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Strategies Small Business Salon Owners Use to Survive Longer Than 5 Years

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Delita Netrice Johnson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Strategies Small Business Salon Owners Use to Survive Longer Than 5 Years

by

Delita N. Johnson

MS, Bethel University, 2015

BS, Union University, 2012

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2018

Abstract

Small business owners are the primary initiators of innovation and economic growth but fail at high rates. Fifty percent of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of operations. Through the lens of systems theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies some small salon business owners use to remain in business for longer than 5 years. Using purposeful sampling, the 7 owners of small salon business owners in the southeastern United States were selected based upon evidence of their strategies to sustain their businesses for longer than 5 years. Data were collected through semistructured, face-to-face interviews and a review of business licenses, certifications, and financial records. During data analysis using Yin's 5-step process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and drawing data-based conclusions, 4 major themes emerged: (a) business growth strategy, (b) customer relationship strategy, (c) financial capital strategy, and (d) marketing strategy. The findings indicated that implementing strategies to maintain business growth, building relationships with customers, securing sufficient financial capital, and engaging in effective marketing are essential for small salon business owners to survive in business longer than 5 years. The implications for positive social change include the potential for small salon business owners to generate employment, sustain the livelihood of employees, contribute to the local economy, and reduce local unemployment rates.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I dedicate this study to my heavenly Father, my Savior, my Creator, my God! There is no way that I could have finished this journey had it not been for You! I dedicate this to my backbone, my husband, Anthony Johnson; I appreciate your patience, understanding, and support! I dedicate this work to my children, Isaiah, Justin, and Kayleb, to my daughter-in-law and future grandchildren, to my Mom (the pusher) and my Dad, to my step-mom, to Momma and Daddy J, to my brothers and sisters (in-laws included), and to all my friends who encouraged me to keep pressing forward. Finally, I offer a special dedication to all my angels in heaven. I love all of you!

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Thank you, God, for giving me strength to make it through this strenuous process. I acknowledge that this journey was all about you and pursuing a goal that I never dreamed possible. I acknowledge every supporter and encourager, thank you. I also acknowledge the doctoral committee who became a big part of my life by helping me to achieve my goal; Dr. Ronald Jones, Dr. Janie Hall, and Dr. Matthew Knight, thank you all so very much. Dr. Ron, I pray you know how much you mean to me. You pushed me to greatness. To my cohorts, thank you.

To my family, thank you so much for being there for me throughout this journey. Mere words are not enough to express my gratitude for your patience, love, and understanding in the pursuit of my doctorate. Anthony, I love you and owe you so much for letting me lock myself up in my room, and missing some date nights. Finally, to my special angels in heaven, thank you for watching over me: Big Mama, Granddaddy, Jordyn, Kinsey, and Mama Darnell.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small businesses are valuable to the growth of the U.S. economy (Babu & Kasilingam, 2015; Ho & Barnes, 2013). According to the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) (2014), 50% of small businesses fail within the first 5 years of operation. Small businesses play a critical role in creating jobs in the United States, making up 99.7% of U.S. employer firms, 64% of private sector jobs, 49.2% of private sector employment, 42.9% of private sector payroll, 46% of private sector output, 43% of high tech employment, 98% of firms exporting goods, and 33% of exporting value (SBA, 2014). Small businesses fail because of lack of skills, insufficient resources, inexperience, inadequate management, and inadequate marketing skills (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014). Exploring strategies small business salon owners use to sustain their businesses longer than 5 years is the focus on this qualitative, multiple case study.

Background of the Problem

Small businesses are the primary initiators of innovation and economic growth (Cheng, 2015), but fail at high rates (Turner & Endres, 2017). Small business owners boost economic growth by generating job opportunities and self-employment (Babu & Kasilingam, 2015). Small business leaders must implement effective strategies to survive in a competitive environment (Zeuli & O'Shea, 2017).

Small business owners contribute approximately 39% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the United States and are accountable for the development and sustainability of their businesses (Ho & Barnes, 2013). Even with the high rate of failure, the United States economy relies on the strength of small businesses (Hayes, Chawla, &

Kathawala, 2015). Small businesses represent 99.9% of all U.S. businesses, accounting for 54% of all U.S. sales (SBA, 2013).

Chen and Chen (2013) established that large businesses have a nearly 100% survival rate, while small businesses have a low survival rate. Poor management, including incompetence, neglect, lack of experience, poor planning, and a poor economy are contributors that lead to small business failure (Miles, 2014). Financial vulnerability can lead to small business failure (Miles, 2014). Leonidou, Christodoulides, Kyrgidou, and Palihawadana (2017) noted that further research is necessary to understand the phenomenon of small business failure. Miles (2014) recommended additional research on strategies small business salon owners might use to survive longer than 5 years in business because multiple factors affect small businesses, including market dynamics, customer turnover, and ecology. Geho and Dangelo (2012) surmised that small business owners experience difficulty in sustaining their businesses longer than 5 years.

Problem Statement

Ninety-five percent of all businesses within the United States are small businesses, yet approximately 50% of small businesses fail within 5 years (Holloway & Schaefer, 2014). Approximately 544,000 new businesses originate each year (SBA, 2014); small business salons in the cosmetology industry fail at a rate of 51% within 5 years (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2017). The general business problem was some small business salon owners start their business without adequate planning for long-term sustainability of their businesses. The specific business problem was some small business salon owners lack strategies to remain in business longer than 5 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some small salon business owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. The targeted population consisted of small salon owners in seven cosmetology salons in Tennessee because these owners successfully implemented strategies to remain in business longer than 5 years. Thriving small business owners create jobs, contribute to local economic development, and promote social value (Meyskens & Bird, 2015). The implications for positive social change are the potential for small salon business owners to sustain the livelihood of employees, contribute to the local economy, and reduce local unemployment rates.

