentation of the findings, application of professional practice, implication of social change, recommendations for action and further research, reflections, summary and the study conclusions.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question for this study was what strategies do small ethnic grocery business owners use to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years? I used a qualitative exploratory multiple case study for the research method and design to provide the insight information for the research question. I conducted semistructured interviews and recorded the answers word for word, to collect data that involved the nine open ended questions (see Appendix C), among three small ethnic groceries business owners in Anchorage, Alaska. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and their businesses, I assigned a number and a letter for identification such as P1, P2, and P3 for the participants and B1, B2 and B3 for the small ethnic businesses in the data

collection and analysis. With a multiple case study design, I was able to understand the phenomena, the participants' experiences, and viewpoints as described by Dasgupta (2015). One of the disadvantages for using a qualitative case study is the researcher's bias, mitigated through an interview protocol, sensemaking, and member checking in the data collection process (Harvey, 2015).

Member checking clarifies the meaning of what the participants said (Koelsch, 2013). Researchers use sensemaking to identify and explain the phenomena and use it as an analysis and interpretation tool (Paull, Boudville, & Sitlington, 2013). I used interview protocol, sensemaking, and member checking to mitigate my biases and used triangulation approach for validity and reliability in the process of data analysis. The triangulation data sources I used included business websites, customer comments, and government official documents besides the interview data.

I coded the three small business owners (participants) as P1, P2, P3, and their businesses as B1, B2, and B3 to ensure their privacy was not violated. Subsequently I used an auto-coding feature within the NVivo software to identify and link similarities in the data with propositions and emerging themes as well as reviewing the data manually for redundancy, checking for accuracy, and identifying themes within the data. In addition, I used NVivo software to search and identify themes during the data collection occurry following to inputting the data. I entered all the collected data into NVivo 11 for Mac to identify nodes, or themes, for analysis. The next step was to cautiously review the data analysis and manually check the data from NVivo to ensure accuracy, validity, and reliability. As indicated in the table below there are eight emerging themes from the

content analysis process. The themes indicated strategies needed for small business owners to sustain their business beyond 5 years, which consisted of (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (e) social networks and human relationships, (f) technology and innovation, (g) government supports and social responsibility, and (h) motivational influence. Researchers use data saturation to improve trustworthiness and validity (Robinson, 2014). I reached data saturation when no new information or themes appeared, and the data became repetitive as described by Fusch and Ness (2013). I also used member checking for clarification until no new meaning emerged.

Table 2

*Emergent Nodes/Themes*

<i>Nodes/themes</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Entrepreneur characteristics	5	72
Education and management skills	5	57
Financial planning	4	32
Marketing strategies and competitive advantages	5	78
Technology and innovation	4	28
Social networks and human relationships	5	32
Government supports and social responsibility	3	14
Motivation influence	4	16

The initial codes and themes were from the transcribed interviews and other data collected associated with the research question, the conceptual framework, and the available knowledge from literature reviews. The results indicated the strategies needed for small business owners to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

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

The three small ethnic grocery business owners met the criteria of being the successful entrepreneurs with sustainability experience in doing business in Anchorage, Alaska for at least 5 years. I entered the data from the interviews, business websites and member checking results, customer comments, and government documents into NVivo and found the following eight themes.

### **Participants**

Participants considered for this study were from an Alaskan small business development center. I selected 10 active small ethnic grocery businesses that met the profile needed for the study in the Anchorage, Alaska geographical region. I contacted 10 candidates by email consent to participate, four responded accepting to participate, three did not respond, and three responded declining to participate. I purposely chose the three participants out of the four who accepted to participate in the face-to-face, recorded interviews (see Table 3). The small ethnic grocery business owners selected for the study had at least 10 years of experience in the customer service industry.

Table 3

*Response from Business owners*

Small Ethnic Grocery Business Owners	Number Responded	Percentage of Response
Number of Respondents Accepted	4	40%
Number of Respondents Refused	3	30%
Non-Respondents	3	30%
Total Number contacted	10	100%

**Emergent Theme 1: Entrepreneur Characteristics**

Entrepreneurs based on entrepreneurship theory concept have the characteristics of risk taking, decision-making, leading, creating, reallocating resources, traits, self-efficacy, and competencies (Cantillon, 1755; Say, 1855; Schumpeter, 1983).

Entrepreneurs were people making decisions in times of doubts to achieve goals (McClelland & Winter, 1971). I analyzed the data from interviews, member checking, business documents of P1, P2, and P3 and coded as theme 1 (Table 4), which showed 72 references related to entrepreneur characteristics.

Table 4

*Node/Theme 1: Entrepreneur Characteristics*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Entrepreneur characteristics	5	72

Based on the literature reviews, entrepreneurs have some commonalities in personality traits like inquisitiveness, decision-making, innovativeness, self-disciplined, and self-motivation that made them resilient to stressful circumstance as stated by Pawęta (2015). Two of the participants acknowledged that every small business owners had to confront stress from competition, human resource management, and financial management (P2 and P3, personal communication, 11-15-17). In fact, prior to interviewing P1, the small ethnic grocery business owner was frustrated because somebody else started a similar grocery store in the vicinity (P1, personal communication, 11-15-17). The participant stated that he believes that "...when your products look good, taste good and the customers will come to buy." Hence, he ensured that his products in the store were well arranged and organized in the shelves to look neat to attract customers. This result supports the suggestion by Nawi, Al Mamun, and Raston (2015) that customer satisfaction is the essence of enterprise success, especially in the competitive business environment. For sustenance, within competitive business environment, small businesses owners should therefore focus on operational strategies, which would lead to an improvement in overall customer satisfaction (Nawi et al., 2015). The startup stage of

business planning and service design received influence by the entrepreneur's traits and personality (Paunescu, 2013).

