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Fast Food Business Survivability Beyond 5 Years in Nigeria

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

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by

Victor B. Ukorebi

MBA, Aspen University, 2009

BS, Brigham Young University, Idaho, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2018

Abstract

The lack of manager's effective business strategies contributes to the failure of fast food businesses in Nigeria. The size of the fast food industry in Nigeria grows at the rate of 4% annually with rapid rate of return on investment. The annual value of the fast food business in Nigeria was N250 billion in 2015, which is approximately US$700 million. However, approximately 80% of fast food restaurants launched in Nigeria in 2014 failed to persist for longer than 5 years because of lack of survival strategies. Using the human capital theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies managers of fast food business use to survive for longer than 5 years. Participants were purposely selected for their experiences implementing survival strategies in their fast food business that enabled them to persist longer than 5 years. Data were collected via face-to-face semistructured interviews with 5 managers of fast food restaurants and the review of organizational documents and online ratings of the fast food restaurants. Data were analyzed using inductive coding of phrases, word frequency searches, and theme interpretation. Three themes emerged: employee development and training improved customer service, effective management of resources and people lead to business survival, and healthy food choice attracted customers and increased revenue. The findings of this study might influence social change by providing strategies for fast food businesses in Nigeria to persist longer than 5 years. When businesses are growing and surviving, they become profitable and contribute to the prosperity of the owners, employees, communities, and the government. These findings may benefit businesses and individuals as they implement the findings from this study.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my sweet and lovely wife, Katie Mae Ukorebi and our lovely children (Maelyn, Monson, McKay, MaLeah, and Micah). Thank you for inspiring and supporting me to pursue this academic excellence. I love you. I also dedicate this doctoral study to my mother – Grace Ukorebi. You are my rock and my pillar. Thank you for having the faith and the confidence in me.

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I am thankful for my sweet wife, Katie, and our lovely children. They all stood by me throughout this study. Finally, I am appreciative of the backing I received from my executive and administrative assistants – Bassey Essien Ukorebi, Ejiro Akpomudje, and Laura Udobong.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Fast food restaurants play an important role in the economy of Nigeria. The Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) reported that 80% of food producing enterprises in Nigeria do not have the management strategies necessary to survive beyond 5 years (Adebisi & Gbesi, 2013). Kirkpatrick et al. (2014) maintained that effective business strategies contribute to the survival of business ventures. The high rate of fast food business failures within the first 5 years of operation relates to the claim that some people embark on small business initiatives without adequate preparation (Williams & Williams, 2014). Ruetschlin (2014) claimed that some small business owners lack the strategies to survive in the fast food business beyond 5 years. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective business strategies that some fast food restaurant managers use to survive in their businesses beyond 5 years of operation.

Background of the Problem

Effective business strategies are integral to the survival of any business venture (Desroches, Hatch, & Lawson, 2014; Ruetschlin, 2014). Adopting effective business strategies in the fast food industry is paramount to the survivability of fast food business (Mann, Adebanjo, & Kehoe, 1998; Min & Min, 2013). The low-profit margins in the fast food industry stem from the failure of fast food restaurant managers to follow their effective business strategies (Min & Min, 2013). Fast food businesses may succeed if their managers follow effective business strategies in running their restaurants.

Many factors lead to why some fast food restaurant's managers need effective business strategies to survive beyond 5 years (Medeiros & Salay, 2013). The failure to follow the recommended strategies in the fast food industry contributes to fast food restaurants failing within this operational time period as well (Kim, 2016; Medeiros & Salay, 2013). Agwu (2014) identified fast food restaurant managers not having appropriate service delivery policies and standards as part of their effective business strategies as another reason that fast food restaurants may be failing. By exploring the business strategies that some fast food restaurant managers use to survive beyond 5 years, this study may provide insight to future fast food business managers on how to continue in their businesses over the aforementioned time period.

Problem Statement

The lack of effective business strategies may contribute to the failure of fast food restaurants in Nigeria (Adisa, Abdulraheem, & Mordi, 2014; Osakwe, 2016). Approximately 80% of fast food restaurants launched in Nigeria in 2014 failed to survive beyond 5 years (Sahagun & Vasquez-Parraga, 2014). The general business problem is that managers embark on small business initiatives without adequate preparation. The specific business problem is that some fast food business managers lack the strategies to survive beyond 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years. The sample population consisted of five fast food restaurant managers located in Lagos, Nigeria who have implemented effective business strategies in their fast food business and whose businesses have operated for more than

5 years. The results of the study may lead to increased understanding of the effective strategies necessary for managers of the fast food business to survive beyond 5 years, which could lead to social change by increasing the length of employment and thus strengthening local tax revenue.

Nature of the Study

I chose the qualitative method for this study. Qualitative researchers explore perceptions, insights, and processes more easily than those using either quantitative or mixed research methods (Yin, 2014). Merriam (2014) posited that qualitative research focuses on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those studied. A quantitative method is the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques (Baillie, 2015; Yin, 2016). Mixed method is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research in a single study or a longitudinal program of inquiry (Anastas, 2014; Yin, 2016). Researchers who conduct a qualitative study can gain insight, and an understanding of the phenomenon (Flick, 2015; Yin, 2016). Quantitative and mixed methods were not appropriate for this multiple case study because I could not achieve the desired results with the statistical and numeric data (Baillie, 2015).

There are four research designs to consider when conducting a qualitative study, which are ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, and a case study (Merriam, 2014). Ethnography is a design used to study a cultural group of people over a long period through interviews and observations (Yin, 2016). Narrative design is a design process used to collect extensive information about study participants to develop a biography or tell life stories (Todhunter, 2016).

The phenomenological research design is a process used to evaluate lived experiences of study participants regarding the phenomenon (Baillie, 2015). Yin (2016) indicated that the case study design is qualitative research that involves doing case studies or examining the relationship between a phenomenon and a single person or group in-depth and over time. Merriam (2014) concurred with Cronin and Yin that qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description, and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit using multiple data sources. I used a descriptive multiple case study design for this study. Descriptive means that the finished product of the case study is a rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2016). By selecting a descriptive, multiple case study design over ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology designs, I explored and gathered valuable information on multiple perspectives from a range of sources. This approach will strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Yin, 2016).

Research Question

The overarching research question for this multiple case study was the following:

RQ: What strategies do fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years?

Interview Questions

The interview questions for this study were as follows:

1. What management skills and knowledge do fast food business managers need to succeed in the business?

2. What business preparation and planning did you embark on before launching your fast food business?

3. What actions do you take to attract, satisfy, and retain your customers?

4. What strategies do you use to improve your organizational performance and sustainability?

5. What support services were available to you when you started the business?

6. How has competition impacted your business survival beyond 5 years?

7. What challenges have you faced in the startup and maintenance of your business?

8. What other experiences, not covered in this interview, would you like to share that might benefit future managers of fast food businesses?

Conceptual Framework

The human capital theory served as a conceptual framework for this multiple case study. Schultz introduced the human capital theory in 1960 (Schultz, 1961). However, the human capital theory became effective in resolving management issues in 1963 (Blaug, 1976). The human capital theory suggests that individuals and society derive economic benefits from investments in people (Schultz, 1961; Sweetland, 1996). Tan (2014) suggested that the organization's success over a period is an expression of its overall effectiveness in focusing on a methodological, empirical, practical, and moral aspect of the theory. Because an organization's resources and competition vary, the assessment of organizational effectiveness must be an open-ended multidimensional set of criteria. This viewpoint suggested that questions of organizational effectiveness in human development must be concerned with at least three strategic levels: the environment, the social organization as a system, and human development and participation within the organization.

Tan (2014) suggested that the human capital theory relates to organizational management and can focus on developing people. Tan (2014) supported the human capital theory as suitable for organizational management because it allows for the identification of effective business strategies in the industry that can lead to human development, which is vital for sustainable business survival. Schultz (1961) and Sweetland's (1961) propositions align with this study, which was to explore the strategies that fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years.

Operational Definitions

Behavioral intentions. Behavioral intentions might involve a customer's conative loyalty or a person who is likely to do something (Pick, Thomas, Tillmanns, & Krafft, 2016).

Family-owned business. A family-owned business is a business owned and operated by family members (Glover & Reay, 2015)

Fast food business. Fast food businesses are also known as quick service restaurants where getting a meal is quickly accessible with no bother of a long wait or hold up (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016).

Frequent customers. Frequent customers, in the context of the fast food industry, are customers who report patronizing fast food restaurants at least once a week and enjoy higher levels of service quality (Srivastava & Rai, 2014).

Service failure. Service-related difficulties or glitches that occur during a customer's experience with a company constitute service failures (Walle, 2016).

Superior service. Superior service is a high-level service to customers that enhances their satisfaction (Kurgunluoglu, 2014).

Sustainable strategies. Sustainable strategies are broad and pervasive changes in all business processes, from strategy formulation to the definition of operational plans (Mathus & Patodiya, 2016).

<div align="center">**Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**</div>

Assumptions

Assumptions are claims that researchers accept or speculate as true without tangible evidence (Dahan & Shham, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I made three assumptions in this study. The first assumption was that the responses from the interview questions would enable me to gather rich and thick data to answer the research questions. The second assumption was that participants would answer all interview questions honestly. The third assumption was that fast food business managers were the sole decision makers in the business and were largely responsible for the survival of the business beyond 5 years.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses that may affect the overall outcome of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study has four limitations. The first limitation of the study was the focus on the fast food business managers as the interview participants. Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) indicated that collecting data from a single occupational group and single organization may limit the generalizability of the results. The second limitation of this study was time constraints. Each participant had the same amount of time for the interview, and that did not

allow the participants to express themselves as desired. The third limitation of this study was the location of the establishments, which prevented me from exploring a higher number of participants in the study. The fourth limitation was my intention to administer both data collection and instrument at the same time, which may suggest bias in the result. The results of the findings may become biased when participants self-report measures for both independent and dependent variables occur without allowing sufficient time between data collection and instrument (de Clercq, Bouckenooghe, Raja, & Matsyborska, 2014).

Delimitations

Katz, Giordano, and Soto-Adames (2015) and Taylor (2014) explained that the delimitation of a study is the boundaries set by the researcher for the reader. There are two delimitations for this study. The first delimitation was that I geographically delimited this multiple case study to the fast food restaurants in Southwest Nigeria given the geographic vastness of the country. An attempt to extend the scope of the study beyond Southwest Nigeria would make the study significantly broad. The second delimitation was that I delimited the study to the following participants from each restaurant: (a) the general manager, (b) the operations manager, and (c) the chief financial officer. All participants for the study were senior managers who had worked in the fast food industry for over 5 years.

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Significance of the Study

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Contribution to Business Practice

Adisa et al (2014) mentioned that effective business strategies and human development might contribute to the survival of fast food restaurants beyond 5 years. The findings of this

study may enable managers of the fast food business in Nigeria to identify business strategies necessary for the survival of their business beyond 5 years of operation. To stay competitive, small business managers need to understand how their strategies for success can aid their business practices and increase their efficiency and effectiveness for longevity (Eniola & Ektebang, 2014; Min & Min, 2013). By gaining a more comprehensive understanding of business managers' perceptions of business strategies, I offered support and recommendations for other fast food businesses that could lead to the longevity of fast food business in Nigeria.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this qualitative multiple case study will influence positive social change in several ways. When fast food businesses can survive for more than 5 years, the economy may improve their performance and reduce the risk of business failure (Ruetschlin 2014). Fast food businesses that survive longer than 5 years may continue to strengthen the economy of the nation (Lussier & Corman, 2015). The findings from this study may contribute to the growth of the economy of Nigeria by reducing the unemployment rate and increasing sales tax revenues.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to gain a greater understanding of the effective business strategies fast food restaurants are following to survive in the fast food industry. Another purpose of this study was to research the factors responsible for why some fast food businesses failed before the first 5 years. The research problem of this study was the inability of some fast food restaurants in Southwest Nigeria to follow the effective business strategies fast food managers use to survive in their industry.

The overarching RQ for this multiple case study was: What strategies do fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years? I explored why some fast food businesses succeeded, and others failed within the first 5 years of business startup. In addition, data gathered from the literature review section of this study may raise awareness of the research in the field of fast food business about effective business strategies in the fast food industry.

I searched for fast food industry literature in several areas and databases, which provided some materials for review. The databases searched were (a) Business Source Complete, (b) Journal Articles, (c) PsycInfo, (d) ABI/INFORM Complete, (e) ProQuest Dissertations, (f) EBSCOhost, (g) Science Direct, and (h) Walden University online library resources. Search items included *small business ventures*, *strategic management, effective business strategies, successful fast food business, competitive advantage, survivability skills in business,* and *fast food business in Nigeria.*

There are over 250 references in this study. These references came from journals, books, seminars, and dissertations. Over 200 or 86% of the references are 5 years old or less by an anticipated graduation date of 2018. The literature review section of the multiple case study has over 160 references. Approximately 87% of the total references in the literature review section of the study are peer-reviewed and within 5 years or less of the anticipated graduation date of 2018.

The literature review section of this multiple case study covered a discussion of the conceptual framework for the research and themes about effective business strategies that managers of fast food businesses use to survive in the industry beyond 5 years. The categories for this study were (a) systems theory, (b) resource-based view theory, (c) competitive advantage

for food producers, (d) customer service, (e) employee training and orientation, (f) customer retention strategies, (g) food quality, (h) use of social media, and (i) cost of the menu and menu labeling. Although there is an extensive body of literature that addressed business strategies that may lead to satisfied customers and improved service quality, I concluded there was a gap in the literature on effective business strategies that fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years in Nigeria.

Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory was the conceptual framework for this multiple case study. The human capital theory came into existence in 1960 from Schultz. The theory became effective in resolving management issues in 1963 (Blaug, 1976). Human capital suggests that individuals and society derive economic benefits from investments in people (Schultz, 1961; Sweetland, 1996). Researchers used this theory to understand the relationship between human capital and the survival of businesses (Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly, & Maltrich, 2014 and Tan, 2014). Scholars determined that the human capital resources were beneficial in exploring the strategies that lead to surviving longer in business (Lauder, 2015 & Ployhart et al., 2014). The greatest strength of the human capital theory is helping employers understand how investment in humans can lead to sustainable business (Becker, 1993; Dimov & Shepherd, 2005).

Dimov and Shephard (2005) and Tan (2014) explained that investment in humans leads to education and experience, which results in improved performance for firms and business survival. The survival of an organization over a period is an expression of its overall effectiveness in focusing on developing people and empowering them to lead the organization to

success (McHenry, 2015; Nason & Wiklund, 2015). Lauder (2015) maintained that the more educated a person is, the more productive that person would be for an employer and organization.

The human capital theory has three significant assumptions. First, it is in the self-interest of individuals to pursue education because it will lead to higher economic returns, which forms the basis for aspiration and a sense of progress in the society. Second, education is fundamentally efficient because employers will not hire incompetent people. Third, the employer will respond to a better-educated workforce by investing in new technology to capitalize on the productive potential of a more skilled workforce (Lauder, 2015). In the study conducted by Dimov and Shephard (2005), their findings revealed that companies which invested in their employees were largely successful in comparison with those companies that did not. The general implication of the human capital theory is that more investment in humans is better (Dimov & Shepherd, 2005).

Since an organization's resources and competition vary, the assessment of organizational effectiveness must be an open-ended multidimensional set of criteria (Tan, 2014). This viewpoint suggested that questions of organizational effectiveness must be concerned with at least three strategic levels: the environment, the social organization as a system, and human participants within the organization (Tan, 2014). Understanding and applying the human capital theory may help in team development and firm performance, which may lead to the survival of small businesses (Dimov & Shepherd, 2005; Lauder, 2015).

Tan (2014) argued that the human capital theory relates to organizational management and is a strategy that can lead to business survival. Wang and Lysenko (2014) supported the

human capital theory as suitable for organizational management because it allows for the identification of effective business strategies in the industry that can lead to sustainable business survival. Schultz's (1961) and Sweetland's (1961) propositions align with this study of exploring the strategies that fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years. Tan (2014) argued that human capital theory can be effective in resolving business challenges and that the criticisms of the theory are fragmented and disorganized. The study by Dimov and Shepherd (2015) also showed some flaws that are contrary to expectations, in which some organizations that slightly invested in their employees did not survive long in business.

There are other theories that dealt with developing strategies that may lead to business survival. These theories include resource-based view theory, systems theory, and transformational leadership theory. I selected human capital theory because an employee's education is critical in the management of the resources, the customers, and the overall interest of the organization.

Resource-based view theory. The resource-based view theory (RBV) supports the human capital theory. Penrose (1959) developed RBV in 1959. Hassan, Yaacob, and Abdullatiff (2014) later expanded RBV. The resource-based theory is comparable to the general systems theory originally introduced by von Bertalanffy in 1937 and later extended in 1949 and 1972 (Drack & Schwarz, 2010; von Bertalanffy, 1972). RBV, like human capital theory, provides a theoretical model for explaining, predicting, and controlling business phenomena (Penrose, 1959; von Bertalanffy, 1972). RBV and human capital theory also provide strategies that apply

to any level of an organization (Drack & Schwarz, 2010; Hassan et al., 2014), and are useful for developing organizational strategies (Penrose, 1959; von Bertalanffy, 1972).

The key concepts and propositions of RBV involve competitive advantage. Business leaders can use the RBV theory to evaluate and enhance their competitive and survival strengths in business (Hassan et al., 2014). Penrose (1959) found that organizational resources are important to the survival of a firm. Kozlenkova, Samaha, and Palmatier (2014) observed that the resource-based view of organizations commenced in the 1980s and supports business survivability.