Nature of the Study

Three methods of research exist: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Qualitative researchers explore interpretations, meaning, and personal experiences of participants to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Birchall, 2014). I selected the qualitative method to explore and gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon through open discourse and interpretation. Quantitative researchers test hypotheses through statistical analysis (Yin, 2018). Mixed-method researchers combine a qualitative and quantitative element (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). I did not test hypotheses through analyzing numeric data; therefore, a quantitative or mixed-method approach is not appropriate.

I considered four research designs: phenomenology, ethnography, narrative inquiry, and case study. Phenomenological researchers explore a phenomenon through

participants' lived experiences (Butina, 2015). The phenomenological design is not the optimal choice for this study because I did not explore a phenomenon through participants' lived experiences. Business researchers use ethnographic research to learn the culture of a specific setting or environment (Morgan-Trimmer & Wood, 2016). Ethnographic research was not suitable because I did not study the cultural meanings and practices of a community. Narrative inquirers use the life stories of participants as data (Butina, 2015). A narrative inquiry was not an appropriate design because I was not collecting life stories from participants. Case study researchers conduct an in-depth investigation of a current phenomenon within a bounded, real-life setting (Rule & John, 2015). A case study was the optimal design for this proposed study because I conducted an in-depth exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life, contextual setting.

Research Question

What strategies do some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies did you use to remain in business longer than 5 years?
2. What strategies did you use to initiate the growth of your business during the first 5 years?
3. What marketing strategies did you use to survive longer than 5 years?
4. What financial strategies did you use to sustain your business for the first 5 years?

5. What strategies did you use to manage the key processes and systems within your business?
6. What strategies were most effective for your business surviving longer than 5 years?
7. What barriers did you face implementing to remain in business longer than 5 years?
8. How did you overcome the barriers to implement the strategies used to remain in business longer than 5 years?
9. What additional strategies did you use to remain in business longer than 5 years that we have not discussed?

Conceptual Framework

Systems theory originated by von Bertalanffy (1950) is the conceptual framework for this study. Systems theorists provide real-world explanations that strengthen comprehension for enhanced levels of predictive ability and explanatory power of practical everyday situations (Adams, Hester, Bradley, Meyers, & Keating, 2014). Von Bertalanffy maintained that components of a system converge with one another rather than operate alone to measure the properties and functioning of that system (Morgeson, Mitchell, & Dong, 2015). Business leaders use systems theory to clarify real-world business issues (Morgeson et al., 2015).

The tenets of systems theory are (a) a holistic approach instead of a simplistic summation of the parts, (b) the requirement for interconnections, and (c) controlling the system (von Bertalanffy, 1972). Business systems include decision-making, financial,

accounting, supplier, marketing, and internal systems that are necessary for business survival (Appelbaum, Kogan, Vasarhelyi, & Yan, 2017). I chose systems theory as being a useful guiding lens for this study because a holistic systems approach to business management remains essential for business survival.

Operational Definitions

Business sustainability: Business sustainability is the ability of an organization to respond to the profitable needs of the organization (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014).

Cosmetics: Cosmetics are articles planned to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled, or sprayed on, introduced into, or otherwise applied to the human body for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or changing the appearance (Kelsey-Anne, 2014). The cosmetic definition includes nail polishes, solvents, and all nail products used in the process of a manicure (Kelsey-Anne, 2014).

Salon business owner: A salon business owner is the owner of a small business who employs workers or individual contract workers who use cosmetics (Kelsey-Anne, 2014).

Small business: A small business is a privately held firm with 500 or fewer employees (SBA, 2014). A small business is (a) organized for profit; (b) has a place of business in the United States; (c) functions mainly in the United States or makes a substantial contribution to the U.S. economy through payment of taxes on the use of U.S. products, materials, or labor; (d) is independently owned and operated; and (e) is not dominant in its field on a national basis (SBA, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are elements that are marginally out of the researcher's control, but required for the relevancy of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Assumptions are factors that are assumed to be true, but are not confirmable (Simon & Goes, 2013). I assumed the participants provided honest, accurate, and complete answers to the interview questions. I received permission to review company documents, such as business licences, certifications, and financial records. I assumed the documents were accurate, up-to-date, and complete.

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control and place emphasis on both the internal and external validity of a study (Connelly, 2013). A limitation of this study was the validity of interview data collected relied on the knowledge and interpretations of small business salon owners in seven businesses that did not mirror the views of the broader population of salon industry leaders. The study's conclusive findings might not transfer to other geographic regions or business cases because of the limited scope of this study. A final limitation was that I relied on the honesty of potential participants as well as the accuracy of supporting documentation to identify small business owners in the salon industry who implemented successful strategies to survive longer than 5 years in business.

Delimitations

Delimitations are characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Simon and Goes (2013) noted delimitations are within the researcher's control. The geographic region of Tennessee was a delimitation. The sample population limitation of seven small business owners in the salon industry also represented a delimitation. The participant inclusion criteria of small business salon owners who successfully applied strategies to survive in business longer than 5 years limited the scope of this study. The sample population restricted to Tennessee was a delimitation. Another delimitation was answering the research question required focusing on strategies small business salon owners used to survive in business longer than 5 years.

Significance of the Study

Small business owners play a vital role in society, accounting for most new job creation (Albornoz, 2016). Lekhanya and Mason (2014) noted that small businesses fail because of lack of skills, insufficient resources, inexperience, inadequate management, and inadequate marketing skills. Small business owners may gain valuable strategies to improve the long-term sustainability of their businesses as well as improve local social conditions from the findings of this study.