Small business owners ought to be able to live with uncertainties and persist through barriers for long periods (Pawęta, 2015). P1 and P2 mentioned that prior to becoming successful, they had failed a number of times but they did not give up (P1, and P2, personal communication, 11-15-17). Thus, "A person without a mistake never tried anything new". The driving force for entrepreneurs are the passion for their products and services, willingness to take some reasonable risks, and the capability for setting goals to better life (Money & Odibo, 2015). P3 noted that avoiding risks as an investor is not possible but with a passion and a goal, one can have the opportunity to succeed (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). Thus, "Choose a job that you like, and you will never have to work a day in your life." The relationship between passions of entrepreneurs is that entrepreneurial self-efficacy drives persistence (Cardon & Kirk, 2013). The inspirations for becoming entrepreneurs were individual satisfactions, fulfillment of individuals' passions, and desired financial independence (Ahmad & Arif, 2016).

P1 and P2 paid off the banks loans 10 and 12 years ago respectively, and started similar grocery stores in different locations (P1 and P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; business documents, 11-15-17). All the three participants have a passion for self-employment (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). All the three participants worked in grocery stores for at least 10 years before starting their own ethnic grocery businesses



(P1, P2, and P3, personal communication, 11-12-17; 11-14-17; and 11-15-17 respectively). By working for other grocery stores, the participants gained experience and saved some money prior to borrowing additional cash from the banks, they saved at least \$50,000 as initial capital (P1, P2, and P3, personal communication, 11-12-17; 11-14-17; and 11-15-17 respectively; member checking, 11-12-17; 11-14-17;; and 11-15-17 respectively). P1 stated that, financial independence also influenced their decision for owning a small ethnic grocery store business (P1, personal communication, 11-15-17). P3 was certain that having self-confidence, autonomy, and self- efficacy are the driving force for owning his own business (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17).

Small business owners needed the capability to resist the fear of uncertainty, potential failure, and make a perfect decision depending on the circumstance to control the outcome (Pawęta, 2015). Self-confidence was the key entrepreneurial trait, a belief that turns the risk proposition through conducting sufficient research and self-assurance to improve the risk and get the job done (Pawęta, 2015). In small business operations, the periods from 1-5 years are the stages of discovery, making mistakes, and learning from failures, gaining experiences, overcoming failures, and retaining sustainability (Amurao & Panlilio, 2016). The emergent theme of entrepreneur characteristics aligned with the entrepreneurship theory conceptual framework and the body of knowledge from the literature review in this study because new business enterprise investors and entrepreneurs success depends on the entrepreneurs' characteristics (Sexton, 2001; Smith & Smith, 2000).

## **Emergent Theme 2: Education and Management Skills**

Based on the entrepreneurship conceptual framework, entrepreneurs ought to have competence and managerial skills to generate efficiency and job creation (Say, 1855). Entrepreneurs ought to have knowledge of consumer behaviors, resource allocations, launching of innovation, and adapting to a changing business environment (Schumpeter, 1983). Self-employment is the driving force for job creation and economic growth thus the need for an efficient education system capable of tapping into the vital skills of entrepreneurship for tackling and resolving problems (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). After hand coding, I entered the data into NVivo for coding the second theme, which is education, and management skills, using five data sources, supported by 57 references as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5

### *Node/Theme 2: Education and Management Skills*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Education and management skills	5	57

Entrepreneurial skills and experiences influence the tendencies of individuals becoming entrepreneurs and the chances for their success (Hietanen & Jarvi, 2015). Successful entrepreneurs learn from failures, experiences and adjust to market conditions accordingly (Hietanen & Jarvi, 2015). Entrepreneurs use suitable educational programs to develop entrepreneur management competencies and improve the opportunities for success and sustainability of small businesses (Qureshi, Saeed, & Wasti, 2016).

Entrepreneurial skills like critical thinking, problem solving, communication, risk bearing, team collaboration, and self-reliance are not natural gifts, thus these skills are attainable through education, with a good business vision and a wise strategy for staff recruitment and training (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014).

P1 has a two-year college diploma in computer science (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; document review, 11-12-17). P2 has a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; document review, 11-15-17). P3 completed GED and worked for a grocery store for 20 years, became a department manager; thus, he attained skills in management, customer service and team work collaborations, the experience and knowledge needed to operate a successful business of his own (P3, personal communication, 11-15-17; member checking, 11-17-17). The findings regarding the significance of business owner's prior experience aligned with the statement entrepreneurs' pre-entry knowledge and experience were directly proportional to entrepreneurial success (Unger, 2011). According to Tan (2011), knowledge is the most important organizational resource with unprecedented value, which managers regard as a source of sustainable competitive advantage.

Small business owners rarely employ specialists and frequently use their own resources (Franco, Santos, Ramalho, & Nunes, 2014). P2 has an electrical engineering background; thus, takes care of the electrical maintenance of his small business, and saves him some money (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17). P1 uses his knowledge from the two-year college diploma in computer science to gain potential customers,

promote his business website, organize data, and interact with consumers on social media (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; document review, 11-12-17)..

P3 was educated in a different country before immigrating to United States; he attained General Education Diploma (GED) and thought it was a waste of time continuing with education in United States, however he went on to acquire some work experiences from some businesses before starting his own business (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). Business owners are not aware that the lack of knowledge might involve missed business opportunities, growth, increased productivity, and competitiveness (Doris & Kusce, 2013). P3 thought, acquiring a degree to operate a successful business was not necessary, but learning from experience was a better way of education for small business owners (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). Thus, “Success in management requires learning as fast as the world is changing”. Theme 2 aligned with the existing body of knowledge from literature reviews and the conceptual framework of this study as successful entrepreneurs ought to have the knowledge to discover and obtain financial and human resources, even while confronting new markets, scarcity of resources, and excessive uncertainty (Bhide, 2000; Smith & Smith, 2000; Stevenson, 1985).