The RBV theory reveals that the solution to the success of a business is to adopt effective industry business strategies (Penrose, 1959). Penrose's (1959) RBV theory fits into an organization's effective business strategies (Cecchini, Leitch, & Strobel, 2013). Restaurants managers can develop effective business strategies that may lead to success through the RBV theory. RBV aligns closely with exploring the effective business strategies that are used by fast food restaurants to survive beyond 5 years in the industry. Fast food restaurant managers in Nigeria may be able to use the conceptual framework of this multiple case study to develop the effective business strategies they need survive in the business.

Several scholars have put the RBV theory in context and researched the theory. For example, Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996), Kor and Mahoney (2000), and Zheng, Chen, Huang, & Zhang (2013) maintained that RBV might support organizations to plan strategically for the survival of their businesses. RBV allows for the use of internal resources of an organization as a strategy to compete with business rivals and survive in the firm (Hassan et al.,

2014). Hassan et al. (2014) maintained that Penrose's (1959) contribution to the RBV theory promotes strategic management for businesses. Therefore, Penrose has influenced the modern resource-based view of strategic management. Rugman and Verbeke (2002) undermined the work of Penrose (1959) on the RBV theory, discrediting it as an invalid theory for strategic management. Hassan et al. (2014) disagreed with Rugman and Verbeke, stating that the RBV theory offers sound principles governing the rate at which firms can grow efficiently.

Systems theory. Systems theory forms a platform for explaining and predicting potential challenges that confront organization (Checkland, 2012). Systems theory could also serve as a tool that provides business managers the understanding of factors that lead to the survival of a fast food business. The systems theory involves the following categories: (a) interrelation, (b) decision making, (c) patterns, (d) interaction, (e) wholeness, and (f) structures (Adriaenssen, Johannesses, & Johannesssen, 2016). Adriaenssen et al. (2016) appraised systems theory on the social capacity for self-development and communication with both internal and external stakeholders.

Buowari (2015) used the systems theory in the study of the strategies managers of small businesses use to survive in the fast food business beyond 5 years. The study focused on small business failure and the factors successful business managers are using to survive in their industry longer than 5 years. With the use of systems theory, Buowari concluded that businesses in Nigeria may survive with the use of effective strategies, flexible financial capital management, human capital development, and stable power supply. Buowari indicated using systems theory

that small businesses can last longer than 5 years if entrepreneurs identify and prevent factors that may contribute to the failure of small businesses.

In another study, Bush (2016) used the systems theory to explore the factors used by small businesses to sustain operations beyond 5 years. Bush focused on small business failure and factors used by small business managers to develop and maintain viable and long-lasting businesses. The result of the study showed that some of the requirements for the survival of small businesses are capital, customer service, and good location.

The Fast Food Industry and the Challenges

In a recent report, Mathur and Patodiya (2016) described fast food restaurants (FFRs) as eateries known as quick service restaurants where vendors prepared food quickly and made it accessible with no bother of long waiting. Fast food includes the following components: minimal table service, fixed menus, and most ingredients prepared ahead of time (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016). Fast food restaurants play an important role in the economy of each nation (DiPietro, Cao, & Partlow, 2013).

Successful fast food restaurants contribute to the competitive advantage of a nation. Sigalas (2015) described competitive advantage as the isolated characteristics or particular properties of a product market that give a firm a positive competitive position as compared to other companies serving the product. The competitiveness of a nation addresses the cost structure of the economy in a nation in comparison with other economies in their exchange rate, the cost of capital, land, labor, and tax policies. Sigalas, using Porter's book on competitive advantage, referred to competitive advantage as the firm's ability to create superior values to customers in

the form of low prices, higher customer service, and faster delivery time. Solvell (2015)

evaluated competitive advantage as the competitiveness of a nation.

Fast food consumption has significantly increased due to the demographic changes and

cultural influence (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016). Daniel (2015) claimed that the rapid growth

of fast food industry is a result of factors such as consumer preference of fine dining, discount

offers, take-outs and delivery services. The growth of the fast food restaurants come with

challenges. Ninety percent of fast food business owners go out of business within the first 5

years of establishment due to inadequate knowledge on survival strategies (Parsa et al., 2015;

U.S. Small Business Administration, 2015). The high rate of fast food business failures within

the first 5 years of operation supports the claim that some people embark on small business

initiatives without adequate preparation (Williams & Williams, 2014).

The fast food industry in Nigeria. The fast food industry is a major contributor to the

economy of Nigeria (Mustapha, Fakokunde, & Awolusi, 2014). The annual value of the fast food

business in Nigeria was N250 billion in 2015, which is approximately US$700 million (Daniel,

2015). The Association of Fast Food and Confectioners of Nigeria (AFFCON) indicated that the

size of the fast food industry in Nigeria grows at the rate of 4% annually with the rapid rate of

return on investment (Mustapha et al., 2014). Mustapha et al. (2014) stated that the number of

fast food restaurants in Nigeria is increasing at a geometric rate and may double in 5 years. This

projection has lured many entrepreneurs into the fast food business without adequate preparation

on strategies required to succeed (Mustapha, Fakokunde, & Awolusi, 2014). However, the Small

and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) reported that 80% of food

producing enterprises in Nigeria do not have the management strategies necessary to survive beyond 5 years in business (Adebisi & Gbesi, 2013).

Retail business in Nigeria has fundamental challenges such as land, labor, importation, and utility costs. Despite that, the fast food restaurant sector (known as quick service or QSR) has experienced rapid growth. Nigeria has a large population of over 170 million; therefore, in a global context, the fast food sector has long-term potential (Oxford Business Group, 2017). Most investors in other industries forgo larger profits up front, exchanging them for smaller ones in the immediate future. However, the fast food industry offers a rapid profit turnaround. Some of the challenges are the same as those of other sectors (i.e., land, labor, import, and utility costs). What is singular for the Nigerian fast food sector, however, is balancing local food culture with that of international food preferences. At the same time, it is consistent in all franchise locations (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

Over 800 fast food outlets existed in Nigeria in 2014, and approximately 100 were small and medium-sized (Oxford Business Group, 2017). The Association of Fast Food and Confectioners of Nigeria (AFFCON) noted the businesses had revenues of N200 Billion ($1.22 Billion). AFFCON's president, Bose Ayeni reported that employees numbered over half a million with more than 500,000 workers employed (Oxford Business Group, 2017). Different sources have a variety of definitions of the nature of a fast food business. The U.S. Department of Commerce's Commercial Service researched 290 fast food units. Three firms, including Food Concepts (the parent company of Chicken Republic), Mr. Bigg's, and Tantalizers were the major firms in the market in Nigeria (Oxford Business Group, 2017). The research revealed that

compared to other economic sectors, the fast food industry in Nigeria had the highest level of women leading companies. One such leader is Kehinde Kamson of AFFCON, who founded Sweet Sensations, with over 28 franchises.

Challenges in the fast food industry in Nigeria. Adisa et al. (2014) indicated that there are five challenging factors affecting business survival including the fast food industry. The factors are: (a) lack of adequate funding for the business and human development; (b) poor record keeping and information management; (c) inability to distinguish business capital from personal money; (d) lack of crucial infrastructural facilities, and (e) lack of proper business and management skills/knowledge. Each factor poses a threat to the survival of fast food business in Nigeria.

Lack of adequate funding for the business and human development. The problem of funding is one of the five major themes discovered in the study conducted by (Adisa et al., 2014). The findings of the study indicated that funding is the principal reason small businesses including fast food restaurants are failing (Adisa et al., 2014). Tan (2014) concurred with Adisa et al. (2014) that the issue of inadequate funding for small businesses in Nigeria is twofold; (a) problem of securing adequate funding to start-up the business, (b) lack of funding to sustain and upgrade the business. Inadequate funding affects the training of employees and their performance (Tan, 2014; Lauder, 2015).

Poor record keeping and information management. Adisa et al. (2014) indicated that poor record keeping and lack of information management are very pronounced among Nigerian small businesses including the fast food business. The phenomena contribute to why some fast

food restaurants cannot survive beyond 5 years after initial startup. The overwhelming majority interviewed in Nigeria do not prioritize record keeping, and very few who kept records do so unprofessionally (Adisa et al., 2014).

Inability to distinguish business capital from personal money. The majority of small business enterprises, including fast food businesses, are failing because of the inability of the managers to separate business capital from their profits (Blair & Marcum, 2015). Most of the small businesses in Nigeria, including fast food restaurants, do not have proper accounting systems, which is threatening their business performance and survival (Olatunji, 2013). Financial management is one of the biggest challenges affecting the survival of fast food businesses in Nigeria (Olatunji, 2013).

Lack of crucial infrastructural facilities. Olatunji (2013) indicated that lack of adequate infrastructure may threaten the survival of fast food business. The availability or non-availability of infrastructural facilities can determine the success or failure of fast food businesses in Nigeria (Olatunji, 2013). Nigeria is the panacea for infrastructure deficit, which has caused diminishing interests of both local and foreign private investors (Babatunde, Perera, Zhou, & Udeaja, 2015).

Lack of proper business and management skills/knowledge. Most of the business owners in Nigeria, including restauranteurs, do not have the basic education and skills required to succeed in business (Olatunji, 2013). Lack of proper business and management skills threaten the survival of fast food business in Nigeria (Adisa et al., 2014). Approximately 80% of fast food restaurants launched in Nigeria in 2014 failed to survive beyond 5 years because of inadequate business knowledge (Sahagun & Vasquez-Parraga, 2014).

Management Strategies for Surviving in the Fast Food Business

Organizational or management strategies are commercial or professional procedures accepted as the industry standard (Slack, 2015). Researchers have explored many strategies to improve their chances for business success, specifically in customer service area (So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016). Effective business strategies are required for a fast food restaurant to operate successfully (Adisa et al., 2014; Medeiros & Salay, 2013). Desroches et al. (2014) indicated the need for the adoption and implementation of effective business strategies in organizations to meet the mutual benefits of employees, management, and customers.

Developing and implementing the right strategies are the key decisions managers must take. Kim (2016) maintained that managers in the main administrative positions must decide which strategies are the best for their organizations. The development and understanding of effective business strategies and their salient attributes such as customer service and benefits are necessary for all parties (Desroches et al., 2014; Min & Min, 2013). Implementing such customer service strategies involve the understanding of which approach is the most effective and cost-efficient for the business (Kim, 2016) Ibrahim, Dumas, and McGuire (2015) and Spiess et al. (2014) have noted that following effective business strategies may lead to satisfied and loyal customers whose continued patronage is essential to the survival of the fast food business.

Good customer service. Fullerton (2014) indicated that customers are unlikely to return if a service provider delivers a level of service quality that falls below their expectations. Therefore, fast food restaurant managers must improve the quality of customer service to retain their customers. Given the increasing competition among fast food restaurants, enticing new

customers can no longer guarantee business survival, while keeping existing customers is undoubtedly profitable (Eniola & Ektebang, 2014).

Existing customers who are satisfied with the quality service they receive may not only return for the same service, but they may also promote the organization's services to others, thereby bringing in new customers (So et al., 2016). These new existing customers increase the organization's revenues. A. H. Liu et al. (2016) argued that there must be a combination of customer satisfaction, service quality, and perceived value to achieve customer retention.

Customer service is a critical aspect of effective business strategies in the fast food restaurant. Fast food restaurant managers need effective customer service skills to compete in the industry. Medeiros and Salay (2013) conducted a study to identify the important factors that predict a consumer's purchase intention of food service. The study took place in Scopus, Scielo, and the Web of Science from April 1, 2010, to August 25, 2011. Medeiros and Salay used a theoretical model as a basis to research the study. Results revealed that using the following leads to the survival of business ventures: (a) effective strategies, (b) service speed, (c) affordable prices, and (d) food quality. Customer service strategies lead to superior perceived value, customer satisfaction, and favorable perceptions of corporate image that positively affect repeat patronage (Khodakarami & Chan, 2014). Khan, Hussain, and Yaqoob (2013) indicated that customer service strategies influence service quality and customer satisfaction in a fast food business.

Khan et al. (2013) researched the food industry in Peshawar, Pakistan to determine the customer service strategies that may lead to the survival of a fast food business. Results

suggested that failure or survival of a fast food business depends on following the most effective business strategies of the industry such as promotion, service quality, meeting customer expectations, physical environment, price, and taste of the menu items (Khan et al., 2013).

Fast food restaurant managers may adopt and implement customer service strategies to address customer needs and satisfaction to enjoy a competitive edge (Eniola & Ektebang, 2014). They need to consider key points in strategy formulation, including affordability in designing strategy, the image in positioning strategy, and promotional strategies (Kim, 2016). Fast food restaurants that provide quality service can easily meet their survival goals (Mahatma, Bakti, & Sumaedi, 2015).

Customer service strategies are actions that provide patterns for achieving success and survivability of any establishment. Chen (2014) indicated that customer service strategies are actions that achieve the goals of any business establishment. Chen, Zhu, and Zhou (2015) indicated that business owners must continue to review and modify their strategies to include new patterns of running their businesses for survival. Cordeiro (2013) conducted a study on effective business strategies and their relationship to business survival. Cordeiro observed that some business owners, including managers of fast food restaurants, often do not understand the customer service strategies of their industry that lead to survival. Marx (2016) concurred with the findings of Cordeiro that the lack of effective business strategies and following customer service skills are responsible for why some businesses, including fast food restaurants, are failing. Intense competition, which is the key to a sustainable competitive advantage, lies in following customer service strategies that may result in satisfied customers (Skarzynski, Crosswhite, &

Jones, 2014). Satisfied customers contribute to the reasons that some fast food businesses survive the intense competition in the industry.

Customer service refers to the activities carried out to enhance the quality of service to customers and to improve their satisfaction (Kurgunluoglu, 2014). Customer service is the primary driver of customer satisfaction, which increases competitive advantage and organizational survivability (Kessler, Pachucki, Stummer, Mair, & Binder, 2015). Additionally, Piekkari (2015) noted that placing customer's external and internal needs above every other need in an organization yields dividends.

For top-notch service, the fast food restaurant managers must have good customer service strategies (Sivakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014). Service plays an important role in customer satisfaction and retention, which should be the primary responsibility of all parties involved in running a business (Lockett & Wild, 2014). Sivakumar, Li, and Dong (2014) suggested that good strategies could have a positive influence on customer satisfaction. On the other hand, customers are dissatisfied and disloyal when expectations exceed outcomes (Sivakumar, Li, & Dong, 2014).

Fast food business managers are expected to strive to attain a higher level of customer service to improve customer retention and sales (Izogo & Ogba, 2015). Bilgihan, Seo, and Choi (2017) and Pizam et al. (2016) evaluated the effect of customer service on customer satisfaction and loyalty and concluded every business needs both to survive. Customer service is efficient in achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty; other dimensions such as product quality and perceived value are equally important for business survival (Robson, 2015). Fast food business managers have also failed to identify customer service qualities, and behaviors considered

valuable to clients. Dutta et al. (2014) indicated that food, physical environment, and quality service lead to repeat patronage.

Izogo and Ogba (2015) investigated the effect of perceived service quality and perceived value of customer satisfaction. Results showed that perceived value is a mediating factor in perceived quality and customer satisfaction. Perceived value has a strong positive effect on customer satisfaction (Izogo & Ogba, 2015). Robson (2015) indicated that improving customer service is relevant to the survival of the fast food business. Fast food managers may develop new effective business strategies that align with the industry's goals to improve customer satisfaction and retention (Glover & Reay, 2015; Meiseberg & Dant, 2015).

Agwu (2014) indicated that customer service is an important strategic approach intertwined with organizational commitment, communication, and employee satisfaction. Identifying the qualities and behaviors that communicate good service quality is a strategic tool for attaining operational efficiency and improved business performance (Robson, 2015). Fast food restaurant managers must identify customer conditions and behaviors considered valuable to the customers to establish service delivery, policies, and standards (Robson, 2015). Agwu (2014) opined that efficient customer service is a critical part of effective business strategies and is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage in the fast food business.

A typical fast food business operator must have the following customer service knowledge to survive in the business: (a) conscientiousness, (b) optimism, (c) intrinsic motivation, (d) tender-mindedness, (e) deference, (f) conventionality, (g) willingness to serve other people, and (h) amenability to working long hours or becoming a workaholic (Lounsbury

et al., 2012). The quality of interpersonal interactions between frontline service employees and customers is a critical component in creating a customer service experience that may lead to business survival (Asaolu, Adedokun, & Monday, 2016).

Aguilar-Morales et al. (2013) indicated that the essential business strategies that influence customer perceptions of service quality are reliability (i.e., employees provide consistent service), empathy (i.e., employees show a sincere interest), responsiveness (i.e., employees are willing to help), assurance (i.e., employees instill confidence), and tangibles (i.e., physical aspects of the service environment). For example, successful fast food business managers care about the quality of service and the customers' dining experience. Experienced fast food business managers usually develop a good relationship with the customers.

Customer service training. Effective customer service training is a critical part of the strategy to survive in the fast food business (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015). Similarly, Umar, Hanudin, and Shahrullail (2016) indicated that practical strategies, management, and training are essential for surviving in the fast food business. In the fast food industry, compliance with previous service standards may not yield the level of improvement necessary to become a formidable market competitor. Therefore, fast food restaurants need to improve their compliance with effective business strategies by always training their staff to be customer service oriented (Umar, Hanudin, & Shahrullail, 2016). However, fast food restaurants may not survive beyond 5 years unless their employees gain an understanding of what the leading competitors do in the market as well as best and current service practices (Umar,

Hanudin, & Shahrullail, 2016). Customer service employees provide clients with valuable clues about a company's service quality (Jahanshani et al., 2014).

Marx (2016) suggested training for fast food employees as key for fast food restaurants to achieve reliability, responsiveness, and assurance. Employee training is key to surviving in a competitive business environment; therefore, managers must invest more resources in this strategy (Hsieh & Yeh, 2015). Training is an aspect of a worker's psychology that guides their on-the-job perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Padachi, 2016). Kessler et al. (2015) indicated that the orientation of individual service employees enhances customers' perceptions of mutual benefits in patronizing the restaurant and ultimately contributes to customers' long-term relationship orientation toward the restaurant. Training improves employees' performance and leads to the survival of the organization (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015).