Contribution to Business Practice

Small business salon owners might improve their business practices for improved survivability because of gaining additional knowledge and insight from exposure to effective strategies to remain in business longer than 5 years. The significance of the study was to help small business salon owners recognize how to improve the long-term

sustainability of their businesses. Small business owners who experience long-term sustainability in their business sector do so through profitability, business development, training, human capital, and stability (Asfaw, 2016). The findings of this study prove beneficial to small business salon owners for enhanced financial performance, growth, and stability, and fortification of their position in the salon industry.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change are the potential for small salon business owners to sustain the livelihood of employees, contribute to the local economy, and reduce local unemployment rates. Small business owners remain essential for local competitiveness and productivity (Ludmila, Lubor, & Dimitris, 2017). Small business owners who survive in business create employment, increase economic development, and promote social value (Meyskens & Bird, 2015). Communities may benefit economically because of lower unemployment rates, improved standard of living for residents, and local economic stability.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some small salon business owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years in Tennessee. Small business leaders and owners are motivators of innovation and economic growth, contributing to nearly 39% of the GDP in the United States (Cheng, 2015; Ho & Barnes, 2013). Small businesses represent 99.9% of all United States businesses, accounting for 54% of all U.S. sales (SBA, 2013). Approximately 544,000 new businesses originate

each year (SBA, 2014). The United States Department of Labor indicated that 51% of small businesses fail to succeed longer than 5 years of operation (DOL, 2017).

In the literature review, I provided analysis and synthesis of published research on strategies small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. The literature review will comprise of both current and seminal peer-reviewed research for studies regarding the conceptual framework, systems theory. To retrieve peer-reviewed and seminal articles for review, I used the Walden University library database, Walden University Thoreau search engine, Bethel University library database, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, ABI/INFORM Emerald Management Journals, Google Scholar, and other online websites as primary sources for research. I used the following key words in the search for relevant articles: *small business sustainability, small business innovation, cosmetics, cosmetology, small business, small business owner, small business financing, small business failure, small business success, small business marketing, systems theory, human capital, and small business sustainability.*

The literature review, grounded in the conceptual framework, consists of analyzed insights and viewpoints regarding how small business salon owners remain in business longer than 5 years. Von Bertalanffy (1950) originated systems theory to use various viewpoints to study the many elements and systems within businesses. Systems theorists strengthen the understanding for improving levels of predictive ability and explanatory power of practical everyday situations (Adams et al., 2014). The literature review is organized as follows: (a) conceptual framework, (b) small business success, challenges and failures, (c) the cosmetology industry, (d) innovation, (e) sustainability, (f)

leadership, (g) organizational development, (h) financing, (i) marketing, and (j) human capital.

My strategy for searching the literature review is to ascertain and identify significant keywords and ideas, find pertinent company document information related to the study in order to keep the literature review limited to the scope of the research, explore electronic databases using relative keywords, examine the selection of materials for credibility, and review updated resources that aligned with advances in the field with significance to the topic in an organized and systematic flow. The total number of references include: (a) six government reports, (b) three dissertations, (c) six books, and (d) 239 peer-reviewed journal articles. Of the 254 references used, 94% were peer-reviewed journal articles and 89% were published in 2014-2018. Eighty references are unique to the literature review.

Systems Theory

Small business owners might use systems theory to resolve real world business problems by regarding individual parts as an entire or whole system. Business leaders, social scientists, and academicians use systems theory to provide a framework for analyzing real-world explanations in order to strengthen knowledge for a higher level of predictive ability and explanatory power of real-life situations (Adams et al., 2014). In agreement with Adams et al. (2014), Morgeson et al. (2015) commented that researchers use systems theory to clarify real-world business issues. Broks (2016) viewed the principles of systems theory and theorized that the significant principles include (a) replication of human world phenomena in a human's world of thoughts as systems, (b) a

totality of systems interrelated parts, (c) an individual's interest to study and use systems properties to gratify their corresponding needs of life, (d) human cognizes of the world by parts, and (e) the cause of everything is an interconnection of everything. Adams et al. refuted Broks by suggesting that the significance of systems theory is the unified cluster of detailed propositions used by researchers, systems practitioners, and business leaders to gain an enhanced understanding of the organizational systems. Business owners employ systems theory to simplify and describe real world phenomena.

Shaked and Schechter (2016) conducted a qualitative study with principals that determined that systems theorists do not break down systems into parts in order to understand them. Systems theory is a framework for seeing the whole and is an effective way of handling real-world problems. Adams et al. (2014) noted, in opposition to Shaked and Schechter, that systems theorists encourage the harmony of science through cultivating communication among professionals enabling researchers to identify interrelatedness and parts of the system rather than individual patterns. Ackoff (1994) expanded on von Bertalanffy's (1950) research, clarifying that researchers involved in the study of systems theory resolve real business problems. The tenets of systems theory are (a) a holistic approach instead of a simplistic summation of the parts, (b) the requirement for interconnections, and (c) controlling the system (von Bertalanffy, 1972). Ackoff determined that researchers who uncover real business situations explore ways to reduce and improve the phenomenon. Kim and Senge (1994) alleged that an organization is a whole system composed of numerous subsystems inside the organization. Alignment among social foundations and human ideologies are essential for an organization to

operate correctly (Kim & Senge, 1994). These organizational alignments demonstrate how humans respond to changes made within an organization regarding survival (Ackoff, 1994; Kim & Senge, 1994).

Sayin (2016) posited that systems theory is a method used to create a reasonable, mathematical, self-consistent, self-existing, coherent model to describe the interactions of the elements, functions, and development of a closed or open system. System theory is vital to define, organize, evaluate, control, regulate the systems, and form mathematical models in a set of elements of a system (Sayin, 2016). Sayin noted that general systems theory is a term adopted to describe a level of theoretical model-building laying between a highly generalized construction of pure mathematics, logic and the specific theories of a specialized discipline. Karakurt and Silver (2014) found that since systems theorists assume that all parts of the system link to each other, an accurate understanding is not conceivable if researchers view and examine the parts separately. Systems theorists focus on the interactions that transpire between members of the system (Karakurt & Silver, 2014).

Tenets of Systems Theory

Researchers and business leaders use the tenets of systems theory to gain a deeper understanding of the interacting parts of whole systems (Belinfanti & Stout, 2018; Yaşar, 2017). The overall health and continued functioning of a system remains contingent upon the sustained health and functioning of each of the subsystems (Belinfanti & Stout, 2018). Subsystems must align with the whole system to work properly (Belinfanti & Stout, 2018). Applying the principles of systems theory offers insights about the nature of

a business and measures managerial techniques and performance (Cao, 2017). Systems theorists use the tenets of the theory to promote accountability and sustainability (Belinfanti & Stout, 2018).