### **Emergent Theme 3: Financial Planning**

In the entrepreneurship theory concept, entrepreneurs allocate resources to maximize financial return and to equilibrate supply and demand in the market (Cantillon, 1755). Financial planning is essential for establishing the monetary goals of the business (Albuquerque, Filho, Nagano, & Philippsen, 2016). The forecasts reveal the startup

money that small business owners need and the deficit that might occur for possible adjustment of the revenue and expense projection to avoid a problem in savings or loans to cover any cash insufficiency (Albuquerque et al., 2016). The financial plans comprise of the projected profit-and-loss statements for the next three to five years with a break-even analysis, cash flow statements, and balance sheets (Albuquerque et al.).

Investors and lenders are interested in seeing the entrepreneurs' business plans, including the financial plans with projections and assumptions behind the forecasts (Xiang & Worthington, 2015). The financial plan, that is impractical, will discourage the impending loan or investment (Xiang & Worthington). Table 4 represents theme 3, showing the coding data analysis from four sources with 32 references for financial planning.

Table 6

*Node/Theme 3: Financial Planning*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Financial planning	4	32

In 2015, small ethnic businesses such as grocery stores were growing very fast in the USA (Bewaji et al., 2015). When small business owners started businesses with the assumption of being successful, but later discovered that success after business launch can be illusive (Hayes, Chawla, & Kathawata, 2015). Creating a business plan with a complementary financial plan is a feasibility study for a successful and profitable business startup (Hayes et al., 2015). The small business owners use financial plan to

indicate whether the resources are available or the market is unstable for the investment (Verstina, Akimova, Kisel, Chibisova, & Lukinov, 2015).

P1, P2, and P3 prepared their financial plans prior to launching their business (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). P1 used an official financial plan to apply for a small business loan through a business advisor after running his business for two years (P1, personal communication, 11-15-17; member checking, 11-17-17). P2 used his financial plan to acquire an angel loan as part of his startup fund (P2, personal communication, 11-18-17). With a financial plan, entrepreneurs could analyze the prices or the costs and determine whether they are too high to earn a profit or not in comparison to the competitors' (Verstina et al., 2015).

P3 stated that the cost control is vital because he uses a low price policy as a differentiated strategy (P3, personal communication, 11-12-17). According to P3, before starting his business he had his financial plan in place as a guide for deciding the right time to start the business or expand it (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17). According to P2 "You wouldn't get in a car and drive around aimlessly, hoping to eventually arrive at a pleasant destination. So why would you even consider doing this for your business?" Entrepreneurs monitor the actual results against the budget in the financial plan to access the opportunity for taking essential steps to get back on track (Verstina et al., 2015). In general, theme 3 aligned with the existing body of knowledge regarding the research topic and the conceptual framework of this study.

#### **Emergent Theme 4: Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantages**

According to the entrepreneurship theory, an entrepreneur is an individual who allocates resources with the ability to adapt individual strengths, weaknesses, handle threats, and opportunities in a changing environment (Schumpeter, 1983). Marketing planning is informal in structure for small businesses to implement and evaluate (Franco et al., 2014). Entrepreneurs use marketing plans to analyze a brief overview of the business's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to achieve competitive advantages (Brooks, Heffner, & Henderson, 2014). Strengths and weaknesses refer to characteristics of internal factors such as higher quality products and exceptional services, while opportunities and threats refer to external factors like the effect of competitors, the structure of the industries, and government regulations (Albuquerque et al., 2016). Small businesses had competitive advantage when the business owners implemented values, created strategies without concurrent implementation by competitors (Garcia-Castro & Arino, 2011; Grant & Royle, 2011). I used marketing strategies and competitive advantages as theme 4 (Table 5) for the data analysis, which showed 78 references from five sources.

Table 7

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

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

Small business owners ought to have a marketing plan to indicate growth potential and essential tools for their business success (Franco et al., 2014). Marketing strategies are the consequence of market analysis, facilitating entrepreneurs' familiarity with the characteristics of the market to identify the target market, to ascertain prices, distributions, and promotion strategies in competitive circumstances (Osiri, 2013). Small business owners' use pricing as a marketing strategy to control the cost of goods sold for enabling a lower competitive price, gaining higher market shares, and profits (Felzensztein & Gimmon, 2014).

P1 explained how he used a lower price strategy and website as a competitive advantage, that the lower the prices, the more you sale and the more profits you make. The more the customers make positive reviews the higher the sales and the more you make profits (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; document review, 11-12-17). Small business owners attained competitive advantage in several ways to determine and differentiate their strategies (Miculescu & Miculescu, 2012). The business ownership management consisted of sustainable competitive advantage when competitors could not duplicate the benefits of the business's value (Garcia-Castro & Arino, 2011).

P1 mentioned, he could predict the trend for the costs of suppliers' products and the prices to consumers since he has been in the business for many years (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; member checking, 11-14-17). P1 stated, "The aim of marketing was to know and comprehend the customer so well that the product or service fits him and sells itself." Many types of grocery store items are relatively cheaper in summer compared to winter due to scarcity and weather conditions in Anchorage Alaska,



thus some of the items need storage, freezers for proper regulatory sales to make profits (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). P2 stated “America's competitive advantage lies in its human talent, all of us ought to do everything we can to make sense and develop our work force”.