Piekkari (2015) concluded that the strategy the employees need to attract customers is training on reliability, responsiveness, credibility, competence, access, courtesy, communication, security, understanding, and tangibility. Fast food restaurant operators must train their employees on these ten qualities to have a high-quality customer base and increase the chances of surviving in the business (Piekkari, 2015).

Training employees to own assigned responsibilities allow them to perform to the best of their abilities and follow the effective business strategies of the industry (Arham, 2014; Miri, Mansor, Chasempour, &Anvari, 2014). Psychological ownership is the state of emotional connection employees have toward the organization and their employers (Arham, 2014). Jehanzeb, Hamid, and Rasheed (2015) indicated that employee training to align with the

organization's goals is an important business survival strategy for every organization. Lechner and Gudmundsson (2014) noted that without adequate training for the employees, the feeling of ownership could not emerge because employees are not personally motivated and self-identified with the goals of the organization.

Goussinsky (2015) argued that negative feelings reduce when employees are trained to understand and take ownership of assigned tasks. Goussinsky noted that if fast food employees get the training they deserve, it may lead to their experiencing more pleasant moods, which then prompt positive emotions in the direction of customers.

When leaders focus on training employees on task completion and employee compliance and rely heavily on organizational rewards and discipline, such strategies influence employees positively, and the level of performance accelerates (Tracey et al., 2015). When fast food employees are trained to focus on task completion and compliance with the industry standard, quality service may improve and enhance the growth of the fast food business (Goussinsky, 2015). Umar, Hanudin, and Shahrullail (2016) stated that a low-quality relationship between managers and their employees could be detrimental because the harmful relationship contributes to employees' negative emotions that may lead to hostility in service interactions.

Inadequate training of employees by their supervisors may negatively influence employees' performance and the overall success of the organization (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). When supervisors provide adequate training for their employees, the training supports directors; thereby, they reciprocate by maintaining a positive job attitude (Namasivayam, Guchait, & Lei, 2014). Supervisors need to provide necessary coaching and help subordinates to fulfill their job

responsibilities better (Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Swain, 2014). Therefore, supervisory training can act as a type of employment resource that facilitates employee customer orientation (Umar, Hanudin, & Shahrullail, 2016).

Namasivayam et al. (2014) indicated that upper-level supervisors' training might help employees to reduce work stress and improve psychological well-being. Service employees who feel supported and adequately trained may have more inner resources to deal with difficult customers and meet customer needs. Supervisors not only motivate and coach service employees on how they can best satisfy the needs of the customers, but they also act as role models, trainers, and mentors for service (Umar, Hanudin, & Shahrullail, 2016). When customers are satisfied because of good leadership and quality customer service resulting from the adequate training of employees, the company become successful, profits accelerate, and the business survives failure (Jehanzeb et al., 2015; Walle, 2016).

Employee orientation. Namasivayam et al. (2014) defined employee orientation as the importance fast food operators place on employee growth and development regarding the service offerings and the extra service and efforts workers put in to satisfy their customers. Service employee orientation creates effective leadership and provides effective business strategies used by owners of small businesses to survive in the industry (Liu et al., 2014). Padachi (2016) conceptualized employee orientation as a work value.

Employee orientation also aids service employees in addressing major challenges, such as handling customer complaints and resolving interactional conflict, which in turn leads to improved customer relations, more customer retention, and word-of-mouth referrals (Jehanzeb,

Hamid, & Rasheed, 2015; Lounsbury et al., 2012). Employees are the most valuable asset of any organization because they can make or break the business if valuable and constant training are lacking (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016). Training service employees are essential to the development of customer-oriented workers (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016; McFarland et al., 2014).

Gazzoli et al. (2013) and Namasivayam et al. (2014) studied employee service orientation, and results showed that employee orientation positively predicts several important customer outcomes. These findings include customers' perceived service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer affective commitment to the organization. Hence, organizational leaders need to understand how to enhance employee customer orientation. High customer-oriented service workers build long-term customer relationships, display low-pressure sales tactics, pay attention to customers' needs, and solve customers' problems (Namasivayam et al., 2014).

Employees who are customer service-oriented are more willing to put time and effort into maintaining good customer relationships rather than focusing on increasing sales (Korschun et al., 2014). When a good relationship exists between service employees and customers, customers are likely to have a positive service experience (Gazzoli et al., 2013). A positive service experience means that when a customer has identified with a service employee with a customer-oriented attitude, the customer may likely feel satisfied with the employee's service delivery and respond by rating employee service performance favorably (Namasivayam et al., 2014). Therefore, employee-customer orientation enhances customer assessment of service performance. Namasivayam et al. (2014) indicated that service employees with high customer

orientation tend to engage in service-oriented behaviors during service interactions. When employees are well trained, they offer excellent customer service that keeps customers happy and satisfied (Gazzoli et al., 2013).

An employee's characteristics are of particular importance in a service setting where, very often, the frontline employee is the only point of contact with the customer (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015). If the key person in the restaurant fails to understand customer needs, the quality of the service delivery process is at stake (Kessler et al., 2015). The communication between the employee and customer is a vital hint in shaping a customer's service quality perceptions (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016). When interacting with clients with diverse needs, the service employee's attitude is likely to be a major determinant affecting service performance (Žemgulienė, 2015). The high-quality interaction between frontline employees and customers is likely to affect a customer's consumption experience positively (Gazzoli, Hancer, & Kim, 2013).

Job training and organizational commitment are key drivers of employee performance (Georgiadis & Pitelis, 2016). A highly customer-oriented service employee is capable of developing close relationships with customers, thus making them feel special and retaining a connection with the restaurant (Kessler et al., 2015). Customer orientation improves job outcomes, enhances frontline employees' psychological welfare, and is good for business (Padachi, 2016).

Food quality and healthfulness. In most cases, customers take into account the food, quality, ambiance, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, assurance, and price in assessing their satisfaction with the entire restaurant encounter (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). Failure to

deliver quality food can threaten the fast food restaurant's long-term survival. Agarwal and Dahm (2015) identified food quality as the most important factor affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty. The taste of food on the menu, appearance, presentation of food, food healthfulness, and food diversity are important to different customers (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015).

Food healthfulness has also become paramount among other food attributes (Kirkpatrick et al., 2014). Anzman-Frasca et al. (2015) indicated that when food is healthful, it increases value and customer satisfaction. This feeling of satisfaction serves as a predictor of intention to patronize. Food choice is crucial to health-conscious customers who place importance on healthy lifestyle and value nutritional products (Kirkpatrick et al., 2014). Gaber and Wright (2014) suggested that advertising more nutritional options and lowering prices may encourage consumers to purchase healthier foods.

Food quality, physical environment, and employee services are effective business strategies in forming perceptions of the restaurant experience and overall service quality that leads to business survival (Kirkpatrick et al., 2014). Good food is an essential strategy for customer satisfaction and repeated patronage decisions in the restaurant industry (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Thus, priority in maintaining and improving high food quality rather than saving costs is critical to establishing a favorable image. The quality of food can influence the customer's patronage preference, and the excellence of food products and services help to enhance the customers' preferences to either buy more of the products or purchase other services.

Medeiros and Salay (2013) indicated that food quality and taste are important factors of choice in all types of food service, including fast food restaurants. Aung and Chang (2014) argued that customers might perceive food quality to be high if it is nutritious, delicious to the taste, and visually attractive. Food taste is a critical food quality attribute considered most important to the fast food restaurant customer's impressions of service (Aung & Chang, 2014). Tasty food can satisfy a person's hunger, which influences restaurant satisfaction and future purchase intentions (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). Lockett and Wild (2014) added that the restaurant's image might be influenced with good food, quality service, and pleasant surroundings.

Fast food quality is the most important factor that affects a restaurant's image, which in turn affects customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and the intention to return and spread positive word-of-mouth (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Fast food quality is the most important strategy influencing customer's repatronage decisions and an influential element of customer loyalty (Aung & Chang, 2014). Mascarello et al. (2015) indicated that the taste and presentation of food, varieties of the menu, and healthful options determine food quality.

Ensuring customer satisfaction and retention. Fast food businesses should have as their primary focus the task of satisfying and retaining their customers that lead to business survival (Dabholkar, 2015). Dabholkar (2015) concurred with Fullerton that customer retention is one of the most significant results a fast food operator can achieve because it increases the profit margin of the business and leads to business survival. Customer retention is the customer's intention to repurchase a service from the service provider (Liu, Leach, & Pelton, 2016).

Customer retention leads to an acceleration of cash flow, an increase in the volume of cash flow, and a reduction in risk associated with cash flow (Spiess et al., 2014). Focusing on customer retention, in turn, implies some important managerial and financial implications (Coussement, 2014). First, through customer retention, organizations can better serve their current customer base by building and maintaining relationships, rather than expanding efforts to recruit new customers (Coussement, 2014). Second, long-lasting customers spend more with companies, provide new word-of-mouth referrals if satisfied, and are less costly to serve because the company has more knowledge about them (Coussement, 2014). Third, long-term customers are less prone to competitive marketing actions (Coussement, 2014). Fourth, losing customers leads to opportunity costs and missed possibilities to cross or upsell products while also increasing the necessary costs to attract new customers (Coussement, 2014).

Herstad et al. (2013) indicated that customer retention strategies are a vital key to improving relationships with customers, and thus, an enhanced relationship with one's customers can lead to long-term survival of the business. A service provider–such as a fast food restaurant, which provides expert service, effectively handles complaints and shows professionalism–is likely to have more satisfied customers that make the business survive beyond 5 years. Employees' activities within a fast food company enable a connection between the company and its customers (Mpofu & Hlatywayo, 2015). So et al. (2016) argued that an employee's ability to retain customers contributes to the survival of the business.

Agarwal and Dahm (2015) argued that customer satisfaction is an essential element for obtaining customer loyalty that is necessary for financial success in a fast food restaurant. Yu et

al. (2014) indicated that satisfied customers tend to be loyal, thereby leading to customer retention and increased revenue generation. In many cases, customer loyalty may not be enough and is not the only factor that considerably influences business success.

According to Yee et al. (2013), customer satisfaction is an evaluation of a product or service regarding whether the product or service has met the customer's requirements and expectations. Customer satisfaction occurs when the customer's expectations are met or exceeded by using the product or services (Cook & Wolverton, 2015). Yee et al. (2013) further indicated that customer satisfaction reflects the customers' perceptions of their consumption experiences. Customer satisfaction is an important aspect of the fast food business (Parsa et al., 2015). It is crucial because satisfied customers can generate long-term benefits for companies, including customer loyalty and survival of the business (Cook & Wolverton, 2015). These long-term benefits include customer retention, financial performance, and stock market performance (Parsa et al., 2015).

Merlo (2015) argued that service quality affects customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction leads to a firm's survival in high contact service industries such as the fast food industry (Parsa et al., 2015). Likewise, Merlo claimed that customer loyalty depends on satisfaction. When customers are unhappy due to inadequate services, it affects the level of their patronage (Parsa et al. 2015). On the other hand, when they are very satisfied, accordingly, the rate of their support and loyalty increase significantly (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Fast food operators who ensure that their customers are always satisfied are likely to enjoy repeated patronage from their customers (Ertekin & Pelton, 2015).

When customers are satisfied and retained, the profit of fast food restaurants will rise, and the business may survive beyond 5 years (Liu et al., 2016). When fast food restaurant customers get more for their money, they become satisfied, and repeated patronage is assured (Yee et al., 2013). Such patronage keeps the business thriving and strong, thereby reducing the failure rate (Liu et al., 2016). Furthermore, customer satisfaction involves the joy a person derives from getting a service that is beyond the customer's expectations (Sandoval-Caraveo, LópezParra, Surdez-Pérez, Aguilar-Morales, & Corral-Coronado, 2014). Parsa et al. (2015) pointed out that good service quality may satisfy the various demands of the customer, which means that customer satisfaction is the overall valuation of the services provided by the fast food operators to the customers.

Customer satisfaction relies on the employees' ability to exceed customers' expectations (Robson, 2015). Fast food restaurants need to measure employees' skills and follow effective business strategies that match customer expectations (Robson, 2015). According to Khan et al. (2013), fast food managers may also consider developing new interview tactics that align with the organization's strategies that would allow them to assess employees' skills, personal attitudes, and their commitment to excellent service. Having an evaluation of customer feedback may help to increase customer satisfaction levels and meet the organization's survival goals (Robson, 2015).

Korschun et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of a positive interaction between customers and frontline employees to customer satisfaction and organizational survivability. Customer satisfaction is one of the factors affecting customer loyalty and organizational

performance (Robson, 2015). Thus, fast food managers must apply the strategy of knowledge of service performance to customer satisfaction to improve sales. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2013) examined the critical survival factors in the fast food industry in the region of Peshawar, Pakistan, collecting data on customer satisfaction from Kentucky Fried Chicken, Chief, Arbain Chick, and Pizza Hut. Their findings suggested that customer satisfaction strategies are critical factors to surviving in the fast food industry.

Customers perceived service quality and perceived value relate to customer satisfaction (Parsa et al., 2015). Parsa et al. (2015) asserted that perceived value is an important factor in customers' evaluation of satisfaction. Top-notch services yield customer satisfaction and retention (Subramanian, Gunasekaran, & Gao, 2016). Evaluation of service satisfaction is a form of attitude indicating the customer's judgment about a fast food restaurant's overall excellence (Prentice, 2014). This evaluation is essential to understand the effective business strategies used to survive in the fast food industry in Nigeria (Aguilar-Morales et al., 2013). Evaluating customer satisfaction has unique effects on the retention of customers (Prentice, 2014). Prentice (2013) indicated that building and following effective business strategies is one means of evaluating fast food customer satisfaction.

Examination of service delight is required to evaluate the satisfaction rate of fast food customers. Oliver (1980) indicated that there must be a differentiation between *delight* and *satisfaction*, and the causes and effects of customer delight. When evaluating satisfaction, if the result is above average, then the fast food restaurant managers should deploy resources to delight rather than satisfy customers (Oliver, 1980). Service satisfaction falling below expectations

indicates that negative disconfirmation has occurred, which is noticeable enough to affect customer satisfaction (Oliver, 1980). Chandler and Lusch (2014) concurred with Oliver that if service performance is not as good as the customer expected there might be a negative disconfirmation that leads to dissatisfaction. In most cases, service is mainly intangible and often requires the customer to be present during the process.

Implementing customer loyalty programs. Customer loyalty makes the frontline employees a vital channel between companies and their respective customer bases. Customer loyalty is an essential component of a company's long-term viability or sustainability. Therefore, there is a need for adequate orientation of the employees to achieve sales, profitability, and growth (Padachi, 2016). A customer loyalty program is a critical part of effective business strategies for marketing that leads to the survival of any business (Zakaria et al., 2014). Zakaria et al. (2014) defined customer loyalty programs as a structured marketing strategy that aims to enhance customer loyalty by rewarding their repeat purchase behavior. Many organizations' primary goals include developing a strategy for retaining existing customers (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013). Organizations acknowledge that customer retention through loyalty program is increasingly important as markets become saturated and highly competitive (Zakaria et al., 2014).

Al-Tit (2015) maintained that customers could tell the difference between being loyal to the company and being faithful to the loyalty program. A customer loyalty program functions as a strategy to influence customer's purchase intentions. Increasing commitment to a loyalty program rather than to the company behind the program can cause severe financial loss to the

business (Wang, Lewis, Cryder, & Sprigg, 2016). Customer loyalty programs happen because of customer satisfaction (Stathopoulou, & Balabanis, 2016).).

Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty programs both lead to customer retention (Yee et al., 2013). A customer loyalty program primarily attracts customers to particular fast food restaurants and once inside the fast food restaurant, they spend more money (Al-Tit, 2015). Increasingly, fast food restaurant managers are recognizing the need for cultivating customer loyalty programs into their strategy to attract and retain customers so that profit can accelerate, and the business can survive for years (Sahagun & Vasquez-Parraga, 2014).

A customer loyalty program need not be expensive to be effective. According to Choi and Kim (2013), positive word of mouth is an inexpensive business strategy. It often works because of the efforts of retaining customers who are happy and satisfied with the fast food company and its menu. Skarzynski et al. (2014) argued that customer satisfaction is one of the most important strategic tools used for building a brand's image in the fast food industry, thus resulting in customer retention.

Dorotic, Bijmolt, and Verhoef (2012) discussed the effects of the points-pressure mechanism in customer loyalty programs. The pressure point mechanism addresses the thresholds of accumulated purchases. In fast food restaurant settings, customers get points based on the number of times they dine at the restaurants or amount of money spent when dining. Cook and Wolverton (2015) stated that customer loyalty significantly relates to service quality, which in turn affects customer satisfaction and ultimately leads to firm survivability in a high contact service industry.

Proper menu labeling and cost of the menu. Two factors that can promote any fast

food business is revealing the cost and the contents of the menu (Fullerton, 2014). Ozdemir and

Caliskan (2014) opined that menu is an instructor that dictates (i) the type and quantity of the

food, (ii) what ingredients is in the meal, and (iii) what qualifications the restaurants should have.

However, in some restaurants in Nigeria, this information (menu and cost of the menu) are not

available to customers until they request for it (Olatunji, 2013; Adisa et al., 2014).

Fullerton (2014) indicated that customers are eager to make an informed decision about

their health and the kind of food they consume. Detailed menu labeling that is straightforward

can attract and retain potential customers of any fast food restaurant (Feldman et al., 2017; Ohri-

Vachaspati et al., 2015). The lack of menu awareness negatively affects the survival of fast food

businesses (Filimonau & Krivcova, 2017).