Holistic approach. Zamanzadeh, Jasemi, Valizadeh, Keogh, and Taleghani (2015) confirmed, in a qualitative study, that the idea of holism is representative of the basis of the philosophy of system theory. The holistic approach is the concept that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). Fiandaca et al. (2017) argued that a systems' holistic approach aims to be comprehensive and exhaustive in coverage. Fiandaca et al. established in their research that the holistic approach of systems thinking is a set of parts viewed as a whole. Fiandaca et al. commented that the holistic approach is comparable to a set of physical parts that are fragments of a whole system, such as a structural system of a building or the traction control system of an automobile. Fiandaca et al. compared a holistic approach to a human being and all the physical systems with a person's body. Chan (2015) attested that individuals who view parts of a system under a single lens utilizing a holistic approach gain the ability to explore business issues from an in-depth perspective.

Interconnection. Systems theory is a means for researchers and business leaders to comprehend the interconnections between numerous elements with a complex system (Abdussamad, 2014). Zamanzadeh et al. (2015) viewed systems interconnections as highly pervasive. Zamanzadeh et al. defined systems interconnections as a set of objects or ideas that link to each other, convey a meaning, or achieve outcomes unachievable by any single part on its own. The interconnections of a system join to achieve a purpose

(Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). Contrary to Abdussamad (2014) and Zamanzadeh et al., Chan (2015) associated systems interconnections as seeing the macro view of things as opposed to a detailed microscopic view. Chan contended that systems interconnections permit business owners to understand how individual objects fit together, helping them explain a phenomenon. Chan described interconnections as the capability to distinguish the forest from the trees. Applying systems interconnections principles in research gives individuals the ability to solve problems in a stable and holistic way instead of focusing on one facet of the problem (Chan, 2015).

Controlling the system. Abdussamad (2014) determined that by controlling the system, researchers discover hidden factors, allowing for appropriate handling. Young and Leveson (2014) argued that controlling the system aids in avoiding certain losses because of several types of threats and disruptions. Shaked and Schechter (2016) agreed with Young and Leveson by mentioning that business owner's use controlling the system with complex organizational problems. Controlling the system using the principles of systems theory might help business owners to make better organizational decisions (Breil, Ritchie, & Greer, 2017). Systems thinking is an efficient means of facing real-world problems (Shaked & Schechter, 2016).

Contrasting Theory

Systems theory, originated by von Bertalanffy (1950), is different from the chaos theory originated in 1961 by Edward Lorenz (Boudreau & Dubé, 2017). Systems theory emerged within the scientific field of biology in 1950, founded on the fundamental set of ideas and principles for the study of complex holistic conditions (von Bertalanffy, 1950).

System theory can be universal, perfect, imperfect, or defective (Sayin, 2016).

Contrariwise, chaos theory occurred within the context of quantum physics in the 1970s, used by researchers to explain phenomena in clinical practice (Boudreau & Dubé, 2017).

Broks (2016) defined systems theory as a tool for solving problems. However, Boudreau and Dubé (2017) described chaos theory as an active system in motion with constant changing behavior patterns that never return to its original condition to maintain balance. In contrast, von Bertalanffy (1972) argued that components of a system converge with one another rather than operate alone to measure the properties and functioning of that system. Various applications of chaos exist, ranging from leaders explaining business cycles to forecasting movements in stock markets (Simionescu, 2016).

The tenets of chaos theory are (a) an individual's life perceived as a complex active system that is inseparable from his or her setting, (b) a description of intricate relationships, and (c) providing needs for an individual's enhanced living (Boudreau & Dubé, 2017). McMahon (2017) described systems theory as a system as an intricate element standing in interaction. McMahon stated that the views of systems theorists show individuals as systems living in a complex context that encompasses a social system. The individual system is where career development research and theory has focused on intrapersonal influences like personality and interests (McMahon, 2017). Conversely, Akmansoy and Kartal (2014) proposed that some leaders use chaos theory to invoke substantial, transformational change in an organization.

Akmansoy and Kartal (2014) surmised that researchers and business owners might find the chaos theory helpful in predicting future results. Conversely, McCarthy (2014) believed that chaotic systems are sensitive and initial conditions are difficult to identify, which makes accurate predictions and forecasting challenging. McCarthy deemed that chaos theorists detect a complex system as having some interrelated parts that are dynamic and continuously changing. Chaos theorists seek to explain and make logic of the behavior of a system (McCarthy, 2014). McCarthy explained how the analogy of the butterfly infers that in chaotic systems small inputs may result in substantial outcomes. The butterfly effect is the reliance on early conditions in which a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system may result in massive variances at a later state (McCarthy, 2014). Predictability is the focus of organizational and business management practitioners who have not contemplated the benefits of chaos and how to manage the conditions according to chaos theory (McCarthy, 2014).

Small Business Success, Challenges, and Failure

Small businesses have 500 or fewer employees (Hayes et al., 2015). Small businesses are independently owned, for-profit businesses and are not dominant in their industry field (SBA, 2014). Senge (2010) described businesses as complex systems since they have various interacting reaction loops between their elements, interact with other complex systems, and produce nonlinear, emergent behaviors. Broks (2016) postulated that business leaders could use systems theory to solve complex business problems. Broks determined that small business owners who use systems theory as a tool for solving intricate business problems may overcome challenges. Bengtsson and Johansson

(2014) agreed with Broks that small start-up business owners face multiple challenges when attempting to develop and sustain new businesses. Small business owners lack major resources, have a small presence in the market, and depend upon a small product or service a niche customer base (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2014). Bengtsson and Johansson added that another challenge for small businesses is the need for outside resources, which reflects a liability of smallness. Small businesses owners who do not identify which problems to avoid may fail (Hayes et al., 2015).