All the three participants noted that some frozen food products lose taste with time compared to the fresh ones but more preferable than nothing (P1, member checking, 11-14-17;; P2, member checking, 11-17-17; P3, member checking, 11-19-17). All the three participants have different price policy leading to the price variations among them, P1 shown the lowest priced products compared to P2 and P3 has the highest priced products compared to both participants (P1, personal communication, purchase invoices, 11-15-17; P2, personal communication, purchase invoices, 11-15-17; P3, personal communication, purchase invoices, 11-15-17). P1 mentioned that having low price policy was the better way to promote sales and return on investment (P1, personal communication, 11-15-17; member checking, 11-17-17). Small business managers might focus on both success and growth when pursuing competency-based strategies; however, small business managers risk business success in pursuing flexibility-based strategies (Armstrong, 2013). Virtually all small firm managers pursue strategies to compete even though some of the strategic growth strategies may endanger their various survivals (Armstrong). P2 said he preferred using an average price policy to cover more segments of the market to have a competitive advantage (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; member checking, 11-17-17). P3 preferred using high price policy to avoid losses caused

through shipment of products to Anchorage Alaska (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; purchase invoices, 11-18-17)

Some challenges to address competition include resource constraints in workforce and capital, for exploiting the opportunities in the market (Lamine, Mian, & Fayolle, 2014). Small business owners ought to identify opportunities through allocating their limited resources or acquiring support to explore the opportunities (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). The findings from theme 4 aligned with the presented body of knowledge and the conceptual framework for this study as entrepreneurship was a significant influential on which marketing and innovative capabilities depends (Weerawardena & O’Cass, 2004). The function of marketing was to acquire the complete market knowledge, generate and offer valuable and quality products and services to the intended customers (Weerawardena, 2003).

### **Emergent Theme 5: Social Networks and Human Relationships**

Entrepreneurship theory relates to social networks and human relationships, thus a successful entrepreneur should be able to identify new opportunities for coordination (Say, 1855). Small business entrepreneurs use communication skills for motivating and leading others to follow their vision (Omri & Frikha, 2015). Entrepreneurs give individuals the power to connect and interact through the social media and networking from different geographical locations while fostering business growth and personal relationships (Omri & Frikha, 2015). Theme 5 is the social networks and human relationships (Table 6) for the data analysis, the results indicate 32 references from five sources.

Table 8

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

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Social networks and human relationships	5	32

Social networking or social network is the use of internet-based social media programs for making connections with friends, family, classmates, customers and clients. Social networking can occur for social and business purposes. It is also significant tool for targeting a specific market through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Classmates.com and Yelp. Entrepreneurs use social network to connect with friends, family members, business associations, to build relationships (Kavir et al., 2014). Successful small business owners ought to be competent in building relationships with teammates, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and investors through social networks (Song, 2015).

P1 illustrated how to use his personal Facebook communication page on his mobile phone and emphasized that social networking was crucial for his business connection to suppliers and customers (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; business letters, 11-12-17). P1 said that in the summertime, farmers would bring their produce to the farmer market where sellers and buyers interact and build relationships with each other (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17). P1 would buy vegetables and other products from these farmers for his store annually making the suppliers his friends and customers (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; member checking, 11-14-17). P1 thought social networking builds relationships and trust between customers; pointing at

the review message from his customers on the business website showing appreciations (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; business letters, 11-12-17). P1 revealed that besides the business website, he also used the social media like Facebook to get daily opinions from his customers regarding the trend of products, prices, new government regulations, or new competitors entering the market (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17). P1 also used social media for sending out information, promotions, and communicating with customers (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; business letters, 11-12-17). Baptista et al. (2014) suggested, human capitals comprised of tangible and intangible features, owners used positively to influence startup success in the first years after startup. Human capital included the abilities of employees, was the primary factor business owners relied on to differentiate their products and services to build a competitive advantage (Hargis & Bradley, 2011).

P2 explained how the social media and social networks facilitated the sales in his ethnic grocery store couple with unique decorations (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; business reports, 11-15-17). P2 stated “Business was not making deals only; it was about having quality products, engineering, and providing exceptional service to customers thus a cobweb of human relationships”. P2 said that using social media and networking is cheaper and better than actual advertisement and emphasized that it was the power of word-of-mouth promotion as the customers relate to their friends (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17). P2 supplemented that his customers would also put comments, recommendations, and ratings on his business website (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17). P2 said that though the ratings might not be so accurate; his

competitors have smaller ethnic grocery businesses and are not as busy compared to his but their ratings were higher than his and he showed the comparison in the ratings (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; business websites review, 11-15-17). P2 said, secret of rating is that some competitors requested many of their relatives and friends to give positive ratings to their businesses as a favor (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17). Nevertheless, the comments and ratings can facilitate decision-making for new customers in town looking for an ethnic grocery store (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17).

P3 described social media and social networking as tools providing information for the customer service industry (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). P3 uses social media such as Facebook and email to ask for advice from his friends who have more experience than he does in the small ethnic grocery business (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). P3 also used the social networking to seek for the angel loan, as a startup fund (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). When P3 was having shortage of employees he posted to the social media and someone gave him a recommendation that resolved his problem (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). Small business owners develop relationships and make strategic alliances for achieving benefits and solving the scarcity of their resources through social networking and acquaintances (Pawęta, 2015). Small business owners use social networks to access financial support and human resources; provide information on government regulation policies, and advertising intelligence data (Omri & Frikha, 2015). Small business owners use integration, reconfiguration, and relocation of resources to generate market opportunities (Pawęta, 2015). The findings of theme 5 aligned with the body of

knowledge and the conceptual framework of this study as entrepreneurs seek support, knowledge, and access to distribution channels through social networks and link to people and organizations interacting among themselves, the contacts widen the availability of resources for sustaining a new business (Hansen, & Wortman, 1989).

### **Emergent Theme 6: Technology and Innovation**

Based on the entrepreneurship theory, entrepreneurs ought to convert a new idea or invent into a successful innovation (Schumpeter, 1983). Innovation creativity is an essential role for entrepreneurs (Drucker, 1994). Entrepreneurs have a vision for identifying opportunities overlooked to prioritize for innovation (Senyard, Baker, Steffens, & Davidson, 2014). Infiltrating innovation involves transformation, disruption, uncertainty, and complexity (Ndubisi & Agarwal, 2014). Innovation is a valuable complement to advertisement, funding, IT, and product development as it improves business growth (Omri & Frikha, 2015).