Orel and Kara (2014) argued that price, convenience, and availability might increase

customer satisfaction. Thus, when customers perceive the price to be reasonable, satisfaction

with food quality may also increase the customer's perception of satisfaction (Agarwal & Dahm,

2015; Scozzafava et al., 2017). Reasonable prices serve as a moderator variable in increasing the

effect of food quality on satisfaction.

Besides, customers' perception of affordable prices in the fast food restaurants may

enhance the effects of quality of service on customer satisfaction (Orel & Kara, 2014). Martínez

and del Bosque (2013) noted that customer satisfaction is also affected by the price of the items

present on the menu because the price is the factor that has the supremacy in attracting or

repelling customers. If prices are low, it may be a question of the restaurant's ability to deliver

product and service quality (Sandoval-Caraveo et al., 2014). In contrast, if prices are high,

customers are likely to expect high quality. If the price is greater than customer expectations,

customer satisfaction is adversely affected. Thus, price fairness is an important issue that

ultimately leads to satisfaction. Price plays a major role in fast food selection and a similar role

in the formation of repurchase intentions (Martínez & del Bosque, 2013).

Kirkpatrick et al. (2014) indicated that customers could become insensitive to the cost of

fast food if the food quality is satisfactory. Preparing food the way customers enjoy it may lure

them back for many return visits (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). On the other hand, customers may

complain to others if dissatisfied (Kirkpatrick et al., 2014). Lee-Kwan et al. (2015) concluded

that some consumers do not consider price when making purchases because they care more about

the quality of the food.

Ohri-Vachaspati et al. (2015) noted that providing customers with an educational tool to

help them make informed choices about their health and the food they consume could lead to

customer retention. Menu labeling at the point of food purchase allows the customer to evaluate

the contents of the food they plan to consume and ultimately decide whether to patronize the fast

food restaurant or not (Dutta, 2014). Customers are more comfortable with both food vendors

and restaurants when they are aware of the nutritional content, food quality, and the value of the

meal they consume (Ohri-Vachaspati et al., 2015).

Kirkpatrick et al. (2014) demonstrated that menu innovativeness has a positive effect on

customer retention. Agarwal and Dahm (2015) argued that food quality may not be enough to

attract and maintain restaurant customers. However, Parsa et al. (2015) reasoned that quality and

reasonable cost are imperative. In a study conducted in King County, Washington, Chen et al. (2015) stated that the customer base would triple because of nutritional facts disclosure in the food labeling.

In two separate surveys conducted by Wootan (2007) and Caravan Opinion Research Group (2008), 78% of customers advocated for menu labeling and considered menu labeling as an important strategy of running a fast food restaurant without failure. Wootan and Osborn (2006) stated that about 80% of customers want nutritional information availability. Another 48% stated that at one time or another, nutritional labeling had altered their patronage of a fast food restaurant. Pulos and Leng (2010) conducted a study demonstrating that more than 71% of customers who carefully evaluated the nutritional information on the menu and ordered a nutritional item on the menu did patronize the fast food restaurant in the future. Wootan and Osborn (2006) and Bleich et al. (2015) all concurred that fast food restaurants without menu labeling were not as effective as those restaurants with nutritional labeling.

Agarwal and Dahm (2015) suggested that fast food restaurants should follow effective business strategies, such as reverse engineering and elimination of extra costs, to prevent price increases. Additionally, they can investigate competitors' prices and consider them in their pricing strategies (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Hanaysha (2016) indicated that price differentiation plays a critical part in customer decisions to choose restaurants in which to dine.

Attractive physical environment. The physical environment can have a significant effect on the overall perception of the service encounter that, in turn, affects customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry (Cook & Wolverton, 2015). The better the physical design

and appearance of the restaurant, the greater the level of satisfaction. The quietude of the restaurant environment contributes to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). A peaceful and agreeable space creates a restaurant atmosphere where customers can enjoy privacy and comfort. Parsa et al. (2015) argued that employee service orientation and quality customer service enhance customer satisfaction. The fast food restaurant image is the consumers' perception or definition of a fast food firm judging from the relevant attributes of the restaurant, including the physical structure (Agu, Kalu, & Agaeze, 2017).

Kirkpatrick et al. (2014) indicated that atmospherics are an important part of the dining experience and reported that they influence customers' emotions and expectations regarding service and food quality. Usually, a customer first perceives the atmospherics when he or she enters a restaurant, which occurs before the delivery of any actual services or meals (Herstad et al., 2013; Tuzunkan & Albayrak, 2016). Thus, the emotions created by the perception of the atmospherics may affect the customer's reaction to the actual services and meals in restaurants. Kirkpatrick et al. (2014) noted that even if the atmosphere of the restaurant is not satisfactory, providing quality food and variety of menus could produce satisfaction, positive behaviors, and may exceed the lowered expectations created by the atmospherics

Frontline employees. Frontline employees are charged with the duties of sensing market demands, informing customers about offerings, and delivering service in ways that contribute to customer acquisition and customer loyalty (Korschun et al., 2014). Frontline employees who are properly oriented influence the customer's perception of quality service (Parsa et al. 2015). Service employees who have been trained to be customer oriented devote more time and effort to

satisfy customer needs and end up more successful at maintaining mutually beneficial long-term service relationships with customers (Namasivayam et al., 2014). Therefore, maintaining a long-term relationship with customers leads to business survival. Employee loyalty to an organization promotes a favorable work environment where employees commit to serving customers with a high level of quality in their services (Lai, 2015).

In service organizations such as fast food restaurants, frontline employees are often the first and only point of contact between the restaurant and the customers (Kessler et al., 2015). Placing frontline managers as the first point of contact for customers gives the managers the privilege to gather first-hand customer information. Martínez and del Bosque (2013) argued that employees' dissatisfaction with their jobs negatively affects the likelihood of future customer patronage. Hence, satisfied employees can provide signals to customers that can help strengthen customer satisfaction. Parsa et al. (2015) indicated that frontline employees with a high degree of service orientation influence customers' perceptions of the fast food restaurants. Following effective business strategies lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Wu, 2014).

Dabholkar (2015) suggested that creating information counters, a suggestion box, or an avenue where management personnel can effectively give an instant answer to customers enhances customer satisfaction. When customers are satisfied, they can then point out service weaknesses that need improvement and allow service personnel to confront the negative emotions they hold because of an unpleasant experience (Dabholkar, 2015). Thus, fast food managers may provide customers with the newest information and promotion announcements (Dabholkar, 2015). A high standard of customer service may result in customer satisfaction,

thereby enabling the fast food restaurant to initiate the establishment of long-term relationships with customers (Herstad et al., 2013).

Customers are demanding greater satisfaction as they patronize fast food restaurants (Parsa et al., 2015). Aung and Chang (2014) argued that to achieve customer satisfaction; there must be a combination of food quality, service, and a physical environment conducive to customer enjoyment. Food quality is a vital attribute of overall restaurant strategy and has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction (Kafetzopoulos & Gotzamani, 2014). Quality food attributes include food presentation, serving size, menu design, a variety of food, food taste, and freshness (Aung & Chang, 2014). Among other food quality attributes, food healthfulness has become imperative. Xu and Li (2016) indicated that the perceived food healthfulness increases value and customer satisfaction. The feeling of satisfaction serves as a predictor of repeat patronage (Kafetzopoulos & Gotzamani, 2014).

Use of social media in promoting fast food business. Zhu and Chen (2015) defined industry's effective business strategies as a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer care, resulting in the customer's perception that the service has met the required expectations. Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch (2017) suggested utilizing social media as a tool for enhancing customer service. In the past, the Internet was used by customers for layout content; they read it, watched it, and also used it to buy products and services (Sashi, 2012). In the 21st century, customers are now using platforms such as blogs, social networking, and Wikis to create, share, and discuss Internet contents. The use of social media can now positively influence a firm's sales and reputation (Sashi, 2012).

Engaging in social media can help a company gain insight from the customer's feedback, opening up new channels for interaction. For example, Twitter-based customer service and Facebook news feed completely reposition a brand through the way its employees interact with customers or other parties online (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). Due to the interactive nature of social media, managers have thought it wise to use social media in serving their customers better and satisfying their needs (Papaioannou, Georgiadis, Moshidis, & Manitsaris, 2015). Social media can establish conversations between individuals and firms and involve customers in a content generation (Sashi, 2012). Managers formulate effective business strategies based on customer needs; hence, the need for social media to enable managers and customers participate in the strategic decision-making process (Sashi, 2012).

Social media also offer customers a platform for efficiently engaging in bad word-of-mouth, which can lead to a threat to a restaurant's image (Kim, Koh, Cha, & Lee, 2015). While social media usage is advantageous to organizations, it also has its disadvantages. Social media has played a significant role in consumer decision making in areas such as increasing awareness, sharing information, and forming opinions and attitudes (Sashi, 2012). Many customers rely on the use of the Internet to see online reviews of restaurants by other customers so that they can make an informed decision about where to eat based on recommendations of those who have experienced particular restaurants (Boyland & Halford, 2013).

Kirkpatrick et al. (2014) examined the relationship between restaurant service (food quality, service quality, atmosphere, and price fairness) and consumers' motivations of positive e-word of mouth (eWOM). Findings demonstrated that food quality, service quality, and

atmosphere all trigger positive eWOM in different ways (Kirkpatrick et al., 2014). Hospitality companies, such as fast food restaurants, have embraced some of the opportunities provided by social media (Sashi, 2012). According to Kirkpatrick et al. (2014), consumers are likely to be less price sensitive and more likely to tell others about their positive experiences if the quality of service is top notch.

Fast food restaurants must find effective ways to make good use of these online tools because of the increase in the use of social media. Boyland and Halford (2013) observed that social media enables consumers to communicate with one another within their social networks, which creates a word-of-mouth effect for companies. Therefore, it is pertinent for fast food restaurants to know how to communicate effectively with their customers.

Fast food restaurants managers need to learn what to do and what to improve regarding customer satisfaction. Customer services can improve by using social media in educating customers on product benefits (He, Zha, & Li, 2013). This kind of response may be positive if it provides quality customer service (Boyland & Halford, 2013). Most often, responding is also a part of crisis management (Boyland & Halford, 2013). Responding can help to counter negative comments and reinforce positive comments (He et al., 2013). No response can be quick enough, and the ability to act rapidly requires the constant, proactive monitoring of social media (Kim & Lee, 2013). A rapid, transparent, and honest response to customers' sentiments easily influences behavior (Kuokkanen, 2013).

Transition

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years. In Section 1, I presented the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, and the research and interview questions. In Section 1, I also reviewed the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, the significance of the study and implications for social change, and review of the literature. I developed a list of seven questions to ask five senior managers who operate fast food businesses in Southwest Nigeria to understand the strategies managers of fast food business use to survive in the fast food business beyond 5 years.

Section 2 began with a purpose statement of the study. I explained my role within the study and revealed the dynamics of the participants. One of the primary focuses of Section 2 involved the data collection and data analysis process. Smith (2016) indicated that the research design enabled researchers to collect detailed information using a variety of data collection techniques over a sustainable period.

Section 3 concluded the study with the presentation of findings. Answers and evidence followed each interview question. A detailed discussion linked the results to professional business practice in the fast food industry. Finally, I provided recommendations for action and further research to increase the survival rate of fast food restaurants in Nigeria.

Section 2: The Project

The second section of this study provides valuable information about my role as the researcher, the purpose of the study, and the criteria for selecting prospective participants. Section 2 contains a discussion of the research project and an explanation of various research methods and design approaches, including a highlight of the key methodological and design considerations. I address the reasons for choosing a qualitative method and a case study design to explore effective strategies fast food managers use to survive beyond 5 years in the business. I discuss the population and sampling, the process of ensuring ethical research, and the tools used during the data organization, collection, and analysis process. Section 2 encompasses a discussion of my plan to ensure reliability and validity of the study findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years. The sample population consisted of five fast food restaurant managers located in Lagos, Nigeria who had implemented effective business strategies in their fast food business and whose businesses had operated for more than 5 years. The results of the study may lead to increased understanding of the effective strategies necessary for managers of the fast food business to survive beyond 5 years, which could lead to social change by increasing the length of employment and thus strengthening local tax revenue.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument in a qualitative study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Rudestom & Newton, 2014). The data collection process in a qualitative study

involves interviews, documentation, and observations through a reliable and valid instrument

(Kyvik, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). As the primary research instrument, my role was to

choose an appropriate methodology and design for the study and then implement the research in

an ethical and unbiased way. In fulfilling this role, I assumed the responsibility for selecting

participants for the study, conducted all interviews, and transcribed, analyzed, interpreted, and

summarized the data collected.

As the primary research instrument, my responsibilities included the following: (a)

conduct a thorough literature review and analysis to determine the research gap and develop

useful interview questions surrounding the topic, (b) interview the participants, and (c) present

my findings and conclusions in a rich and thick description. I developed the interview,

observation, and website analysis protocols. Marshall and Rossman (2016) opined that

semistructured interviews are the most effective strategies for the researcher to gain a thorough

understanding of an individual's perceptions and experiences.

There is no professional relationship between the study participants and myself.

McDermid et al. (2014) indicated that researchers must reveal their relationship with the study,

participants, or the area of research to ensure adherence to ethical requirements for the study. As

a teenager in Nigeria, I worked part-time in my family's fast food restaurant for almost 5 years.

The work experience I gained provided me with first-hand knowledge of the challenges

experienced by managers of fast food businesses. As such, this experience inspired me to select

the research topic that explored the strategies that fast food business managers use to survive

beyond 5 years. My previous experience in this field will not lead to any potential risk for unethical conduct in the research (McDermid et al., 2014).

The researcher has a responsibility to follow the design of the study to protect and respect the participants, mitigate risk, maintain confidentiality, and conduct the research ethically (Hammersley, 2014; Yin, 2014). The Belmont Report recapitulated the ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of the participants in a study as prescribed by the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1979). The Belmont Report protocol allows for the protection of the human subject during a study (Rogers & Lange, 2013). The strategy to protect participants in a study include (a) providing informed consent, (b) ensuring voluntary participation in the study, and (c) allowing the participants to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative penalty (Mikesell, Broomley, & Khodyakov, 2013). Protection of participants in a study is a critical part of the responsibilities of the researcher (Yin, 2014). My duty as the researcher was to protect the interest of each participant.

The interview protocol consisted of five steps. The first step was to schedule an interview with each participant at a mutually agreed place after they completed the informed consent form. The second step was to ask the same interview questions of all the participants. The third step was to ensure that each participant is allocated the same amount of time for the interviews (approximately 45 minutes). The fourth step was to audio-record each participant's responses to ensure the accuracy of the information obtained. The fifth step was that each participant would have the opportunity to review the recording transcript of the interview to be

sure it represented what they said during the interviews. I interviewed participants at a location

of their choice to ensure privacy and to allow them to feel comfortable. I protected personal and

organizational information in a private place. I ensured that I had the required interviewing skills

by studying appropriate interview techniques. The quality of information obtained depends on

the researcher's ability to gather relevant information (Yin, 2014). Marshall and Rossman (2016)

emphasized that researchers must have the skills to develop questions that can allow the

participants to express opinions on the subject of research.

The researcher is responsible for discovering and removing bias in the process of the

study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). However, completely avoiding bias in a study is difficult

(Malone, Nichol, & Tracey, 2014). My personal experience as a part-time worker in my family's

fast food restaurant and my dining experience in Nigeria did not affect the lens that I used to

conduct this research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Yin (2014) posited that when a researcher

recognizes personal views, the better the researcher may hear the voices and interpret the

perspectives of others. To mitigate personal bias during the data collection process, I relied on

multiple sources of information, a process called triangulation. The use of triangulation process

prevented me from falling into this error. The premise is that a researcher should take all

precautions against doing things that may affect negatively or threaten data accuracy and

reliability of the study (Guercini, 2014; Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2014).

My overall aim for this study was to explore the strategies that fast food business

managers use to survive beyond 5 years in Nigeria. During this process, I was mindful that my

culture and experiences might potentially contain biases that could affect the interpretation of the

study's findings. However, I took the appropriate steps as the primary instrument to accurately interpret the data and represent the participants' views and not mine.

Yin (2014) indicated that interview protocols include the introduction of the study to the participants, obtaining consent from the participants, presenting the interview questions, and implementing conclusion protocols of the interviews. I followed all ethical protocols in conducting the interviews as established in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Using a variety of data collection protocols controlled my reactions to the solicited interview responses and mitigated the effect of bias and any preconceived notions on my part (Yin, 2014). As such, I used interview questions (Appendix A), observation, and document analysis protocols, and conducted member checking, and follow up interviews until data saturation was reached (Morse, Lowery, & Steury, 2014). Additionally, I did not interview any business managers personally known to me.

Participants

Participants for a qualitative study must have the relevant experience regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Petica-Harris, deGama, & Elias, 2016). The criteria for selecting participants for the study must align with the overarching research question of the study (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014; Lamb, Backhouse, & Adderley, 2016). Selected participants must be qualified to address the problem of the study, experienced in the field of the study, available, and willing to participate in the interviews (Reybold, Lammert, & Stribling 2013; Yin, 2014). I used five eligibility criteria to ensure that the selected participants were representative of the target populations. First, the target population for this study would be managers of fast food

restaurants in Southwest Nigeria. Second, they would be managers with annual sales between 5,000,000 and 20,000,000 million Naira. Third, they would have a minimum number of 25 employees. Fourth, the managers would have been in business longer than 5 years. Fifth, the participants would be managers of fast food businesses who have spent at least 3 years in their current role as managers.