The United States economy relies on the strength of small businesses, which represent 99.9% of total U.S. businesses (Hayes et al., 2015). Hayes et al. (2015) noted that no simple design for success exists amid small businesses; nor is there a general theoretical framework for success. Small businesses play a vital role in the economy, but have a limited resource base (Burgstaller & Wagner, 2015; Lavia Lopez & Hiebl, 2014). Small businesses fail for various reasons and are more vulnerable to external events in comparison to larger businesses (Falkner & Hiebl, 2015). Small business survival is threatened more so than larger businesses because small business owners have inadequate financial and nonfinancial resources (Falkner & Hiebl, 2015). In agreement with Falkner and Hiebl (2015), Nel and Abdullah (2017) specified that some small business owners utilize financial measurements to determine business success, while other small business owners determine success by nonfinancial business measurements. Nonfinancial business measures refer to the number of employees, productivity, reputation, perception, market share, and other nonfinancial measures (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). Nel and Abdullah stated

that several studies have found that a small business owner's personal goals relate to success.

Sarmiento, Hoberman, Jerath, and Ferreira Jordao (2016) offered an insightful overview that small business owners invest massive sums of money, time, and resources to survive; lack of planning for disastrous events often lead to failed businesses. Sarmiento et al. surmised that when small businesses prepare for disasters with a business continuity plan, they thrive longer. Linnenluecke and McKnight (2017) remarked that natural disasters pose significant challenges to the economic sustainability of small businesses. In rebuttal to Sarmiento et al., Linnenluecke and McKnight stated that despite adversity, small businesses need the ability to absorb devastating impacts by maintaining value during and in the aftermath of a natural disaster. However, Sarmiento et al. and Linnenluecke and McKnight agreed that disaster resiliency and business continuity plans are vital for sustaining small businesses. Although disaster resiliency and business continuity plans are standard for businesses, small business owners are often not aware of the costs in not preparing for unexpected disasters (Sarmiento et al., 2016). Small business owners who do not recognize a business continuity plan as high priority for implementation; therefore, might not comprehend the substantial benefits gained from such plans (Sarmiento et al., 2016).

Success in the business field is the accomplishment of business objectives within a stated period (Nel & Abdullah, 2017). Small businesses are irrefutably critical to the advancement of the economy (Adisa, Abdulraheem, & Mordi, 2014). Small business leaders generate employment, aid in the development of technology, and develop

indigenous entrepreneurs (Adisa et al., 2014). Horne and Ivanov (2015) assessed challenges that plague and hinder the success of small businesses. Horne and Ivanov determined that the lack of structure and proper protocols might lead to the failure of small businesses. Leaders using micromanagement techniques might be a detriment to small business success because of creating an environment of distrust among employees (Horne & Ivanov, 2015). Horne and Ivanov suggested that new small businesses owners implement flexible strategies to improve sustainability and business success.

The SBA (2013) reported that seven of 10 small businesses survive at least 2 years. Lekhanya and Mason (2014) observed that the factors influencing small business failure are a lack of skills and a lack of access to finance. Small businesses are unable to expand without adequate financing (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014). Small businesses contribute a significant percentage of the GDP of the United States and are critical forces of business growth (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016). Research indicated that small business failure occurs because of barriers such as (a) finance restriction, (b) marketing, (c) information communication technology, (d) skill, (e) innovation, (f) human resource management practices, (g) access to skilled employees, and (h) government bureaucracy and regulations (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016). Small businesses are contributory for industrialization (Lekhanya & Mason, 2014; Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016)

The Cosmetology Industry

Approximately half a million individuals in the United States are employed in the cosmetology field (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2014). The BLS (2014) estimated the number of cosmetologists in the United States at 460,520. Cosmetologists

must obtain proper license and training provide beauty services (Norlien, Landsteiner, Williams, & Carlson, 2017). Norlien et al. (2017) described beauty services as shampooing, cutting, coloring, and the styling of hair. Small business salon owners serve between three and 500 clients per week (Ahlers-Schmidt, Redmond, Struempf, Hunninghake, & Nimeskern, 2014). Small business salons are a vital part of communities in the United States (Ahlers-Schmidt et al., 2014). Ahlers-Schmidt et al. (2014) confirmed that cosmetologists spend from 30 minutes to an hour with each client. Licensed small business salons serve over 150 clients per week (Ahlers-Schmidt et al., 2014).

Since 2007, leaders of cosmetology businesses implemented innovative change to enhance the industry (Madnani & Khan, 2013). The emphasis shifted from cleaning hair to repairing the hair, increasing the shafts tensile strength, lessening the oxidative damage, and stimulating growth (Madnani & Khan, 2013). Cosmetologists have advanced from cutting the hair to coloring the hair, changing the texture of the hair, and maintaining the health of the hair (Madnani & Khan, 2013). With the multifaceted aspects of small business salons, the use of systems theory will allow small business owners to detect related parts of the business as a whole rather than by individual parts (Adams et al., 2014). Adams et al. (2014) proclaimed that systems theorists encourage the synchronization of science through that permits individuals to recognize interrelatedness and parts of a system rather than individual forms. For small businesses to succeed, small business owners must establish long-term relationships and deliver value to their customers (Wambui & Bwisa, 2013). Small business owners in the

cosmetic industry have become more innovative by producing unique grooming hair care products such as shampoos for different hair types, conditioners, serums, hair sprays, waxes, gels, and mousses (Madnani & Khan, 2013). Small business salons are a place of community for political, social, and economic interactions (Ahlers-Schmidt et al., 2014). Ahlers-Schmidt et al. (2014) noted that small business salons are places of refuge and healing.

Education. The Board of Cosmetology and Barber Examiners, a national governing body in the United States, regulates the practice of cosmetology, including the licensure and registration of (a) cosmetologists, (b) instructors, (c) aestheticians, (d) manicurists, (e) natural hair stylists, (f) salons, (g) master barbers, (h) barber instructors, (i) barber shops, and (j) barber and cosmetology schools (Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance [TDCI], 2018). Cosmetologists must obtain certification as well as proper licenses and permits to operate (TDCI, 2018). The goal of the TDCI Division of Regulatory Boards is to protect public welfare by guaranteeing that once individuals are licensed they maintain high levels of propriety and professional standards of practice, individuality, and competency (TDCI, 2018). Specified training and education have an immense impact on wages and productivity for small businesses (Bercu, 2017). Bercu (2017) also noted that education and training have a substantial effect on the overall growth of small businesses while stimulating innovation in the workplace.