Living in the information age with the use of technology and global economy, competition is knowledge-based, and innovation is the driving force for sustainable competitive advantage for small businesses (Hayter, 2013). A technological innovation contributes to higher levels of economic production and deliverance of new goods and services, improving social welfare and capabilities (Wang, Kitvorametha, Wang, 2014). I used theme 6 (Table 7) as the coding for technological and innovation data analysis, demonstrating the findings of 28 references from the four sources.

Table 9

*Node/Theme 6: Technology and Innovation*

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Technology and innovation	4	28

P1 said he used ‘Cloud’, a global network of online servers for carrying out business activities such as multiple backups to reduce the chances of loss of valuable data and commented that the fear is the cyber security problems (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; Document review, 11-14-17); member checking, 11-14-17). Technology, social media, leadership, education, and training were some predominant factors affecting the success of small businesses (Abdul Jumaat, Jasmani Binti, & Nek Kamal, 2013; Geho & Dangelo, 2012). P2, explained how he used computer programs, which are helpful for accounting and sale analysis (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; member checking, 11-17-17). P2 in addition showed some high technology tools in his office such as WorkTime Cloud, software for monitoring employees in start-ups businesses to track productivity (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; document review, 11-15-17). The older participants seemed not very interested in the use of the technology (paranoid) confirming the statement that one of the factors affecting the success in small businesses operation is age (Huang, Nandialath, Alsayaghi, & Karadenzi, 2013). Other factors included experience, use of a social media strategy, and financing (Hibbler-Britt & Sussan, 2015).

P3 stated that he provided free WiFi for customers as a resourceful marketing tool, devised for effective and customized strategies to promote products and services. In addition, he commented that a business with improved customer satisfaction means further customer acquisition prospects for the business that might lead to increased profit making (P3, personal communication, 11-15-17; document review, 11-15-17). P3 stated, “The only way to succeed in business was to continuously transform into something else, the continuous transformation made innovation business”. Technological innovation associates development with the national economy (Abhyankar, 2014). Entrepreneurs explore and develop new technology to achieve more opportunities and influence to develop across various sectors and industries (Moghavvemi & Salleh, 2013). Business owners use technology and innovation as a comparative advantage over other competitors (Maritz & Donovan, 2015).

Entrepreneurs use extensive market research to identify trends for developing technology and innovation for their businesses and consumers (Schott & Sedaghat, 2014). Entrepreneurs use technology and innovation to facilitate monetary assistance by guiding business ventures through various forms of funding with different sources such as angel investors and crowd funding (Mayer, Harima, & Freilling, 2015). Crowd funding involves raising money for business enterprise by drawing several investors using social media and Internet channels (Quero & Ventura, 2015). The findings theme 6 aligned with the body of knowledge and the conceptual framework for this study.



### **Emergent Theme 7: Government Support and Social Responsibility**

Relating the entrepreneurship theory to entrepreneur social responsibility, entrepreneurs drive economic progress and create social value (Schumpeter, 1983). Entrepreneurial social responsibility is therefore necessary for the business enterprise sustainability (Andre & Pache, 2016). Small businesses and entrepreneurial startups are the driving force of the nation's economy, social development, and growth (Omar, 2014). Consequentially, the government encourages small business growth and financial loans through policy makers (Wonglimpiyarat, 2015). Table 8 showed the coding theme from data analysis associated with government support and social responsibility. The findings showed only 14 references because the participants seldom use the government support.

Table 10

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

<i>Node/theme</i>	<i>Sources</i>	<i>References</i>
Government support and social responsibility	3	14

Based on the data collection analysis, P1 specified that social responsibility was vital for business sustainability (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17). P1 said, as a leader he always tells his employers “the customer is the king” give the customers what they need, treat them well and you earn a good reputation in doing business thus the customers will be satisfied and will keep coming back to the store (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; document review, 11-12-17). Bengesi and Roux (2014) discussed that business owners who focus on customer needs tend to have the most

effective strategy to meet the challenges in a competitive business environment. P1 highlighted that ethics and responsibility were very important in achieving social trust and promoting word-of-mouth publicity (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; document review, 11-12-17). P1 furthermore stated that everybody was responsible for protecting the environment from waste and pollution as well as saving energy when possible (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17; document review 11-12-17). P1 rarely used government support thus lacks information about it (P1, personal communication, 11-12-17)

P2 stated that providing training for his employees was essential for teamwork efficiency and productivity (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; document review, 11-15-17). P2 motivated his workers by handing out awards and nominating the worker of the month with the photo pinned on the wall, thus to encourage them continue working hard, be responsible and disciplined (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17; document review, 11-17-17). P2 restated to his employees, always pay attention to the quality products and services rendered in the grocery store as a priority (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17 document review, 11-15-17). P2 acquired some financial support from the government through a small business loan on the SBA website, which was very helpful in the early stages of the business (P2, personal communication, 11-15-17 member checking, 11-17-17). P2 stated, “Businesses ought not to have a singular view of profitability but a balance between commerce and social responsibility, businesses that were authentic about it would wind up as those making more money”.

Conversely, P3 detested from discussing government support for small businesses, according to him, small businesses barely get the financial assistance from the government, as the businesses are too small to draw the government's attention (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-18-17). P3 was disappointed when the government financial support agent declined to offer him loan and instead got the startup funds from the angel investor (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17). Nascent entrepreneurs ought to research for assistance programs, that guide preparation and affect startup success (Yusuf, 2014). Generally, the findings aligned with the body of knowledge and conceptual framework for this study, as government support and social responsibility extends to human rights, workplace practices, globalization practices, business power, ecological impact, corruption, community affairs and effective stakeholder dialogue (Cowe, Porritt, 2002).