I chose participants by using a purposive sampling method, which is a nonprobability sampling method that allows the researcher's discretion in selecting participants for the study (Yin, 2014). A purposeful sampling method allows for the selection of participants who are conversant in the area of the study (Perez, Nie, Ardern, Radhu, & Ritvo, 2013). Purposive sampling is justified in most cases when a researcher is unable to do accurate random sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

To gain access to participants after receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study, I checked the directory of fast food restaurants in Southwest Nigeria to get information about location, duration in business, customer reviews, and other useful information about the businesses in that area. Building a relationship of trust is essential in gaining access to the participants (Kidney & McDonald, 2014; Siu, Hung, Lam, & Cheng, 2013). I contacted the managers of the selected restaurants directly by phone to set up an appointment to interview them in the selected restaurants. Most restaurants operate on a popular street in Southwest Nigeria. Participants received a written invitation to participate in the study after consenting to the interview (Peticca-Harris, et al.,2016).

The approval from the management included permission to (a) contact the fast food managers for interviews, (b) obtain participants' consent for the interviews, (c) obtain participants' permission to audio record the interviews, (d) gather contact information from the selected participants, and (e) conduct member checking with the participants. Contact with the participants was face-to-face to present them with a letter of invitation (see Appendix A) to participate in the interviews. Participants are more likely to accept an invitation to participate in a study when they trust the researcher (Robinson, 2014; Verdonk, Räntzsch, de Vries, & Houkes, 2014). I gave potential participants an overview of the study and invited them to participate in the interviews. I e-mailed (see Appendix D) the participants to confirm the date of the interviews after they signed the consent form. Interviews with the participants took place separately (Yin, 2014).

The strategy to establish a working relationship with the participants included contacting the participants following approval from the management of the fast food restaurants to interview their employees. Yardley, Watts, Pearson, and Richardson (2014) argued that it is crucial to maintaining a good working relationship with participants in a study. To allow for an effective working relationship, I assured participants of the confidential nature of the study (Robinson, 2014; Verdonk, et al., 2014). Data collected did not negatively affect the participants or their organization. Researchers are to protect the identity of the participants in a study, which will encourage participation and good working relationship (Blythe, Wilkes, Jackson, & Halcomb, 2013; Hammersley, 2014). I selected five managers as participants for this study from a list of fast food restaurants that have operated for more than 5 years. Participants reported their

length of employment, which I verified with the manager of the establishment. To reduce risk and to protect participants' professional reputations, all data will remain confidential; names and descriptors were de-identified. I referred to participants by number (e.g., Manager 1, Manager 2, etc.).

Participants must align with the overarching research question to maintain the integrity of the study (Yin, 2014). Siu et al. (2013) specified that researchers should build their working relationship with their participants on the principles of trust, honesty, and integrity that will lead to addressing the phenomenon. I maintained the integrity of the study by following the interview questions (see Appendix A) and the procedures outlined in the consent form as agreed with the participants (see Appendix D). Participants would be more responsive to the overarching research questions when they have confidence in the researcher's ability to be professional (Hammersley, 2014). Because of the good working relationship with the participants, the data collected aligned with the overarching research question of the strategies that managers of fast food businesses use to survive in the industry beyond 5 years.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the effective business strategies that fast food business managers use to survive in the fast food business beyond 5 years. I used a qualitative research method for this study over quantitative and mixed methods. Qualitative research method allows for flexibility and documentation of relevant findings (Kornbluh, 2015). The qualitative method may support the research of the strategies that fast

food business managers use to survive in the industry beyond 5 years. Smith (2016) and Ilkay (2013) indicated that qualitative research aims to investigate, observe, and understand a social phenomenon. Patton (2015) and Silverman (2013) noted that a qualitative research method helps to understand life experiences, gives meaning to a problem and brings to light the nature of a phenomenon.

Using a qualitative method, a researcher can collect data by interviewing key participants in the field of interest (Collins & Cooper, 2014; Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Yin (2014) noted that the purpose of conducting qualitative research is to gain in-depth knowledge in a particular field. Smith (2016) suggested that a qualitative methodology is appropriate if the study is exploratory or if the problem is too complex for a yes-or-no hypothesis. Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to build a holistic understanding of complex processes or reality (Silverman, 2013). A qualitative case study approach is ideal for this study because it allows for the gathering of data to explore and analyze the results of a complex study such as exploring the effective business strategies fast food restaurants require to survive in their industry.

Qualitative research methods involve exploring the process of how individuals attach meanings to challenging issues affecting growth and development in a particular field (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). Qualitative research methods allow researchers to explore and construct a holistic understanding of complex processes or realities (Smith, 2016). Yin (2014) indicated that qualitative methods involve the use of exploratory research with patterns, meanings, and perceptions that allow research to occur naturally. Unlike quantitative and mixed methods, qualitative approaches allow research to occur in normal settings, thereby promoting

the credibility of the study (Siu et al., 2013). In conducting research, the chosen method and design was critical because it determines the results. I chose a qualitative method for this study to address the research question, gather information, and analyze data for the study.

The research questions are exploratory and focused on the effective business strategies that managers of fast food business use to survive in the fast food business beyond 5 years. Smith (2016) indicated that a qualitative method is appropriate if the study is exploratory and when yes-or-no questions cannot resolve the complex problem. I chose the qualitative method over the quantitative method for this study because the quantitative method involves developing and testing hypotheses using statistical analysis. Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, and Carsten (2014) indicated that statistical analysis might not provide in-depth data regarding a study because it does not allow for full input from the participants.

Quantitative methods help to resolve vagueness and uncertainty regarding a problem (Silverman, 2013). Quantitative research involves using surveys and experiments to measure data and predetermined hypotheses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Silverman, 2013). Quantitative methods are tools to measure the results and present the problems from the data collected for the study. Therefore, they cannot give the researcher an in-depth comprehension of detailed, personal experiences of the participants (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). By contrast, a qualitative method involves gaining an in-depth understanding of things, places, or people (Yin, 2014). Thus, such a method was ideal for this multiple case study because it allows for obtaining a greater understanding of the effective business strategies managers of fast food business use to survive in the industry beyond 5 years as opposed to testing a particular hypothesis.

The mixed method is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2013). Mixed method research includes using qualitative and quantitative methods, whether concurrently or sequentially in a single study to understand a phenomenon (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015). Smith (2016) indicated that mixed method designs are often time-consuming. Because there was limited research on perceptions of customer service in the fast food industry, I gained a greater understanding of the phenomenon rather than test specific hypotheses. As such, neither quantitative nor mixed methods are appropriate for this investigation. As evidenced by the research question, the study is exploratory. Thus, a quantitative method was not chosen for this multiple case study because its purpose was not to perform statistical analysis on numerical data. Instead, the purpose of this study was to explore the effective business strategies managers of fast food business use to survive in the fast food business beyond 5 years. The need to integrate both qualitative and quantitative methods for this study was unnecessary.

Research Design

The research design for this multiple case study was a qualitative case study design, which is an empirical, in-depth inquiry of a phenomenon that occurs in a natural setting (Singh, 2014). Yin (2013) described case studies as exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. Multiple case studies are ideal for exploratory assessment and are conducive to constructing analysis supported by real-life contexts (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Time and activity bind case studies and the researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a

sustained period (Smith, 2016; Yin, 2014). Because the research question requires an exploratory investigation, I chose the qualitative case study design.

Marshall and Rossman (2014) indicated that a case study design enables the exploration of complex situations, allowing for the gathering of multiple perspectives from a range of sources, including contextual information. Silverman (2013) noted that a case study could be used to observe, analyze, and understand the processes of a particular business. The rationale for selecting a case study design for this study was to identify and address specific business strategies managers of fast food business use to survive in the industry beyond 5 years.

Researchers have the option of selecting from the research designs for a study: a case study design, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, or narrative inquiry (Roberts, 2013; Rudestam & Newton, 2014). Case study design enables the researcher to obtain detailed information using a variety of data collection techniques (Yin, 2014). Smith (2016) defined a case study as a strategy of inquiry whereby the researcher explores a program, event, activity, process, or individuals. Yin (2014) indicated that the case study design is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. A case study incorporates participants' views by observing and analyzing the data collected for the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Researchers commonly use qualitative case studies to explore a single experience or distinct occurrence (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The case study design enables them to collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a continuous period (Smith, 2016).

Phenomenological research designs involve using interview techniques and other data collection methods to address the research question (Smith, 2016). Phenomenological research

design involves understanding individuals' lived experiences by exploring patterns and relationships (Yin, 2014). Therefore, using a phenomenological design for this multiple case study may not provide the effective business strategies managers of fast food business use to survive beyond 5 years in the business because I did not research lived experiences of the participants in this study.

Ethnographical research study focuses on cultural experiences or historical happenings (Kimmel, 2013; Mutchler, McKay, McDavitt & Gordon, 2013). Yin (2014) indicated that researchers use ethnographical research design to study people's beliefs, reasons for an association that they have with one another, and their feelings. I did not select ethnographical design because this study will not focus on a particular culture or community.

Yin (2014) indicated that descriptive case studies explore events and their framework. A descriptive case study is emergent and appropriate for a small sample study (Merriam, 2014; Nassaji, 2015). The descriptive method with interview questions was inappropriate to examine the effective business strategies fast food restaurants need to survive in Nigeria because it defines events with hypotheses and involves mostly a small sample study. Therefore, participants' responses may not identify the effective business strategies that managers of fast food business use to survive in the industry beyond 5 years because this study was extensive and involved many participants.

Data saturation occurs in a study when the researcher can no longer collect data or get any additional useful information and can no longer add any new information to the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Other researchers indicated that saturation might occur when

participants can no longer give new ideas about the subject of the study and the same themes are repetitive (Galvin, 2014; O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). In the present study, I interviewed participants until I could not gather new insights or information, and the themes replicated.

Population and Sampling

The target population for this study was managers of fast food restaurants in Southwest Nigeria with annual sales between 5,000,000 and 20,000,000 million Naira with a minimum number of 25 employees that have been in business longer than 5 years. I used purposive sampling to select participants for this study because it allowed me to engage participants with relevant experience and knowledge about the fast food business. Through purposive sampling, the researcher can explore the option of selecting participants from cases that meet those criteria (Palinkas et al., 2015). Palinkas et al. (2015) defined purposive sampling as a method that researchers use to select qualified participants for an academic study. This sampling method allowed me to select appropriate participants in a population to represent other members of that group (McCabe, Stern, & Dacko, 2013).

The interview participants chosen for the study will come from a group of general or senior managers of fast food managers who have worked for fast food businesses that have operated for more than 5 years. Palinkas et al. (2015) indicated that the sample size in a qualitative study is often small because the focus is on in-depth information and individual experiences. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) suggested using five to 28 participants for a study. A large number of participants is neither practical nor beneficial in a qualitative study

(Molenberghs et al., 2014). Palinkas et al. (2015) revealed that the number of participants in a qualitative study is often small because the depth of information and the variance of experiences are of interest. Molenberghs et al. (2014) indicated that a smaller number of participants is satisfactory for a case study.

In a qualitative study, it is imperative to establish the criteria for selecting participants who understand the study phenomenon (Molenberghs et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). The sampling method is essential to the practice of qualitative study (McDermid et al., 2014; Robinson, 2014). There are two advantages of purposive sampling, which are (1) purposive sampling allows for obtaining rich information from the participants; and (2) purposive sampling enables the researcher to focus on the specific characteristic or group to be studied (Griffith, Morris, & Thakar, 2016). For this study, I recruited only fast food business managers who have been in business for at least 5 years. The restaurants selected are situated in Southwest Nigeria and operating for more than 5 years with a minimum number of 25 employees. The selected participants knew the fast food industry, its challenges, and the strategies successful managers use to survive beyond 5 years in the business.

Ethical Research

I conducted the research after receiving approval from the IRB at Walden University. The IRB approval number is 12-27-17-0393425. The purpose of the IRB is to ensure researchers maintain ethical integrity throughout the study (Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2013; Kidney & McDonald, 2014). Adherence to all the ethical standards as prescribed by the American Psychological Association and IRB of Walden University is paramount to this study. Informed

consent is part of the ethical requirements for the study (Yin, 2014). Khan (2014) indicated that researchers must solicit for informed consent for the study to be ethical. I sent the informed consent form to the participant selected for the study. The informed consent form is in Appendix D of this study.

I presented each participant with an informed consent form (Appendix D) that provided the participants with sufficiently detailed information on the study so that they can make an informed, voluntary, and rational decision to participate (Kidney & McDonald, 2014; Tilley, 2015). The consent form includes the purpose of the study, the specific data collection procedures of the study, information on participant's right to decline or withdraw, foreseeable potential risk, discomfort or adverse effects, research benefits and incentives, and contact information for questions.

Participants may signify their interest to withdraw from the study through e-mail or phone call to the researcher as stipulated in the consent form (Appendix D). Participants may withdraw from the study at any time with or without notice to the researcher (Kidney & McDonald, 2014). If a participant withdraws from the study, the data collected will become invalid (van Wijk, 2014). There will be no penalty for withdrawing from the study. Participation in the interview is voluntary and confidential, and participants can withdraw from the study at any time if they no longer desire to participate in the study (Kidney & McDonald, 2014; van Wijk, 2014). Yin (2014) indicated that participating in an interview for academic research should be voluntary, and the researcher must be clear about the process of withdrawal from the study.

Khan (2014) indicated that participation in any research must be voluntary. However, researchers may elect to show appreciation for the services rendered by the participants. I offer participants an incentive for their participation, which will be a gift card to Shoprite Mall in Lagos, Nigeria that shall not exceed $15.00. Each participant will receive a thank you card from me after the interviews. van Wijk (2014) suggested that incentives are vital to sound research. Additionally, to encourage participation in the interviews, participants will get a copy of the completed doctoral study.

To ensure that ethical protection of the participant was adequate in the study, participants received assurance of confidentiality, transparency, and assurance of free-will participation in the study. Credible research involves ethical standards (Yin, 2014). Mitchell and Wellings (2013) stated that it is the researcher's responsibility to protect the participants' information. Participants' codes, names, contact information, restaurants' names, and any descriptors will be removed after data collection and before the presentation of the findings, which will serve to protect participants' confidentiality and professional reputations. Confidential agreements and consent forms will be in a locked filing cabinet. I stored the data on a password-protected hard drive. Additionally, the transcriptionist hired to transcribe interviews will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Participants' information needs protection at all times during and after the study (Yin, 2014). I saved copies of the signed electronic consent form and confidentiality agreements to both an external password-protected backup site and an external hard drive for 5 years. All data

and hard copies of consent forms are locked in a filing cabinet for 5 years, and I will destroy the

files after that time to comply with Walden University requirements.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument for a qualitative study (Owen,

2014; Yin, 2014). The data collection instruments will consist of multiple sources to ensure

higher credibility and validity. Using multiple sources help to validate themes and ensure

triangulation in qualitative studies (Acharya et al. 2013; Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). As the primary

instrument in this multiple case study, I collected data from fast food managers in Southwest

Nigeria. I conducted semistructured interviews with managers of fast food business whose

businesses are succeeding because of the strategies they are using.

Data collection through semistructured interviews will allow me to understand the

participant's perspective on the effective business strategies that fast food business managers use

to survive in the fast food business beyond 5 years. Interviews are the preferred method when the

researcher desires to probe deeper into participants' responses (Hilgert, Kroh, & Richter, 2016;

Stuckey, 2014). Data collection through onsite visits (observation) at the restaurants allowed me

to observe for evidence of management strategies to deliver superior customer service.

Kirkpatrick et al. (2014) indicated that atmospherics are an important part of the dining

experience and reported that they influence customers' emotions and expectations regarding

service and food quality. Data collection through online website visits (document analysis)

allowed me to explore how the business managers use the social media outlets as a strategy to

survive in the fast food industry. Due to the interactive nature of social media, managers use

social media in serving their customers better and satisfying their needs (Papaioannou, Georgiadis, Moshidis, & Manitsaris, 2015). Social media can establish conversations between individuals and firms and involve customers in a content generation (Sashi, 2012).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection process, I used member checking to allow participants to review the data collected from them and validate its accuracy (Yin, 2014). Through member checking, participants can review the information that I gathered through interviews, observation, and website visits to reduce the chances of misrepresentation (Andraski et al., 2014). Sharing the researchers' interpretations with the participants of the interviews and web visits will help me to enhance the validity and reliability of the study (Houghton et al., 2013). The interview protocol (see Appendix A) contains procedures for interviewing the five fast food business managers. The email to confirm transcript review (Appendix B) contains procedures for reviewing interview transcript. The recruitment letter protocol (Appendix C) contains procedures for recruiting participants.

Data Collection Technique

The process of data collection is critical in qualitative research (Yin, 2014). After obtaining IRB approval, I began data collection using three data sources, a process referred to as triangulation. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), triangulation is a means of ensuring the credibility of the findings. Triangulation is a form of data collection process from many sources for validating results of the data interpreted (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Yin, 2014). Houghton et al. (2013) maintained that triangulation involves using more than one source of data collection to ensure the validity of the result of the study. The data collection process in this

research involved three data sources: semistructured interviews, site observations, and review of documents related to the business establishments that corroborates the interview data.

The first data source was the interview. Conducting a face-to-face interview during the data collection process allows the researcher to gather data from firsthand experience with the participants (Richie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). Using in-depth semistructured interviews during a visit to the business location gives the researcher an edge of understanding the participants' reasons, feelings, and beliefs about the phenomenon of the study (Hilgert et al., 2016; Richie et al., 2013;). I conducted the semistructured interviews based on the interview protocol detailed in Appendix A. I scheduled the semistructured face-to-face interviews at mutually acceptable and suitable locations that offered some degree of privacy. The duration of each interview was approximately 45 minutes.

During the data collection process, I obtained data from the participants semistructured interviews by using recording devices, cameras, and cell phones to capture the event. Hilgert et al. (2016) stated the use of technology might enhance the quality of the data collected during the interview process. Using recording devices to record video and audio during interviews increases the quality of the information gathered during the data collection process (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Gronn, Romeo, McNamara, & Teo, 2013). Participants will have the privilege to restate their responses for clarity if the comments have the potential of forming themes for the study.