Employees gain strength in their knowledge and skills through education and training (Van Rijn, Yang, & Sanders, 2013). Education and training have become more

extensive for the cosmetology industry as the focus has changed from regulation to awareness (TDCI, 2018). Cosmetology professionals face new challenges concerning communicable diseases, and the Board of Cosmetology and Barber Examiners have placed strict guidelines on the use of sterilized equipment, gloves, and goggles for all licensees who perform any service on a client (TDCI, 2018).

Continuing education requirements. Business owners and employees must develop new skills as the demand in the marketplace increases (Alasadi & Al Sabbagh, 2015). Small business owners maximize their potential through education and training (Alasadi & Al Sabbagh, 2015). Licensed individuals in Tennessee must have 28 hours of continuing education every renewal period (TDCI, 2018). Licensees, with approval, obtain a maximum of 14 hours of continuing education credit for online courses every renewal period (TDCI, 2018). According to the TDCI (2018), the renewal period for licensees is every 2 years. Licensees may not take the same course or any course with similar subject matter and are permitted to take continuing education credit only once every 5 years with the exception of the National Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (NUSPAP) course (TDCI, 2018).

Licensees may obtain continuing education credit for a NUSPAP course taken more than once provided that the licensee takes the course no more than one time during a 2-year renewal cycle; the seven-hour NUSPAP update is required each renewal period (TDCI, 2018). The NUSPAP nurtures professionalism in assessing by appraising, improving, and promoting the practice of cosmetology (The Appraisal Foundation, 2018.)

Small Business Innovation

Small businesses are the most critical drivers of innovation, and small business leaders play a chief role in augmenting innovation (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016). Yildiz, Basturk, and Boz (2014) demonstrated in a qualitative study, through a correlation analysis, that a positive link exists between innovativeness and business performance. Adopting innovation strategies is vital to the success of a small business. McKinley, Latham, and Braun (2014) viewed innovation as any new product, service, or production process that starts out from a previous product, service, or production process designs. Moldogaziev and Resh (2016) studied that adopting innovation is a two-step process: initiation and implementation. Effective leadership and innovation within small businesses aid in balancing the concepts of reaching sustainable growth and profitability (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016). The concept of systems theory indicates that business practices and leadership work together as a whole system to meet the objectives of the business (Montgomery & Oladapo, 2014). Muenjohn and McMurray (2016) proposed in their study that innovation leads to organizational change, which leads to growth. Small business owners must strive to recognize the organizations need for innovation. The efficacy of innovation influences the business leader's inclination to identify and act on opportunities (Cooper, Peake, & Watson, 2016). Cooper et al. (2016) researched and documented that creating an atmosphere that encourages the exchange of ideas is a vital factor for small business owners in order to stimulate employee contributions to organizational innovation. Contrariwise to Cooper et al., Álvarez and Crespi (2015) emphasized that small businesses with financial constraints reduce innovation. Credit for

innovation is vital for product volume and adapting new technology. New technology is the key engine of growth in productivity (Álvarez & Crespi, 2015).

Katila, Thatchenkery, Christensen, and Zenios (2017) indicated that customers are a major source of innovation. However, Manso (2017) specified that business leaders use innovation to explore new and untested markets. Business owners have to design compensation plans for managers that allow them to take risks to discover the practices and technologies deemed effective for innovation (Manso, 2017). Innovation entails inventiveness and originality (Manso, 2017). Manso suggested that when innovation is the goal of the business, the business owner must allow time for failure and time for new methods to prove the value of the manager. Lefebvre et al. (2014) stressed the importance of networking to increase innovation. Networking for innovation is advantageous for small businesses to help balance their innate fragility because of their size (Lefebvre et al., 2014). Lefebvre et al. mentioned that networking offers a supportive atmosphere conducive to most small businesses.

Strategic innovation is a vital factor regarding the success of both product and technological, organizational and management innovations (Pavlov, 2017). Pavlov (2017) acknowledged in a study regarding innovation that choosing an innovation strategy is contingent on the stance the business takes in the market, innovation potential, financial abilities, company culture, the technological level, the environment, and the goals of the business owner. Pavlov posited that innovation creates opportunities to proficiently meet societal needs. Some small businesses lack the necessary resources and abilities to innovate exclusively using in-house activities (Lefebvre et al., 2014). Networking is a

business asset used by leader to aid in dispensing the risks and qualms through the innovation process by lessening innovation time, decreasing costs, providing access to outside knowledge, and providing skills that might be essential for new ideas and successful innovation development (Lefebvre et al., 2014).

Small Business Sustainability

Business leaders and owners seeking sustainability as a competitive advantage must have a strategic plan (Winnard, Adcroft, Lee, & Skipp, 2014). The sustainability of a business is vital to the community because sustainability requires business owners to commit to people, profit, and the environment (Johnson, Faught, & Long, 2017; Krechovská & Procházkov, 2013). The sustainability of a small business depends on how long the business can sustain in the future, given its present profitability (Krechovská & Procházkov, 2013). Krechovská and Procházkov (2013) agreed with Shields and Shelleman (2015) in defining sustainability as an expansion that grants the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their needs. Small business owners with sustained practices build a balanced society, create positive support for local populations, natural resources, generate employment, and improve economic development through governance practices and market presence (Krechovská & Procházkov, 2013).