### **Emergent Theme 8: Motivational Influence**

The primary theme emerging from the data collection was the owners' motivation to start, build, and maintain a successful small ethnic grocery business. All the participants discussed their motivations to generate businesses with capabilities grow and emerge the best small businesses in Anchorage, Alaska. Motivation is the key to building a successful business, and the absence of it hindered growth and success (Dalborg, von Friedrichs & Wincent, 2015). In some of the interview questions, all the participants mentioned motivation and having passion for entrepreneurship as their driving force to business ownership. The research study identified three particular motives for entrepreneurship such as the desire for flexibility, financial rewards, and independence.

The general motive stated by every participant was the desire for quitting from the corporate work sector due to job dissatisfaction and value. The findings of this study were consistent with the previous research by McGowan et al. (2013), which stated, women's motivation for small business ownership included the desire for independency, flexibility, and economic self-reliance. Table 11 demonstrates the occurrence frequency of sub-themes, generated from the analysis of data based on women motivation for starting and sustaining successful businesses. These sub-themes, discussed later in the findings, influence the strategies women use to succeed in business past 5 years.

Table 11

*Frequency of Sub-themes*

Themes	Reference	frequency of occurrence
Independence	8	55%
Flexibility	5	45%
Financial Success	3	19%

***Independence.*** The entrepreneurs' motivation for success included the desire for independence. Owners needed devotion to be and stay independent as stated by all the participants in the interview questions 2 "What factors and conditions led to the development of your business strategies to succeed?" All the participants specified that the desire to be independent aroused from job dissatisfaction. However, P2 also had some early ambition of becoming an entrepreneur, the support for getting involved came from his family members after experiencing struggling with work as a fulltime salaried job.

Sen, Sen, and Tewary (2012) noted that employees fulfilled their most basic needs for survival, and became more motivated to satisfy their need for safety, (P2, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17).

Likewise, the wife for P3 asked him to consider starting a small business when the company she worked for outsourced her job to overseas. For P3, her spouse's suggestion was a jump starter to learn more about business ownership in Anchorage Alaska where he has lived for at least 25 years (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). All the participants discussed the needs to become small business owners and succeed. P1 developed a desire to share his skills with others and finding mentors from SCORE also known as "Counselors to America's Small Business." P2 enrolled full-time in postsecondary education to improve his skills and business growth (P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; document review, 11-18-17). In consistence with previous research, family support and encouragement was a motivating factor for P1 and P2 for starting their own businesses (P1 and P2, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). According to P2, "When you started your own business, your work was going to fill the large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied was to do what you believe was great work thus you needed to love doing your work."

Independence and passion motivate small business owners in business startups and valuable knowledge and skills in the business sector influences entrepreneurial success (Block, Sandner, & Spiegel, 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2012; Krishnamoorth & Balasubramani, 2014). Through member checking, all the participants confirmed that being business owners was more satisfying though demanding compared to working as

ordinary employees because of many requirements such as working long hours, direct personal responsibility, planning investments, management, and participation. According to P1, "Starting your own business was like riding a roller coaster; there are highs and lows and every turn you made was another twist, the lows were low, but the highs could be high and you needed strength to hang on and ride along with the roller coaster you started."

Individuals who are dissatisfied with their jobs are motivated to become entrepreneurs (Block et al., 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2012; Krishnamoorth & Balasubramani, 2014). The findings of this study indicated, motivation, skills, education, and personal characteristics can influence the success of business start-ups, development, and sustainability thus affecting strategic decisions, business performance, and profit making.

***Flexibility.*** Each participant mentioned that flexibility was a significant factor for motivating the desire for owning a business. The findings of a study reported by Cheng (2015) indicated that social needs were difficult to meet at workplaces because of the intense competition for senior jobs where a greater sense of teamwork exists. Small business owners have occupational flexibility that provides opportunities to choose personal work hours to balance personal schedules with business life (Lee & Stearns, 2012; MCGowan et al., 2012). P1, P2 and P3 stated the passion for the skills they possessed and cited flexibility as a factor for motivating and reducing stress from achieving work-life balance (P1, P2 and P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). All the participants acknowledged a sense of achievement in

business ownership that was unattainable in ordinary employment due to more professional and resource control.

The flexibility to manage family affairs was significant to each one of the participants, and while their family role influenced their decisions to pursue entrepreneurship, work-life balance was not the key motivating factor for business startup (P1, P2 and P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). The freedom to control a personal schedule was a key motivator for business startup. P1 and P2 gained comfort of not relying on others for childcare and support while working the required long hours, as they could provide their own childcare at the workplace in case of conflicting schedules. Through member checking, P2 affirmed that the flexibility to earn money for supporting his family without relying on childcare from others while working was a significant motivating factor. P1 stated the flexibility to contribute to the community by mentoring, employing, and providing services to improve social change was a motivator for the business success and sustainability (P1, member checking 11-19-17).

***Financial success.*** All the participants mentioned the significance of using financial strategies to generate wealth for their businesses (P1, P2 and P3, personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). Something consistently mentioned in the literature but not by the participants of this study, was women deliberately created lower profits businesses. Kautonen et al. (2012) suggested American women did not prioritize generating financial resources for their small businesses. Consistent with the current research findings, women entrepreneurial business owners

were motivated to create financial goals generating wealth for their small business (Chamorrow- Premuzic et al., 2014). P1 and P2 stated using personal funds for a business start-up and mentioned acquiring business financing to grow and sustain their business (P1 and P2 personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17).