The advantages of using semistructured interviews are that participants may openly express their opinions, feelings, and beliefs about the phenomenon (Hilgert et al., 2016; Yin, 2014). Another advantage is that face-to-face interviews bring both the participants and the

researcher together, thus allowing the researcher to seek further clarifications from the participants (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Hilgert et al., 2016). Face-to-face interviews give the participants and the researcher the opportunity to build a relationship of trust that may allow the participants to communicate genuinely with the researcher about the phenomenon (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

The disadvantages of interview technique may include that the participant may feel uncomfortable to express thoughts and feelings about the phenomenon (Yin, 2014; Hilgert et al., 2016). Doody and Nooman (2013) observed that another disadvantage might include time and costs arising from driving and transcribing the interview responses and procuring recording devices. Another disadvantage of using interview technique is that the interviewee may keep important personal information from the researcher (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Yin (2014) noted that a disadvantage to interviews is that they are time-consuming and may limit access to certain participants.

In addition to the interview, I conducted observation during a site visit to understand the operational strategies of the fast food restaurant. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) believed that research observation as a method used to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study and is a way to increase the validity of the study. The premise is that observations may help the researcher have a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) posited that validity is much stronger when researchers use multiple data collection strategies to observe, interview, and document analysis. Participant observation can help to answer descriptive research questions, to build theory, or to generate or test

hypotheses (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Hilgert et al., 2016). Yin (2014) suggested that direct observations are evidence recorded and validated. The researcher will gain more insight that would not be so apparent through other evidential sources.

Merriam (2014) suggested that a key advantage of using observation methods for data collection is that it allows for providing a thick and rich description for describing behaviors, situations, and events and it provides opportunities for viewing or participating in unscheduled events. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) added that it improves the interpretation and quality of data collection and facilitates the development of new research questions. Kawulich (2005) claimed that the main disadvantage is that observations can be time-consuming. It may allow for researcher's bias (Kawulich, 2005).

To conduct observation, I used field notes to capture what I observed. Kawulich (2005) noted that field notes are the primary way of capturing observation data. Notes will include records of observation, including informal conversations with participants, interactions between customers, menu cost and overall activities occurring at the site (see Appendix B). Notes are essential when interacting with participants (Hilgert et al., 2016; Yin, 2014).

Lumadi (2014) indicated that researchers must consider both the advantages and disadvantages of document review in their research. One of the advantages of document review is the consistency of approach in document research process. Another advantage of document review is that researchers do not have to make personal contact with the participants. The following were disadvantages associated with document review: (a) documents are usually

incomplete; (b) the researcher is limited to what document is available and accessible (Lumadi, 2014).

Yin (2014) indicated that member checking is appropriate for interviews and data collection. I used this process to ensure I represented participants' views accurately. Member checking allows participants to review the results of data analysis. Through member checking, participants can review the information they gave to reduce the chances of misrepresentation (Andraski et al., 2014; Siu et al., 2013). Similarly, Morse (2015) indicated that member checking allows each participant another opportunity to review the data collected during the interview. Houghton et al. (2013) concurred that member checking allows participants to review the comments attributed to them for accuracy. Participants will receive a copy of my written interpretations and transcripts of the interview to review and provide feedback.

The use of member checking allows for rephrasing and personalizing the responses from the participants (Andraski, Chandler, Powell, Humes, & Wakefield, 2014). It enables participants to review their statements for accuracy before the study is published (Andraski et al., 2014). Member checking helps to improve the reliability, validity, accuracy, and credibility of findings (Andraski et al., 2014; Harvey, 2015). This technique allowed participants to question and rectify falsifications and misrepresentation by reviewing interview transcripts (Jimenez-Soto, Hodge, Nguyen, Dettrick, & Lopez, 2014).

Data Organization Technique

The organization of data is as important as the interview itself (Yin, 2014). The researcher needs an appropriate data storage technique to organize the data (Anyan, 2013).

Reflective journals enable the researcher to take notes throughout the interviewing process and keep the data organized (Al-Tit, 2015; Corbin & Strauss, 2014). The data organization technique for the study will be through a reflective journal to take notes and a handheld recording device to record the interviews to keep track of the collected data (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). After the interview, I reviewed the notes that I have taken on the reflective journal to capture emerging themes from the interview.

Check et al. (2014), and Faber and Kruger (2013) recommended securing the research data in a locked-up place. All information will remain in a locked filing cabinet and password-protected external hard drive for a minimum of 5 years; only I will have access to the locked filing cabinet and the password for the hard drive. Yin (2014) recommended that data collected remain in a safe for 5 years before permanent deletion. I will delete all collected data after the end of the 5-year period stipulated.

Data Analysis

Data analysis begins after the data collection and data organization phases (Yin, 2014). The analysis process is to address the overarching research question of the study (Palinkas et al., 2015; Smith, 2016). Data analysis consists of identifying, categorizing, and interpreting themes arising from the research (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013). There are several ways of analyzing research data in a qualitative study that include open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Starker, Xiao, & Beaulieu, 2013). Starker et al. (2013) listed thematic coding as another method of data analysis. Researchers use coding to identify key themes and correlate those key themes with the literature (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Yin (2014) indicated that there are five types of

coding: (a) codes developed after the collection of data, (b) codes developed during the collection of data, (c) the use of a combination of both (emerging and predetermined codes) (d) data interpretation, and (e) data conclusion and meaning derived.

Interview transcripts will be analyzed using NVivo 11 qualitative analysis software as recommended by Yin (2014). NVivo 11 is a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software that supports researchers in discovering relevant information and removing irrelevant information during the data analysis process. Data collected in a study requires analysis and coding to determine emerging themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Pierre & Jackson, 2014). The major advantage of Nvivo 11 is that it allows for the organization of data in a credible and reliable way (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015; Yin, 2014). I used Nvivo 11 mainly to organize and manage data files. I started by importing the word files into Nvivo 11. The features allowed me to code with coding stripes and highlights using text search, word frequency, and coding queries.

Data analysis leads to data reduction and interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2016). The themes that emerged during data analysis will form the basis for grouping data into various categories that address the overarching research question of the study (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). I used the results of the data analysis to address the research question logically and sequentially. Hartman (2013) concurred that research themes must align with the overarching research question.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity equate to trustworthiness, rigor, and quality of qualitative research (Baillie, 2015). Yin (2014) stated that it was the sole responsibility of the researcher to

ensure the research is reliable. Researchers must apply specific procedures to eradicate errors

when interpreting the results of a study (Yin, 2016). Baillie (2015) noted that data collection

must be consistent with the research documentation process and technique. The following are the

most common approaches for evaluating rigor in the qualitative study: (a) dependability, (b)

credibility, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013).

Reliability

Reliability is critical in any study (Yin, 2014). Reliability is a concept that researchers use

to establish the consistency and the accuracy of the data collected for a study (Hess, McNab, &

Basoglu, 2014; Venkatesh et al., 2013). It is the most important step in evaluating the

consistency of the phenomenon (Narayanan, Greco, Reeves, Matthews, & Bergin, 2014).

Reliability allows for the replication of results in the study. Zohrabi (2013) indicated that to

guarantee the reliability of a study, the researcher explains evidently the different processes and

phases of the inquiry. The researcher thereby justifies every part of the study including the

purpose of the study, design, method, and topic (Zohrabi, 2013). As an illustration, the feedback

from participants also conveys reliability, validity, and credibility of the clarification process.

Dependability means that findings are accurate and repetitive in a study (Marom &

Lussier, 2014). Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, and Pearson (2014) indicated that

dependability includes repeating the analysis process by conducting a thorough review of the

research method to ascertain that the findings of the study are accurate. In this multiple case

study, I addressed dependability by ensuring that the interview questions conform to the industry

standard, and the results are similar to what other researchers might get if they were to conduct

the same study. I addressed the issue of dependability by using the member checking method that allows participants to review the research findings transcript for consistency and accuracy. Member checking helps to improve the reliability, dependability, validity, accuracy, and credibility of findings (Andraski et al., 2014; Littvay, Popa, & Fazekas, 2013). Through member checking process, participants will review the transcribed data to ensure it is correctly and accurately interpreted (McDonald, 2014; Tilley, 2015).

Validity

The validity of qualitative studies includes trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Yin, 2014). Siu et al. (2013) noted that concise and in-depth interview questions might improve validity. A professional transcriber transcribed the interview data, and I reviewed the information with the participants to allow them an opportunity to check for accuracy or correct any inaccuracies. Yin (2014) indicated that to ensure validity, it is important to employ credible techniques, methods, and strategies. Additionally, the information collected must apply to the specific research questions (Yin, 2014).

Credibility occurs when research data provide a rich, truthful, and in-depth explanation of the information collected for the research (Munn et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). To establish credibility, researchers gather and review data from more than one source, or from multiple observations looking for similarities within and across study participants (Munn et al., 2014; Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2014). Credibility provides confidence in the results of the data conducted because they are credible and believable (Battistella, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Researchers use member checking to enhance the credibility, accuracy, and verifiability

of data collected during a study (Anney, 2014). To establish credibility, I engaged participants in member checking process after the initial analysis of data.

The transfer of findings to other groups or scholars by providing an in-depth description of the sample and study boundaries is a good definition of transferability (Munn et al., 2014). Transferability is the extent to which the results of the research apply to other contexts or settings (Houghton et al., 2013). Transferability means that the findings of the research is valid and aligns with the research questions (Trainor & Graue, 2014). Anney (2014) opined that transferability involves analyzing and evaluating the findings of a study. I adhered to the data collection and analysis techniques for the research design, using the appropriate interview protocol and provided a rich and thick description of the findings.

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study represent the respondents and not researcher's bias, motivation, or interest (Houghton et al., 2013; Stake 2013). Confirmability means other researchers can confirm the accuracy of the findings of the study (Munn et al., 2014). Confirmability occurs by using member checking (Baillie, 2015). Through member checking process, confirmability took place by allowing the participants to review the accuracy, credibility, and verifiability of the data collected to ensure accurate representation of their views (Anney, 2014).

I continued the data analysis process until data saturation occurred. Data saturation may occur in several ways. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) and Marshall et al. (2013) observed that when no new themes emerge from an interview, then data saturation has occurred. Corbin and Strauss (2014) stated that saturation occurs when the data collected cannot add new information to the

study. I ensured data saturation when I could no longer see new patterns or themes during analysis or when no new themes emerge from the interviews (Elo et al., 2014; Morse, 2015)

Transition and Summary

The second section of this study provided valuable information about my role as the researcher, the purpose of the study, and the criteria for selecting prospective participants. In Section 2, I discussed the research project and explained the various research methods and design approaches, including a highlight of the key methodological and design considerations. I addressed the reasons for choosing a qualitative method and a case study design to explore effective strategies fast food managers are using to survive in the fast food industry beyond 5 years. There was a discussion of the population and sampling, the process of ensuring ethical research, and the tools used during the data organization, collection, and analysis process in this section. Section 2 also encompassed a discussion on my plan to ensure reliability and validity of the study findings.

In Section 3, I presented the findings of effective business strategies managers of fast food business use to survive in the fast food industry. I summarized the major themes and the implications for customer service in the fast food industry in Nigeria. I discussed the potential implications of the study for a social change. Finally, I made recommendations on factors that may contribute to the survival of the fast food industry in Nigeria.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 provides an overview of the purpose of the study, states the overarching

research question, and presents the findings. The section also outlines applications to

professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for actions and further

study, reflections, and the study conclusion. The section concludes with a summary of the study

findings.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that fast

food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years. The fast food managers selected for the

interview through a purposeful sampling method were managers implementing effective business

strategies in their restaurants. I interviewed five managers of fast food businesses in their offices

in Lagos, Nigeria. During the interviews, participants responded to the eight semistructured

interview questions and shared their experiences about the strategies they used to survive in

business longer than 5 years.

To maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the interviewed participants, I replaced

names with pseudonyms, referring to participants as Manager 1, Manager 2, Manager 3,

Manager 4, and Manager 5 and using the codes M1, M2, M3, M4, and M5 to denote the

participants. The overarching research question for this multiple case study was: What strategies

do fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years? The data collected from the

interviewed participants provided answers to the overarching research question. Kallio, Pietila,

Johnson, and Kangasniemi (2016) indicated that appropriate interview questions lead to

descriptive answers; therefore, I collected data through the one-on-one, semistructured interviews conducted with the participating fast food managers. Interview questions directed the conversation toward addressing the overarching research question of the study.

The study also included data such as online ratings by customers, employee satisfaction surveys, internal employee engagement surveys from the last 3 years, and historical business files for the restaurants. Fusch and Ness (2015) opined that data saturation occurs when answers to interview questions become repetitive, and no new information or coding themes emerge. For this study, I reached data saturation after completing the interview with the fifth participating manager. Analysis of the data yielded three conclusions: (a) employee development and training improved customer service, (b) effective management of resources and people led to business survival, (c) healthy food choice attracted customers and increased revenue.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this multiple case study was: What strategies do fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years? To answer this question, I conducted semistructured interviews with successful fast food managers located in Lagos, Nigeria, and also reviewed each restaurant's online ratings by customers, its internal employee engagement surveys for the last 3 years, and its historical business files. Three themes or conclusions emerged from the analysis process:

- Employee development and training improved customer service;

- effective management of resources and people led to business survival; and

- healthy food choice attracted customers and increased revenue.

Theme 1: Employee Development and Training Improved Customer Service

The first theme that emerged was the idea that employee development and training improved customer service. All interviewed fast food managers noted that employee development and continued training of employees were critical to the survival of fast food businesses in Nigeria. The five participants for this study indicated that investing in employees' formal education and in-house, on-the-job training improved customer service.

Investing in employee's education. Under Theme 1, a subtheme emerged regarding the positive returns resulting from investment in the education of employees. The interviewed fast food managers stated that investing in the education of their employees had an impact on the performance of the employees. Analysis of the interview responses revealed that educated employees were the top performers, had stronger leadership abilities, and contributed positively to the survival of the business. The participating managers believed that employee education led to improved organizational performance, which led, in turn, to the survival of fast food businesses. The interviewed fast food managers believed that they succeeded in the business longer than 5 years because they committed a substantial amount of money and time to the education and training of their employees.

The participants identified vocational and tertiary institutions as forms of education that contributed to the development of their employees. Most of the employees received certificates, diplomas, and degrees in the fields of business management, accounting, hotel management, hospitality management, food and beverage certification, and dietary sciences. The participants indicated that employees generally attended classes during weekends and on a part-time basis,

leaving their work schedules unaffected.

Three of the participants (M1, M2, and M4) stated that they rose to management positions in their restaurants because their organizations paid part of their educational expenses. All participants indicated their beliefs that restaurant businesses would survive beyond 5 years if the management made investments in the education of their employees. Participant M3 stated, "I made investing in the education of my staff a priority each year. The staff that takes advantage of this kind gesture remained loyal to the company and became top performers." Participant M2 stated, "After we implemented mandatory college education for our restaurant workers, the performance of the workers who obtained additional educational qualifications increased exponentially."

The findings that management investments in the education of their employees contribute to business survival aligned with Sonfield and Lussier's (2014) study findings that employees' educational development is consistent with the growth and survival of the company. Organizations that recruit and retain educated employees can cope with financial distress and economic depression and can survive longer in business (Pucci, Nosi, & Zanni, 2017). Participants M1 and M3 stated that they were not willing to employ individuals who did not have at least a bachelor's degree. Participant M2 said:

> I feel that the best hands I can get out there are those who are educated and intelligent. Those smart kids are capable of turning any organization around. I have a few of them working with me, which I can rely on at any time.

This sub-theme aligned with the findings of Nasr and Boujelbene's 2014 study that business survivability depends on the education of managers and employees.

In-house, on-the-job training for employees. A second sub-theme related to in-house, on-the-job training for restaurant employees, with managers reporting the need to provide efficient, structured, and continuous training for their employees to keep them abreast of the strategies to survive in the business. The interviewed managers agreed that organizational leadership bears the responsibility of ensuring that all employees receive appropriate training on the strategies that will lead to improved team performance and organizational profitability. Four of the participants (M1, M2, M3, and M5) articulated that in-house training brings employees together in a manner that fosters teamwork, friendship, and efficiency and that it also reduces the poor performance that hampers survivability. All participants insisted that continuing education is necessary for the survivability of a fast food business in Nigeria.

A review of the internal documents regarding monthly training showed each restaurant's schedule of training, the names of the employees who participated in training, and the names of the trainers. The training records also showed each organization's desired outcome of the training, and the strategies for implementing the skills employees learned during the training, along with the organization's plan to follow up with employees to review the success of the training. Participants explained that they kept the training records for their own reference and as documented evidence of their continued resolve to champion the cause of training their employees to become top performers. Participants M2, M3, and M5 articulated that it is important to document training information and materials for future reference. Similarly, other

participants (M1, M2 and M4) mentioned that their primary objective in keeping training records was to hold employees accountable for failure to implement the training they received from the organization.

All five participants attested that they provide employees with training at least once a month regarding performance improvement on the job. When asked follow-up questions regarding the specific types of training provided to employees, participants listed categories including orientation for new hires, customer service skills, time management strategies, technical training, and health and fitness tips. Managers reported orientation for new employees as a common practice, with all five participants indicating that they use the orientation training to imbue new employees with the culture, mission, and vision of the organization. Each participant also suggested that their customer service training led to the survivability of their restaurant businesses. The managers reported providing training for customer service strategies such as patience when dealing with difficult customers, clear communication skills, quick customer service skills, positive language use, and thanking customers for their patronage.

Participants M1, M4, and M5 indicated that the training they provided to their staffs was need-based training that focused on the skills the employees need for improving their performance. Participants M2 and M3 stated that they planned the training for the entire year, focusing on employee need. Manager 3 stated:

> We take pride in schooling our recruits in the culture of our restaurant. We feel that no matter how experienced they are or from whichever field they came from, we must still educate them on how to get the job done in our way, our style. Also, as they integrated

into the culture of the restaurant, we continue to provide them with training on discoveries in the industry that can make them compete with their peers in other restaurants.