Eswarlal and Vallesi (2014) argued that adopting sustainability benefits a small businesses' economic performance. Risks and opportunities for small businesses originated in both social and environmental issues (Eswarlal & Vallesi, 2014). A growing consciousness exists regarding the need to understand and implement effective

sustainability for products, services, and processes because of market pressures (Eswarlal & Vallesi, 2014). Comprehending the characteristics necessary for sustainability is valuable information needed for effective implementation (Eswarlal & Vallesi, 2014). Eswarlal and Vallesi mentioned that the main point concerning the issues of sustainability is not to generate change, but to prevent the damage to the sources of replenishment that can aid the system in recuperating from inescapable instabilities. Sustainable business leaders concentrate on the sustainable development of the business; the survival and success of the business (Eswarlal & Vallesi, 2014). Von Bertalanffy (1972) presented systems theory as a theory that necessitates several factors to work together as a whole to facilitate business success. Shields and Shelleman (2015) contended that small businesses should develop sustainable strategies to accommodate accelerating global changes. Numerous small business owners lack a planned approach to start with strategy preparation in response to a significantly shifting external environment (Shields & Shelleman, 2015)

Parhankangas, McWilliams, and Shrader (2014) determined the necessity for small business owners and leaders to assess, monitor, and develop strategies to obtain sustainability and adjust to overall sustainability demands. Many small business owners lack effective business structures, the financial means, and human resources to integrate sustainability strategies into business decisions (Kiron, Kruschwitz, Rubel, Reeves, & Fuisz-Kehrbach, 2013; Shields & Shelleman, 2015). Successful execution of sustainable products, services, or eco-differentiation strategy is dependent on the company leader's marketing skills (Gauthier, 2017).

Sardana (2014) found that globalization is an important part of small business sustainability. Globalization is a means for small business owners to gain a competitive advantage, improve innovation, and increase the probability of business survival. Sardana noted that globalization might be view as a universal strategy used by small business leaders to create new markets resulting in the transformation from stagnancy to growth. Globalization is unlimited access to markets and resources (Sardana, 2014). Business leaders benefit from globalization because of increased marketplace opportunities, yet face new challenges because of a globalized market (Mahmutovic, Hadziahmetovic, & Talovic, 2014). In contrast to Sardana, Ludmila et al. (2017) noted that because of increased globalization, small business owners experience difficulty in developing lasting competitive advantages and improved business performance. A long-term competitive advantage and enhanced business performance are keystones of business sustainability (Ludmila et al., 2017). Business leaders and owners should implement a strategic plan to support the successful growth of their business (Ludmila et al., 2017).

Small Business Leadership

Lo, Ramayah, and Wang (2015) defined leadership as an individual's ability to influence and motivate followers to contribute towards the success of a business. Lo et al. noted that leadership is a process in which individuals work together toward common goals executed by both formal and informal leaders within an organization. The definition, skills, and qualities necessary for becoming successful leaders received broad spread attention of management in the 1800s-2000s because employees and managers comprehend the importance of achieving goals (Stincelli & Baghurst, 2014). Informal

leaders provide a link between formal leaders and employees in bringing people and ideas together for the good of a small businesses successful future (Stincelli & Baghurst, 2014). Stincelli and Baghurst (2014) found that formal and informal leaders are vital for success, and although an opportunity for informal leaders to contribute can yield positive results, the importance of formal leaders fostering an environment where making mistakes are acceptable may lead to progress. Informal leaders hold the respect and credibility that allow them to inspire and guide others within a small business without formal authority or power.

Leadership is a method of interaction among leaders and subordinates in which a leader tries to influence the behavior of his or her subordinates to accomplish organizational goals (Lo et al., 2015). For leadership to be effective, leaders must have the participation of the subordinates (Lo et al., 2015). Lo et al. (2015) stated that power is the core of a leader's behavior. In contrast to Lo et al., Dimov (2017) had a different outlook on leadership, speculating that human capital embodies an instinctive and appealing construct for predicting business success. Dimov suggested that while some studies indicate no evidence, other studies indicated that small business owners possessing entrepreneurial experience tend to have success with sustaining businesses.

Ethical leadership. Kihyun (2016) examined the influence of ethical leadership on followers taking charge through the mediation of trust in leader and identification with leader. Bendell, Sutherland, and Little (2017) surmised that leadership is persuasive behavior that has the effect of assisting groups of people to achieve something significant in which they are pleased with and would have not otherwise achieved. The key to

leadership is recognizing that leadership is associated with behavior rather than a position of authority (Bendell et al., 2017). Kihyun demarcated trust in a leader as a follower's willingness to remain reliant on the leader because of the leader's ability, compassion, and integrity. Kihyun examined the influence of ethical leadership on followers, postulating that ethical leaders establish a persuasive direction by creating appropriate follower conduct and accentuating the importance of ethical behavior. Ethical leaders encourage and reward behavior deemed ethical (Bendell et al., 2017). Followers who trust their leader see themselves as being in a social exchange relationship with the leader (Kihyun, 2016). Trust in leaders creates a feeling of indeterminate obligation that may stimulate self-efficacy and positive behaviors.

Fa-Wang, Jian-Qiao, and Jin-Ming (2016) labeled ethical leaders as moral people that followers view as role models, emulating their attitudes, values, and behaviors. When leaders are ethical, employees tend to perceive their leadership as trustworthy (Fa-Wang et al., 2016). Fa-Wang et al. noted that not only are ethical leaders ethical themselves, but also enhance their ethical leadership practices by setting ethical standards. Ethical leaders utilize rewards and punishments to support followers' ethical behavior. Ethical leaders hold followers responsible for ethical outcomes by rewarding employees who employ ethical behavior and punishing those who violate ethical standards (Fa-Wang et al., 2016). Ethical leaders help followers to master methods for addressing ethical dilemmas and can build followers' self-confidence to conquer ethical dilemmas. Ethical leaders demonstrate personal qualities and displaying behaviors. The qualities of an ethical leader include honesty, fairness, trustworthiness, and care, and displaying behavior includes

disciplining unethical behavior, and rewarding positive ethical behavior (Wells & Walker, 2016).

Sustainable leadership. Sustainable leadership is one of the most valued factors linked with beneficial outcomes (Evans et al., 2015). Montgomery and Oladapo (2014) noted that working together is essential for leadership. Working harmoniously as a complete system is a means for leaders to meet sustainable objectives of the business (Montgomery & Oladapo, 2014). Farooq, Othman, Nordin, and Ibrahim (2017) declared that sustainable leadership is a relatively new concept. Sustainable leaders must have the capability of recognizing that the complex systems of a business must intertwine with human values to encourage sustainable development and change (Montgomery & Oladapo, 2014). Sustainable leaders transform businesses by reducing harm to the environment and society or increasing positive contributions (Farooq et al., 2017).