P1 stated, nobody should use personal funding to create a business venture as it might lead to management issues particularly when personal funds are required for meeting personal obligations and unavailable due to business operation (P1 personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). P1 mentioned strategically planning to meet financial obligations that created profits for the business by determining the number of storage rented to help cover business expenses (B1, Business Strategic Plans, August 2017; B1, Balance Sheet ending December 2016). P2 mentioned storage rented together with fees for services rendered to sustain business profits after taking care of business expenses (B2, Budget for the year ending, December 2016). P3 mentioned that selling products (B3, Income Statement, July 2016) added to the profits of the business. P1 noted advertising and selling product was taxing on management and difficulty in maintaining adequate inventory (P1 personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17).

The financial rewards for each participant confirms the earlier research indicating work-life balance supports the ability to earn money for the support of family without relying on others for care of their children on work. Balancing work and life matters were not the key reason for business start-up for P2 or P3, but having flexibility to influence their schedules as desired for family vacations or transporting children, were inspiring



and having control over work was satisfying and beneficial to the owners and employees of the businesses (P2 and P3 personal communication, 11-18-17; member checking, 11-19-17). The financial success aligned with the entrepreneurship theory conceptual framework and the body of knowledge from the literature review in this study because the key focus for the field of entrepreneurship is *why*, *when* and *how* some people and not others discover and exploit opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000).

The emergent theme of motivational influence aligned with the entrepreneurship theory conceptual framework and the body of knowledge from the literature review in this study as there are at least three motivation factors that influence business performance: vision, goals, and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; House & Shamir, 1993; Locke & Latham, 1990).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The purpose for this research study was to explore the strategies small business owners needed to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I used a qualitative multiple case study with semistructured interviews and document analysis through conducting interviews with three small ethnic grocery business owners in Anchorage, Alaska. I discovered eight themes using NVivo coding, which are (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (e) social networks and human relationships, (f) innovation and technology, and (g) government supports and social responsibility, (h) motivational influence.

Small business owners ought to build their strategies based on the vital details contained in the eight themes for their business success and sustainability. Based on entrepreneurship theory, entrepreneurs are risk takers involved in resource allocation to maximize financial return (Cantillon, 1755). A successful entrepreneur should have skills in management, communication, and planning combined with self-reflection, self-reliance, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities (Lin & Nabergoj, 2014). The entrepreneurs' characteristics and qualifications indicate the extent of success and sustainability for the small business owners (Lin & Nabergoj). Education and training can improve the small business owners' ability for strategic planning needed for the success and sustainability of their businesses (Oncioiu, 2012).

The findings from this study indicate that most of the small ethnic grocery business owners started their business investments from their passions, through taking risks to seek opportunities for making profits. The participants have most of the entrepreneur qualifications that made their businesses successful and sustainable beyond the first 5 years. Small business owners starting with limited resources without entrepreneur qualifications might not succeed in sustaining their businesses (Doris & Kusce, 2013). The more the business grows, the more there is need for experience, resources, and management skills, or else entrepreneurs may run out of businesses (Minello, Scherer, & da Costa Alves, 2014). The main challenge for small business owners (small ethnic grocery) is the lack of a business plan, a guide outlining goals and details for achieving them.

Small business owners need business planning, to analyze and adjust according to the performance of the business instead of following the daily routine only by attending business workshops, seminars and trainings are essential for updating knowledge and social networking for small business owners, to empower the formation of business strategies for their success and sustainability (Mitchell, Madill, & Chreim, 2014). The Counselors to America's Small Business (SCORE) supported by SBA offers many supporting programs for small business entrepreneurs (SBA, 2015). The important planning strategies that small business owners should have are managerial planning, financial planning, human resource planning, operation planning, and marketing strategies planning.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Small businesses are very important to a growing economy in all countries (SBA, 2014). In 2013, small businesses contributed 51% of the country's payroll, 65% of the new jobs, and 97.5% of the exports from the United States (SBA, 2014). The knowledge attained from this study is necessary for small business owners regarding strategies desired to sustain businesses beyond the first 5 years. Sustainability reinforces the integrity and legacy of the small business owners through leadership, job creation, environmental preservation, products and services provision, and community economic driving force (Chow & Dunkelberg, 2013; Feinberg, 2013; Karadag, 2015). The failure or success of small businesses has significant effects on individual contributions, community, organization, society, and the country (Michell et al., 2014).

The combination of social enterprise and social marketing approach is essential for improving social results (Michell et al.). Social enterprises are organizations handling social issues by applying business practice and principle (Michell et al., 2015). The social enterprises focus on creating social and economic values, value formation and dissemination, which depends on managerial marketing capabilities (Michell et al., 2014). Governments use social marketing such as the ministry of health, agriculture, and a non-profit organizations aiming at improving social and community welfare by contributing to positive social change (Michell et al.). The teamwork among small business owners, social enterprises, and social marketing will speed up the results for positive social change.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Dahmen and Rodriquez (2014) noted from the research study in 2013 that the failure rate for small businesses was 50% for the first 5 years, causing a decline in employment rate and economic growth (SBA, 2014). Businesses persevere through sustainability by confronting a changing market environment of which the entrepreneurs create long-term financial value and minimize the negative effects on the surroundings such as employees, and community (Michell et al., 2015). From this study, the sustainability of small businesses depend on entrepreneurs' characteristics, management skills, human resources, innovation and technology, social networks and social responsibilities, and the abilities to cooperate with the government regulations and policies. To reduce business failure rates the small business owners lacking the qualities need further education, training, or attending business workshops (seminars).