Four of the five participants M1, M2, M3, and M4 indicated that the quarterly training program they provide for their employees allows for peer-discussion and cross-training within the organization. Manager 3 stated, "Our approach is to train our restaurant staff to do almost anything in the restaurant. We do more of cross-training and using the employees to teach one another." Manager 3 stated further, "We identify quick learners and top performers and turn them into teachers and leaders of others. This approach is paying off in my restaurant. Also, we personalized the training in a manner that the employees can absorb the training easily." Managers inspire their employees by teaching them how to learn and how to teach others, with the goal of maintaining a life-long commitment to the company (Isbell, Seth, Atwood, & Ray, 2015).

Providing training for restaurant employees is critical to the survival of fast food business beyond 5 years. Managers who are constantly training and teaching their employees create an atmosphere for those employees that allows them to take advantage of the training to become top performers in the industry (Towler, Watson, & Surface, 2014). Top performing employees are valuable assets to the organization and contribute to the survival of the business (Falola, Osibanjo, & Ojo, 2014).

This sub-theme was consistent with the findings of the study by Falola, et al. (2014) that concluded in-company training and employee development was an indispensable strategic tool

for enhancing employee performance and organizational survivability (Alasadi & Sabbagh, 2015; Falola, et al., 2014). Providing continuous training for employees is a characteristic of an effective leader and it creates an avenue for the growth and development of employees, contributing to organizational success, profitability, and survival.

Customer services skills. The third sub-theme that emerged from under Theme 1 related to the conclusion that employee education and training improved customer service skills and impacted the survival of fast food businesses beyond 5 years in Nigeria. All participants in the study revealed that they invested in training their employees to be customer-focused and customer service oriented, which in turn attracted and retained loyal customers. The managers reported that this strategy produced outcomes including a strong customer base, increased revenue, and increased survivability of the business. All five of the participants reported improving employees' customer service skills by training employees, holding employees accountable for customer satisfaction, and rewarding good performance.

Participants in the study mentioned providing employee training on customer service skills including: greeting customers with a smile, reducing wait time for customers by ensuring they are seated and served their meals within a reasonable time, frequently checking with customers during their meals to find out if they are satisfied, and promptly processing their check and payment. A review of customer ratings online showed that most customers were impressed with the promptness of service rendered. Participants M1, M2, M4, and M5 indicated that being welcome to the restaurant with a smile topped the list of the things that impressed customers.

Participating managers said that they achieved positive customer service and customer satisfaction results by teaching customer service skills to employees, discussing those skills with employees, holding employees accountable for customer satisfaction, and rewarding employees' performance in managing customer expectations.

All five participating fast food restaurant managers indicated that continuous training and discussion of regarding customer service skills improved performance. Kurian and Muzumdar (2017) opined that effective customer service is key to the survival of fast food business, and findings from this study supported that statement. Participant M1 said, "I never gave up on teaching my [employees] the value of improving customer service skills at work." Participant M3 stated, "I see significant improvement in the performance of my restaurant workers as I repeatedly teach customer service principles and skills. One important thing to note is that I do not only teach them, but I also practice it myself." Participant M3 continued, "most customers can tell if poor customer service is the fault of the employees or if management has not sufficiently trained their staff on how to be customer service oriented." Participant M3 revealed that it is her job to train her restaurant workers to serve their customers well, and she holds the employees accountable for discharging that responsibility. Four of the managers – M1, M2, M3, and M5 – said that teaching their employees about the need to provide good customer service improved the overall performance and survivability of their restaurant businesses.

All participants indicated that continuous teaching and discussion regarding customer service skills accounted for improved employee performance in managing the expectations and satisfaction of customers. The findings were consistent with the study conducted by Rosenberg

and Ferlie (2014), which indicated that continuous teaching of employees leads to employee productivity and business survival. Three participants (M1, M3, and M5) reported making customer satisfaction the frequent focus of their training so that employees saw and understand that commitment to customer service in the management and viewed customer service as the focus of their jobs.

Four of the five participants (M2, M3, M4, and M5) indicated that teaching their employees the importance of focusing on customer satisfaction was not enough for their restaurants; they also discussed the consequences of not satisfying the customers. Manager 3 stated,

> I have observed over the years that no matter how repeatedly I teach a principle if I don't instill discipline, the rate of result would be insignificant. So, what I do is to teach, teach, and teach, and then discuss the consequences of not practicing what I have taught. I am quick to teach and follow up and very quick to hold them (employees) accountable for failing to follow the teaching, and I also apply consequences when necessary. This principle has helped my restaurant business a great deal.

Study findings support the idea that holding employees accountable for poor customer service is effective in dealing with performance issues and may lead to business survival. Participants M3 and M4 agreed with this principle. Krishnan, Ravindran, and Joshi (2014) found that when work-related training forms part of performance measures for employees, the rate of employee's performance accelerates. Participant M3 stated, "I review employee's performance quarterly and offer additional training on how the employee can improve service quality. I do not

wait until year-end appraisal to give [employees] the bad news of poor performance." Participant

M3 added, "we do the appraisal quarterly and discuss improvement plans along the year. It has

helped both the restaurant and the employees to meet customer service goals." This finding is

consistent with the assertion of Emami and Doolen (2015) that managers must monitor and

improve the level of customer service rendered by the employees to the customers. Inability to

manage the performance of employees and customer retention account for the failure of many

small businesses, including fast food restaurants (Lamine, Mian & Fayolle, 2014).

The interviewed fast food managers indicated that rewarding their employees for good

customer service increased employee productivity and restaurant performance. The participants

indicated that they rewarded their employees by identifying top performers for the year and

recognized top employees for the month. Participants M2 and M3 stated that they usually place

photographs and brief biographies of employees of the month in strategic places where everyone

can see them. Manager 4 indicated that in addition to recognizing and displaying monthly

photographs of top performers, his restaurant also publishes the names of these employees on the

restaurant's website and Facebook page. Other forms of employee recognition mentioned by the

interviewed fast food managers included promotions, gift certificates, and monetary rewards.

Han, Bonn, and Cho's (2016) found that fast food restaurants that review customer service

performance and reward top-performing employees would have satisfied customers with

repeated patronage, findings that are consistent with this sub-theme.

Participant M3 stated that since employees are key to building and retaining satisfied

customers, is appropriate to use rewards to keep them motivated. Participants M2 and M4

indicated that employee rewards are critical parts of their organizational cultures. The sub-theme is consistent with the conclusion drawn by Pare (2016) – that restaurant managers must inculcate in their practice the principle of rewarding their employees for good performance.

The participants indicated that the relatively small size of their restaurants was an advantage for them regarding attracting and retaining their customers. Managers of small business ventures can work closely with their staff to set goals for customer satisfaction and to reward the employees who meet this target. Manager 3 explained, "the size of my restaurant is small, and it allows me to know most of my diners, even by names and relate well to them. I can quickly identify my hardworking staff and reward them accordingly." Customer satisfaction and employee reward can be effective when managers work closely with their customers through frequent interactions and reward employees who make customer service a priority in their jobs (Anderson & Ullah, 2014).

Participant M1 stated, "it is part of our restaurant culture to reward our staff monthly for good performance. This is a long-standing practice that keeps our employees happy and motivated, and in turn, we get the results of happier customers." Participants M2 and M4 agreed that employee recognition for good customer service is good for the restaurant business. Participant M3 and M5 asserted that recognition of employees is essential for the survival of any business. Participant M3 stated,

> At the start of my fast food business, I observed that my business would survive
>
> competition with other fast food restaurants if I make customer service a priority. I
>
> realized that I could not do this alone without my people (restaurant staff), so, I adopted a

practice to reward them (restaurant staff) for each time they make a customer happy. I

determined that through customer's feedback. Each time a customer says an employee

rendered a service that met their expectations, I reward the staff that served that customer.

This practice kept my people (restaurant staff) motivated, and increased customer

patronage at my restaurant.

Anderson and Ullah (2014) found that rewarding employees for good customer service is

an effective strategy for encouraging employees to make customer service a priority. The

findings of this study aligned with the conceptual framework and literature review and addressed

the overarching research question of this study, concluding that using a customer focus approach

increases customer satisfaction and retention and leads, in turn, to increased revenue and

business survival.

Correlation to the literature. The emergent theme or conclusion that employee

development and training leads to customer satisfaction is critical to the survival of fast food

restaurants. The findings of Theme 1 aligned with Georgiadis and Pitelis (2016) and McFarland

et al. (2014), who found that providing adequate training led to the development of employees

and to business survival. Employee orientation improved job outcomes, enhanced frontline

employees' psychological welfare, and was good for the survival of business (Padachi, 2016).

Employee training was key to surviving in a competitive business environment; therefore,

managers must invest more resources in this strategy (Hsieh & Yeh, 2015).

Theme 1 findings were similar to those of Alasadi and Sabbagh (2015), concluding that

employee training and education program makes a positive contribution to organizational

performance. Employee education and training are beneficial to both the employee and the fast

food restaurants. Current literature validates the findings that investing in employee education

and training ensures that all the staff has the necessary competence for discharging their duties in

ways that meet their full individual potential while also meeting the organizations' goals.

Georgiadis and Petelis (2016) produced similar results in a study of the UK food service sector,

concluding that employee training had a strong positive impact on labor productivity and

profitability.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Theme 1 related to Schultz's (1961) human

capital theory, which posited that individuals and societies derive economic benefits from

investments in people. The human capital theory is an influential economic theory positing the

importance of investment in the development and training of employees. Fitzsimons (2015)

opined that employee education and training is a key strategy and determinant of business

performance and survivability. By identifying potential top-performing employees and investing

in their training, organizations can assemble quality staff members that contribute to the

businesses' overall success, productivity, and survival.

Dimov and Shephard's (2005) findings suggest that investment in people leads to

education and experience, which results in firms' performance and business survival. Similarly,

Tan's (2014) conclusions align with the conceptual framework and Theme 1 of this study,

contending that employee education and training benefits employees and organizations alike.

The human capital theory identifies human beings as factors of production that organizations use

to generate added value.

Theme 2: Effective Management of People and Resources Lead to Business Survival

Data analysis yielded a second theme or conclusion – that effective management of people and resources leads to the survival of fast food businesses in Nigeria. Fast food managers must focus on the key responsibilities of managing employees and managing the resources of their businesses. All study participants indicated that they survived beyond 5 years in the business because they managed their employees and resources well. Poor leadership of people and unwise financial decisions leads to business failure. All five participants suggested that continuing their acquisition of leadership skills and financial management strategies was key to the survival of their businesses.

Participants M1, M3, M4, and M5 indicated that their monthly review of financial reports and their quarterly meetings with their financial teams kept them abreast of the state of their finances in their businesses. The study findings regarding the importance of managing people and resources for business survival aligns with the findings of Adisa, et al.'s (2014), who concluded that poor financial management contributes to the failure of fast food businesses in Nigeria. All five study participants contended that their management abilities contributed to their survival in the business longer than 5 years. Participant M5 insisted that his fast food business could not have survived beyond 5 years if he had not managed his resources and the staff well. Participant M1 shared, "I can attribute my success in this business to the management strategies I adopted, and how I encouraged my people to work harder." Participant M2 related the following:

The first thing I learned before opening my fast food joint (business) was to research why many businesses are failing in Nigeria. The top two issues I discovered were mismanagement of capital and inability to manage the employees. Most of them eat up their profits and their capital all at once. Bad management is what I consider that. Next, they cannot control their people very well, no discipline. I am a no-nonsense manager. My people can attest to that. You must be a tough manager to survive in this business environment.

Participant M3 said, "I consistently review my progress on how I use my capital. My policy is that business is business, and no room for friends and family to eat in my restaurant without paying." The response of participant M3 is consistent with the suggestion that no business can survive without fiscal discipline and effective leadership. García-Pérez, Yanes-Estevez, and Oreja-Rodriguez (2014) revealed that managers and owners of businesses are responsible for developing strategies that lead to the survival of their businesses. Managers are responsible for controlling and growing their businesses (Kolvereid & Isaksen, 2017).

One of the managers, M4, stated that developing additional skills was imperative. Participant M4 admitted that she had to learn and acquire additional managerial skills and took some financial management classes online to sharpen her abilities. Participant M4 shared, "Before I got into the restaurant business, I realized that to succeed I need to do things differently from other managers of fast food restaurants. I knew I had to be knowledgeable about financial management and developing effective strategies." Participant M4 indicated that she took online classes to acquire the skills she needed to succeed in the fast food business. Participant M4's

assertion aligned with the findings reported by Bilal et al. (2017) – that the greatest challenge for small businesses is poor management of resources.

The participants indicated that supervising their management staff was a huge undertaking for them. In listing the strategies that were effective in managing employees, participants mentioned: creating an avenue for teamwork, holding employees accountable for good customer service, working in council to make decisions, rewarding top performers, and applying disciplinary measures when appropriate. Participant M3 stated, "I realized early in my career in the fast food business that if I don't train the trainers well I won't be successful." All participants noted that a good restaurant manager must be able to manage the employees, control the finances of the business, and provide quality customer service always.

Jogaratnam (2017) observed that human capital, financial management, marketing orientation, and constant development of managers and employees' skills are principles managers can use to produce a sustainable competitive advantage. All participants in this study indicated that they operate their restaurants using effective strategies for managing people and resources. The findings of Theme 2 aligned with the conceptual framework, literature review, and addressed the overarching research question of this study.

A review of the last 3 years of financial reports for the restaurants managed by the five study participants showed increased revenue for all 3 years. Other portions of the financial reports revealed the financial management controls implemented to prevent financial misappropriations and to address risk management within the organizations. All the participants stated that they reviewed financial reports every month to analyze trends in the results of their

restaurant operations. Participants M1, M3 and M4 stated that the monthly review of financial reports helps management to measure restaurant success rates and to determine areas of needed improvement for profitability. In addition to reviewing financial reports, they also met quarterly with their financial teams to ensure compliance with financial management best practices.

Correlation to the literature. The second emergent theme of the study is the conclusion that effective management of resources and people lead to business survival. Adisa et al. (2014) indicated that the lack of proper business and management skills threaten the survival of fast food businesses in Nigeria. Approximately 80% of fast food restaurants launched in 2014 Nigeria failed to survive beyond 5 years because of inadequate management of people and resources (Sahagun & Vasquez-Parraga, 2014).

García-Pérez, Yanes-Estevez, and Oreja-Rodriguez (2014) revealed that managers and business owners are responsible for developing strategies that will lead to the survival of their businesses. Jogaratnam (2017) observed that human capital, financial management, marketing orientation, and constant development of managers and employees' skills are principles managers can use to produce a sustainable competitive advantage. Kolvereid and Isaksen (2017) concluded that managers are responsible for controlling and growing their businesses.

Customers are unlikely to return when service providers deliver a level of service quality that falls below their expectations (Fullerton, 2014). Fast food restaurants that provide quality service can easily meet their survival goals (Mahatma, Bakti, & Sumaedi, 2015). Customer service is the primary driver of customer satisfaction, which increases competitive advantage and organizational survivability (Kessler, Pachucki, Stummer, Mair, & Binder, 2015). Additionally,

Piekkari (2015) noted that placing customers' external and internal needs above every other need in an organization yields dividends.

According to Tan (2014), financial mismanagement represents one of the critical challenges facing the fast food industry in Nigeria. The Small and Medium Enterprise Development of Nigeria (SMEDAN) reported that 80% of food producing company in Nigeria do not have the financial and management strategies to survive longer in business. The findings noted in Theme 2 align with those reported by Tan (2014) and with the SMEDAN conclusions that survival in the fast food business depends on the effective and productive management of employees and resources.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Theme 2 aligned with the conceptual framework of human capital theory (Schultz, 1961). Acquiring leadership skills and financial management knowledge increased the capacity of the fast food managers to run their businesses and survive longer than 5 years. Dimov (2017) reported that managers who acquire advanced education and training could develop the capacity of others to be innovative, frugal, and profit-driven. The data collected from the interviewed participants showed that all five managers of fast food restaurants acquired additional educational qualifications that prepared them to be effective managers of people and effective stewards of their financial resources. Lara and Salas-Vallina (2017) and Backman, Gabe, and Mellander (2016) reported that investing in employee training and education increased the chances of an organization's survival.

Theme 3: Healthy Food Choice Attract Customers and Increased Revenue

Food quality and healthy food choice was the third theme that emerged from the analyzed data, with participants maintaining that the quality of food – specifically its acceptability to customers and its perceived health benefits – led to increased revenue. Increased revenue supports long-term business survival. Participants noted, reporting that food quality and nutritional information topped the list of issues important to fast food diners.

Participant M2 indicated, "our restaurants exist to provide quality food at affordable costs to customers." Similarly, participant M3 stated, "we are known for consistently serving quality and delicious meals to our customers – meals they cannot resist." Lee, Hallak, and Sardeshmukh (2016) opined that successful fast food restaurants are those that consistently focus on providing quality meals and improving customer service. In the study conducted by Lockett and Wild in 2014, the findings indicated that quality food service should be the hallmark of every restaurant.

Participants indicated that for a restaurant to survive longer than 5 years, it must continue to offer quality meals, superior customer service, and sustainable strategies for retaining customers. Participant M3 mentioned that providing constant leadership and oversight for restaurant workers, especially the chefs who prepare the meals, contributes to diners' experiences, which leads to increased revenue. Participant M4 stated, "I always do quality checks on the meals to be sure the food is prepared hygienically. Nothing kills a restaurant faster than when the food is tasteless and poorly prepared." Participant M5 concurred with the assertion of M4 that fast food restaurant often fails because of poor management of the employees who prepare the food. The survival of fast food restaurants depends on those who manage the

restaurant and on the menu selections they serve their customers (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). The findings of Theme 4 aligned with the conceptual framework, literature review, and addressed the overarching research question of this study.

In their 2017 study, Muhonen, Hirvonen, and Laukkanen discovered that organizations that have a unique brand are more likely to survive in business than those that do not. Similarly, fast food restaurants that are known for quality food and healthy menus survive longer than others. All participants concurred with the findings of Muhonen, Hirvonen, and Laukkanen (2017). Fast food restaurants can retain customer patronage and increase survivability when they remain consistent about serving quality food (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Participant M1 shared the following:

> Our mission is to give our customers the reason for them to return. One way we do that is to serve them good food – healthy meals. We are in the era of people wanting to eat out but not junk food. We always impressed upon our staff to ensure they serve fresh and delicious food to our customers.

The researcher also examined online reviews and customer feedback for the restaurants owned by the participating managers, observing that more than 90% of the customers who gave feedback indicated that food quality was the deal-breaker for their decisions about which restaurant to patronize. Similarly, loyal customers indicated that food quality was the major reason for their repeated patronage. In contrast, customers who were dissatisfied with their dining experience indicated that their dissatisfaction related primarily because of their meal choices.

The online customer reviews for the restaurants managed by participants M1, M2 and M4 showed that customers remained loyal to the restaurants because of the quality food served there and because of the health qualities of their menu selections. Several customers who left comments for the restaurant managed by Participant M1 rated the company highly because the food was delicious and desirable and because the menu included healthy options. Participant M2's customers expressed delight with the service because they were served meals that were fresh and warm. One of the customers commenting on the website of the restaurant managed by participant M2 explained that he was impressed with the restaurant because the menu included information about the contents of each item. Meal cost was another point of reference for the customers who left comments on the customer review section of the website for the restaurant owned by participant M4. While most of the customers indicated a lack of concern about cost if meals were well prepared, some customers indicated that cost was a determining factor for their dining choices. The website for the restaurant managed by participant M4 included comments that expressed appreciation regarding the restaurant's quick and efficient service.

Correlation to the literature. The third emergent theme of this study was the conclusion that healthy food choices drive the repeated patronage of diners. The findings noted in Theme 3 align with those of Kirkpatrick et al. (2014), who reported that food quality and healthfulness has become paramount among food attributes. According to Agarwal and Dahm (2015), the most important factor affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty in the fast food business is the lack of food quality and healthy menu choices. Individual customers have individual levels of concern

regarding the taste, presentation, healthiness, and variety of food on restaurant menus (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015).

Correlation to the conceptual framework. The responses of participating fast food managers were consistent with the human capital theory, which suggests that individuals and societies derive economic benefits from investing in people (Schultz, 1961; Sweetland, 1996). Researchers used this theory to report on the relationships between human capital and the survival of businesses (Ployhart, et al., 2014; Tan, 2014). According to the human capital theory, business managers need to use the available resources to develop their employees to be top performers in the industry (Dimov, 2017; Mahoney & Kor, 2015). Continuous training of fast food restaurant employees prepares the employees to support the restaurant' mission of serving quality, healthy meals, thereby increasing customer loyalty and sales revenue.

<center>**Applications to Professional Practice**</center>

Fast food restaurant managers who effectively deploy survival strategies in their restaurant businesses attract and retain more loyal customers, thereby increasing their businesses' revenue, creating jobs in the community and strengthening the economy (Mahoney & Kor, 2015). While there are several strategies fast food managers can use to stay in business longer than 5 years, the findings from this study revealed the importance of training employees to be customer-service oriented, managing people and resources, and serving high-quality, healthy meals. Study results may prove valuable to current and future managers of fast food businesses who can apply the survival strategies discussed in this study to improve the survivability of their businesses and provide the resulting benefits to their community as well, including increased

employment opportunities, higher wages, and increased tax revenue. The study findings can suggest strategies for fast food restaurant managers seeking to overcome potential barriers in their businesses.

The study revealed the fast food employees require continuing career development and training to improve customer service skills, which are key to increasing restaurant productivity and profit (Halabi & Lussier). Managers of fast food restaurants who invest in the development and training of their employees will reap increased loyalty among their customers and improved survivability in a competitive business sector. Managers who make knowledge acquisition a priority for themselves and for their employees gain a competitive advantage and increase the rate of survival for their businesses (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). The findings of this study can motivate managers to focus on developing and training their employees to be more customer service-oriented, thereby supporting the survivability goals of their fast food businesses.

Effective management of people and resources lead to the survival of businesses, which contributes to productivity and profitability of the businesses (Adisa, et al., 2014). Successful fast food businesses that are productive and profitable can succeed at long-term survival and provide benefits to the community of increased employment opportunities and tax revenue. Managers who apply the findings of this study to their businesses will make the building of leadership and managerial skills a priority, seeking to lead their employees effectively and gain a competitive advantage in their industry.

Agarwal and Dahm (2015) concluded that fast food restaurants would gain customer patronage and increased survival rates if managers seek to remain consistent in serving high-

quality, healthful food (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Serving quality, healthful meals attract loyal customers, which increases sales revenue and contributes to the longevity of the businesses' survival (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015). Managers can use the findings of this study to increase their understanding of the critical impact of high-quality, healthy food on business survival.

Furthermore, this qualitative multiple case study might help managers of the fast food business to understand how quality customer service, effective management of people and resources, and healthy food offerings can increase sales revenue and reduce the incidence of business failure before the 5-year mark. Fast food restaurant managers who adopt and implement survival strategies to address customer needs and satisfaction will stay in business longer (Eniola & Ektebang, 2014). Similarly, fast food restaurants that provide quality service can easily meet their survival goals (Mahatma, Bakti, & Sumaedi, 2015). New fast food managers can use the survival strategies that emerged from the data analysis of this study to increase employee development and training, to increase their focus on good customer service, to improve their management of people and resources, and to seek to serve high-quality, healthful meals, producing the important economic benefits of increased job opportunities and stimulation of the economy. Diligent training of employees with the goal of creating a customer service-oriented business leads to productivity and profitability for businesses and increases the businesses' chance of survival for more than 5 years.

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may help increase the chances of fast food restaurants in surviving longer than 5 years in the industry. The findings of this study may serve as reference

points for new and existing fast food business owners to acquire strategies and skills for improving business survivability and increasing employment opportunities for the community. Employment opportunities increase government revenue and reduce poverty (Ruetschlin 2014). The findings of this study may help fast food managers to acquire additional insights for expanding their business operations to other locations, thereby further increasing employment opportunities and government revenues. The poor economy in Nigeria is partly responsible for the high unemployment rate in the country (Salmon & Tanguy, 2016). Unemployment problems in Nigeria are often attributed to the increase in robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, drug addiction, and other criminal and irresponsible activities by the unemployed (Asaju, Arome, & Anyio, 2014). Employment keeps people engaged and enhances the prosperity of the country (Ruetschlin 2014).

Education, skills acquisition, and business knowledge lead to the survival of businesses (Dimov, 2017; Mahoney & Kor, 2015). The findings of this study may influence social change by providing strategies for new fast food businesses in Nigeria to survive longer than 5 years. When new businesses are growing and surviving, they become profitable and contribute to the prosperity of the owners, employees, communities, and the government. Lussier and Corman (2015) opined that businesses that survive longer than 5 years would continue to contribute to the stability and health of the economy. The survival strategies from this study may lead to increased job opportunities, sales revenue, and tax revenue for the government.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that fast food business managers use to survive beyond 5 years. The findings provided three conclusions regarding the issues that are vital to maximizing business survivability. By following the recommendations of the study, managers of fast food business can increase the skills necessary for their businesses' survival, with emphasis providing employee development vital to increasing business productivity, profitability, and survivability. The experiences and perspectives shared in this study can encourage business managers to focus on the customer service skills that lead to more loyal customers and increased revenue.

Study findings revealed four recommended actions for fast food managers. First, fast food managers should increase their focus on developing and improving the skills of their employees. The interviewed fast food managers indicated that fast food business fails to thrive when employee training is neglected. Managers should budget time and resources for helping their employees acquire skills and pursue an education that will benefit the employees and the organization alike. Employee educational development is consistent with the growth and survival of the company (Nasr & Boujelbene, 2014; Sonfield & Lussier, 2014).

Second, managers of fast food businesses should become better leaders, managers, and coaches, investing sufficient time in helping their employees become successful and top performers. High-performing employees contribute positively to the survivability of the fast food businesses they serve. Managers should strive to improve their abilities to manage resources and maintain profitability. The five study participants stated that weak leadership and lacking

financial discipline contribute to business failure. Managing resources well, on the other hand, is a key to fast food business survival in Nigeria (Olatunji, 2013).

Third, fast food restaurant managers must make customer satisfaction a priority. All five participants suggested that unhappy customers contribute to fast food business failure before 5 years. Customer service is the primary driver of customer satisfaction, and successful customer service increases competitive advantage and organizational survivability (Kessler, Pachucki, Stummer, Mair, & Binder, 2015). Piekkari (2015) noted that placing customers' external and internal needs above every other need in an organization yields dividends.

Fourth, fast food managers should increase their focus on serving high-quality, healthy, and affordable meals. The five study participants indicated that quality and healthful meals attract loyal customers, which contributes to business survival, and suggested that the failure to deliver quality food can threaten a fast food restaurant's long-term survival. Agarwal and Dahm (2015) identified food quality as the most important factor affecting customer satisfaction and loyalty. The taste, presentation, healthiness, and variety of food on the menu were important factors to customers (Agarwal & Dahm, 2015).

Study findings will be published in ProQuest, making the information available to managers of fast food businesses, students, and educational administrators who wish to gather information on this issue. The researcher also intends to disseminate the study findings in academic research journals including Food and Public Health Journal, International Journal of Contemporary Management, International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science, and

International Journal of Business and Management. Study findings will also be shared with the fast food managers who participated in this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that fast food business managers use to keep their businesses operating for more than 5 years. Literature about the strategies that Nigerian fast food businesses are using to survive longer than 5 years; therefore, future research is recommended. Conducting further research may provide valuable insights not revealed in this study and may identify other strategies that can help fast food restaurant managers increase the survivability of their restaurants.

Section 1 of this study delineated four limitations to the study, with the first being the choice to focus the research on fast food managers. Future research could gather the perspectives of other fast food business leaders. Section 1 also noted the limitation of time that may have prevented participants from expressing all relevant responses to particular questions. Future researchers could design studies that are more flexible regarding the time allotted for interviews. The third limitation noted in Section 1 was the focus on participants from a single geographical location. Therefore, future research could select participants from a less specific geographical target area. Section 1 also listed a fourth limitation of the study – the use of a qualitative research method centered on semistructured interviews and data collected from secondary sources. As de Clerca et al. (2014) and Marshall et al. (2014) note, semistructured interviews can draw emotions and biases from the participants. Future researchers may wish to choose quantitative or mixed

methods for subsequent studies, eliminating the feelings, emotions, or biases that can hinder the reliability and validity of a study.

Finally, future researchers may want to expand their studies to include a larger number of participants to gather a larger quantity of data and potentially increase the credibility of the study findings. The use of larger sample size may yield different results (Boddy, 2016).

Reflections

The intent of conducting this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies fast food business managers are using to help their businesses survive beyond 5 years. The researcher observations of the failure of a family food business in Nigeria before reaching 5 years in operation created an interest in the issue of fast food business survivability. As reported by Sahagun and Vasquez-Parraga (2014), approximately 80% of the fast food restaurants launched in Nigeria in 2014 failed to survive beyond 5 years.

The work experience gained as an employee of the family food business provided the researcher with first-hand knowledge of the challenges experienced by managers of fast food businesses in Nigeria. From this experience, the researcher determined to examine strategies that fast food business managers can use to help their businesses survive beyond 5 years. The findings of this study provided insight into the reasons that fast food businesses fail prematurely and provided information on the priorities that fast food managers should have in mind before starting their business.

The process of completing this study was daunting, educating, time-consuming, and frustrating. The challenges encountered during the research process increased the researcher's

focus and determination. The researcher also learned how to work with and interact with people and obtain valuable business information regarding the strategies that can keep fast food business afloat for more than 5 years. The findings of this study have motivated the researcher to consider starting a fast food business and serving as a consultant for fast food restaurants.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that fast food business managers use to keep their businesses thriving beyond the 5-year mark. The conceptual framework for this study was the human capital theory, which suggests that business managers need to use available resources to develop high-performing employees (Dimov, 2017). The researcher used semistructured interviews to gather data from five managers of fast food businesses in Lagos, Nigeria. The researcher also gathered data from the restaurants' online customer ratings, employee satisfaction surveys, internal employee engagement surveys for the past 3 years, and historical business files. Fusch and News (2015) explained that data saturation occurs when answers to interview questions become repetitive, and no new information or coding themes emerge – in the case of this study, data saturation was reached after completing the interview with the fifth fast food manager.

The findings of the study include three distinctive themes of conclusions: (a) that employee development and training improved customer service, (b) that effective management of resources and people led to business survival, and (c) that healthy food choices attracted customers and increased revenue. The information derived from the findings of the study may help managers of fast food businesses to identify strategies they can use to overcome potential

barriers in the business. The findings of this study may influence social change by providing strategies that managers can use to help new fast food businesses in Nigeria to survive longer than 5 years. When new businesses are growing and surviving, they become profitable and contribute to the prosperity of the owners, employees, communities, and the government. Lussier and Corman (2015) noted that businesses that survive longer than 5 years would continue to contribute to the stability and health of the economy.

In conclusion, future managers of fast food restaurants should adhere to the recommended actions of this study. Available literature is limited on the subject of strategies supporting the survival of fast food businesses in Nigeria beyond the first 5 years of operation. This researcher recommends a further inquiry into this topic to uncover additional business survival strategies for Nigeria's fast food businesses.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Questions

Participant Pseudonym:_____ Participant
Code_____
Interview Date_____ Total Time_____

Interview Protocol

What I will do	What I will say—script

1. Introduce the interview and set the stage—often over a meal or coffee

2. Present consent form, go over contents and answer questions and concerns of participant 3. Give participant copy of consent form.

3. Give participant copy of consent form.

A. Good afternoon Mr/Mrs xxxx, My name is Victor Ukorebi, a doctoral student at Walden University, conducting a study on the strategies fast food restaurants need to survive in their businesses beyond 5 years.
B. Thank you for taking the time to respond to the invitation to participate in this study, here is a copy of your signed consent form for your record
C. I want to believe you have read, understood and in agreement with the content of the informed consent form but should you have any questions or concerns, I would like to take address it before we commence with the interview.

1. Turn on the recording device.

2. Follow the procedure to introduce participant(s) with coded identification; note the date and time.

3. Begin interview with question #1; follow through to the final question.

4. Follow up with additional questions.

5. End interview

1. What critical factors do you believe contributed to the survival of your fast food business within the first 5 years?
2. What strategies do you implement to attract, satisfy, and retain your customers?
3. Describe the support services available to you when you started the business.
4. How are you sustaining the survival of your fast food business while so many others are failing?
5. Describe how competition has impacted your business survival beyond 5 years.

6. What strategies have you used to survive in your business beyond the first 5 years?
7. What other experiences, not covered in this interview, would you like to share that might benefit future managers of fast food business?

Wrap up interview thanking participant	Thanks for taking out time to share your experiences with me on the topic of the strategies fast food restaurants need to survive in their businesses beyond 5 years. I will transcribe the interview data and return to you for transcript review to ensure the correctness of the interview data within the next five days.
Schedule follow-up member checking interview	I would like to agree a time to meet with you to review the result of my analysis and interpretation of the findings of the interview for about 45 minutes or less.

Introduce follow-up interview and set the stage	Script XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Share a copy of the succinct synthesis for each question	Script XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Bring in probing questions related to other information that you may have found—note the information must be related so that you are probing and adhering to	1. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed 2. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed 3. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed

the IRB approval. Walk through each question, read the interpretation and ask: Did I miss anything? Or, What would you like to add?

4. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed

5. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed

6. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed

7. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation—perhaps one paragraph or as needed

Appendix B: E-mail to Confirm Interview Transcript

Dear (Potential Participant's Name),

Thank you for your participation in my research study entitled "Fast Food Business Survivability Beyond 5 years in Nigeria." I am emailing you to request your assistance in reviewing the transcript from our interview on (insert date).

I would like to speak with you within the next 5 days to inquire if you have any changes to the transcript. Should this time frame not work for you please email me times that are more convenient for you in reply to this e-mail.

Thank you again for your participation in my research project.

Sincerely,

Victor B. Ukorebi
DBA Candidate
Walden University

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter for Study Participants

[Date]
Re: Fast Food Business Survivability Beyond 5 years in Nigeria
Dear [Name]:

My name is Victor B. Ukorebi, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in Business Administration – Leadership at Walden University. I am conducting research on the successful business strategies required for a fast food business to survive in Nigeria. The title of the study is: "Fast Food Business Survivability Beyond 5 years in Nigeria" I am conducting this study to explore the strategies some fast food businesses are using to survive in their businesses beyond 5 years.

I am seeking face-to-face interviews with managers of some fast food businesses who meet the following criteria:

- Fast food managers who have been in the business for over 5 years
- Business must be at least 5 years old or more
- The fast food business must have annual sales between N5, 000,000 and N20, 000,000 million Naira with a minimum number of 25 employees that has been in business longer than 5 years.
- Business must be currently operating in the Southwest of Nigeria.

I developed the study selection criteria to assure that participants are likely to possess knowledge and information that are relevant to the purpose of this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time, even after I have completed data collection for the study. I will protect your identity, and your responses to interview questions will not be published or disclosed. I will record all your responses to the questions and record them for analysis and report in the study with no information that identifies you or your organization. I will share the findings from the study with study participants, other scholars, and the managers of the fast food restaurants within the industry. I am requesting that you participate in my study. I will also contact you within the next five days to answer any questions that you may have and to ask for your participation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,

Victor B. Ukorebi
DBA Candidate
Walden University