The other alternative solution to reducing a failure rate is obtaining external assistance such as professional advisors. The government support such as free advice from SCORE is significant for the success and sustainability of the small businesses. The government needs to know the small business growth stages to understand the challenges facing entrepreneurs to design program policies for support (Gobble, 2016). Holmberg-Wright and Hribar (2016) indicated that, some of the government support programs included favorable business environment, excellent infrastructure, cash grants, low-tax system, steady lawful environment, and available workforce. As the researcher for this study, I will ensure the distribution of the findings to the participants, government sectors such as the U.S. Small Business Association, scholarly journals, business literature reviews, and entrepreneurship conferences.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Researchers select methods and designs suitable for the research purpose, while accounting for affordable resources, and answering the research question (Venkatesh et al., 2013). I used a qualitative multiple case study that was appropriate for the study objective and the resource limitation. The boundaries are the sample size, the research method and design, and the demographic of the participants. The three small ethnic grocery businesses owners might not represent the entire small business industry to explore the strategies required for small business owners to sustain their business beyond the 5 years. I used triangulation method, member checking, sense making, and data saturation.

Through member checking, I asked follow-up and probing questions to ensure the meaning of what was said and ensuring data saturation as well. A larger number of participants might be better for future researchers to improve reliability and validity. The location for the research study Anchorage, Alaska might be too narrow and specific thus future researchers should choose some other different areas in United States for the study. Researchers should consider alternative research methods and designs for further research such as mixed methods, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2013). The advantage of this method is that researchers can use one approach to inform the other, which improves the reliability and validity of the study results (Terrell, 2012).

### **Reflections**

My experience during the DBA Doctoral Study process was of learning and challenges. I gained incredible knowledge from the literature reviews of other scholar-researchers particularly on small businesses. By reading and comparing the posts of the new classmates joining the class discussions, I realized how much knowledge and experience I had acquired from the doctoral study program process, the new students were the reflection of myself at the beginning of the DBA program. I used to have preconceived ideas, biases, and values; hence, before starting the data collection, as a scholar-practitioner, I needed to ensure how to understand, identify and mitigate my biases. Prior to obtaining the permission for data collection from IRB, I had to understand the requirements, ethics, and the obligations for the researcher. While in search for potential participants, I visited different small ethnic grocery businesses in Anchorage,

Alaska and had the opportunity for meeting new friends. I thought I had enough knowledge about business theories from my previous education, together with some business experience from my career. However, after completing this study I realized that, there is still so much to learn thus learning never ends unless somebody decides to stop learning.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. I used the entrepreneurship theory as the conceptual framework. The participants for the semistructured interviews were three small ethnic grocery business owners in Anchorage, Alaska. I used member checking and triangulation method to ensure data saturation and validity according to Harvey (2015) and Houghton et al. (2013). Data analysis from multiple sources showed eight coding themes which are (a) entrepreneur characteristics, (b) education and management skills, (c) financial planning, (d) marketing strategies and competitive advantages, (e) social networks and human relationships, (f) technology and innovation, (g) government supports and social responsibility, and (h) motivation.

The summary of the analysis linked each emergent theme back to the existing body of knowledge from the literature review and the conceptual framework for this study. In conclusion, the strategies that small business owners need to sustain their business beyond 5 years are the ownership of the entrepreneur uniqueness such as risk taker, decision maker, and inventor who allocate resources for a motive to achieve a goal through resilience, self-confidence, and self-efficacy (Maden, 2015). Education and

training generate entrepreneurial competencies about management skills and problem solving that are important for the small businesses success and sustainability (Ahlin, Drnovšek, & Hisrich, 2014).

Successful entrepreneurs need management abilities such as operational management, human resource management, financial management, accounting management, and marketing management to build a sustainable business (Dhochak & Sharma, 2016). Small business entrepreneurs should incorporate the knowledge of social media, social networks, and social responsibility into their strategy planning to sustain their businesses. Lastly, one of the necessary factors for small business owners in generating the strategies for their business sustainability is government supports in policies and regulations (Yazdanfar, Sweden, & Brouder, 2015). Government supports such as financial loans, educational and training programs, infrastructure, innovation incentives, legal frameworks, and tax policies have influenced small businesses strategies planning (Kulikova et al., 2016). My contribution in this study is to provide small business owners with more knowledge for their business sustainability and success. This study also included some information for governments to render support to sustain small businesses, which are the significant components of economy development.



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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

- I. Introduce self to participant (s).
- II. Present consent form, go over contents, answering questions and concerns of participant(s).
- III. Participant signs consent form.
- IV. Give participant copy of consent form.
- V. Turn on the recording device.
- VI. Follow procedure to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification, note the date and time.
- VII. Start the interview from question 1 to question 9.
- VIII. Follow up with additional questions.
- IX. End interview sequence; discuss member checking with participant(s).
  - a. Thank the participant(s) for their contributions,
  - b. Emphasis on the contact numbers in case of questions or concerns.
- X. End protocol.

## Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in the Study

<Date>

<Address Block>

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Kayaso Wani, a student in Walden University's Doctoral Business Administration (DBA) program. According to the program, the student must conduct a doctoral research to fulfill the requirement. My research topic is to explore the strategies, small business owners used to sustain their business beyond 5 years by using a case study of three small ethnic grocery businesses in Anchorage, Alaska. The contribution for the study is to provide small business owners with more information for their success in their business. This study also gives some information for governments in providing their supports for the small businesses sustainability. As a business student as well as a previous business owner, I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. Please read the enclosed consent form carefully and ask any questions that you may have before accepting the invitation. This interview will include nine open-ended questions (attached with this letter) that you can provide your opinions and suggestions. I appreciate your valuable time and thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Kayaso Wani



### Appendix C: Interview Questions

The interview questions are as follows:

1. What strategies did you use to sustain your business beyond 5 years?
2. What factors and conditions led to the development of your business strategies to succeed?
3. What strategies did you use to start your current business and remain successful?
4. What are the challenges you countered in developing your strategies?
5. What do you do to formulate your strategies?
6. What did you do to influence the need to initiate strategies in your business?
7. How did your business mission and vision influence the strategic process?
8. How do you implement your strategies to sustain your business?
9. What additional information can you share regarding strategies to achieve ongoing sustainability?