Lubin and Esty (2014) advised that sustainability leadership correlate with market success. Investors believe that sustainable leadership is a direct link to a company's revenues and market success (Lubin & Esty, 2014). Sustainable leaders generate business strategies that promote growth for businesses, humanity, and the environment (McCann & Sweet, 2014). Sustainable leaders should create sustainable strategies that are innovative and revenue driven (McCann & Sweet, 2014). Sustainable leaders have the ability to think past the short-term goals and profits of the business to maintain long-term success (McCann & Sweet, 2014). Contrariwise to McCann and Sweet (2014), Sardana (2014) maintained that small businesses operating worldwide utilize sustainability leaders

who consider the needs and essential competencies of the consumer to sustain a successful business.

Small Business Organizational Development

Ravichandran and Bano (2016) documented that organizational development is the technique of increasing organizational capacities. Ravichandran and Bano stated that organization development is the application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the strategic growth, improvement, and reinforcement of the structures, plans, and processes that lead to organizational success and wellbeing. Alternatively, Gul (2015) expressed that organizational development is a technologically developed plan based on an employee's security and organizational effectiveness. In agreement with Ravichandran and Bano, Gul proposed a direct relationship between organizational development and growth. Organizational development is an interdisciplinary field of study with contributions from business, communication, industrial organizational psychology, human resources management, sociology, and various other disciplines (Ravichandran & Bano, 2016). Gul detailed how employees benefit from the effective use of organizational development. Retaining employees is a crucial factor of organizational development (Gul, 2015). The goal of business leaders regarding organizational development is to expand the capableness of the organization and to increase organizational efficacy for achieving strategic goals (Ravichandran & Bano, 2016). Gul articulated that training and development links to the performance of an individual as well as the functioning of the organization.

Elijah, Taylor, and Wee (2018) explained the mechanisms behind organizational development, suggesting that organizational development is the variations of work routines and strategies that disturb the entire business. Elijah et al. viewed organizational development as the new reality for businesses and their employees. Business owners must effectively respond to the disturbances of organizational change by taking advantage of the created opportunities (Heckelman, 2017). Most business owners and managers struggle with developing and implementing change, and most change initiatives are unsuccessful (Heckelman, 2017). Heckelman's (2017) research indicated that 93% of businesses are not able to meet change efforts.

McKinley et al. (2014) postulated that organizational decline is a universal problem with highly visible effects. Organizational decline is a situation in which a significant, absolute decrease in an organization's resource base occurs over a specific period (McKinley et al., 2014). Organizational decline converges on two opposing positions; organizational decline hinders innovation and organizational decline stimulates innovation (McKinley et al., 2014). McMillan and Overall (2017) opposed McKinley et al. by stating that organizational decline occurs because of the global decline of the sector, low customer demand, low levels of managerial commitment, or disruptive technological change. Organizational decline is normally related to an event and oftentimes, temporary (McMillan & Overall, 2017). McKinley et al. noted that managers might have a positive influence on their firm experiencing decline through implementing innovative strategies. McKinley et al. proposed that managers should concentrate on initiatives of proficiency, constricted budgets, cost cutting, and better accountability.

McKinley et al. warned business owners to be mindful of the differences between organization decline and organization crisis. Organizational decline and organizational crisis contain highly complex situations that threaten an organization's survivability; however, the difference in crisis and decline is the speed in which the two phenomena occur and response time of the decision makers. McMillan and Overall indicated how failure at one level of a business leads to more severe failures, or even to catastrophic failure of the business through a downward spiral. Organization decline typically leads to failure of a business (McMillan & Overall, 2017).

Small Business Financing

Cheng (2015), in a quantitative study, demonstrated possible small business lending discrimination. Cheng analyzed the relationship of new small business survival and business owners' debt financing from numerous sources. Cheng focused on small business loan discrimination and the consequences of small business loans regarding survivability. Small businesses are at a disadvantage and face struggles in obtaining financing (Cheng, 2015). Small businesses leaders experience a high rate of business loan denial (Cheng, 2015). Wilson (2015) revealed that small business owners have little confidence in bank lending as evidenced by the decline of the number of owners using bank financing. Small business leaders appear overwhelmed by irregularities that deter banks from properly evaluating their profitability and survivability or creating financial creditability (Cheng, 2015). Cheng postulated that most small business owners are unlikely to have audited financial statements; therefore, face high fixed costs. Capital market restraints are important determinants for starting a business. Research indicated

that capital market restraints might hinder entrepreneurs and initial capitalization of new ventures, reduce creation of new businesses, and cause lower survival rate among developing businesses (Cheng, 2015).

Wilson (2015) interviewed senior managers, individuals, and focus groups with bank loan officers, revealing that no set criteria or stipulated rules are set for small business loans. Lenders use both quantifiable data and *gut feelings* in their decision-making process. Wilson analyzed qualitative data to explore why different bank officials can reach dissimilar conclusions on the same proposed loan. Although bank leaders have tried to regulate the decision process for small business loans, some commercial loan officers have no boundaries for decision-making rules (Wilson, 2015). Ludmila et al. (2017) argued that small business owners depend on debt financing. The debt ratio for small businesses is higher because small businesses are reliant on upon receiving financing from outside sources (Ludmila et al., 2017). Ludmila et al. recognized that bank credit is the only external source of funds for many small business owners. Banks charge higher interest rates because of large debt liability (Ludmila et al., 2017). Financial risk and lack of bank financing are two key causes for default of small businesses. Poor capital structure is a chief reason for small businesses financial risk (Ludmila et al., 2017). Small business owners who manage financial risk reduce the competition because of an improved financial structure and increased production capability (Ludmila et al., 2017). Effective supervision of capital reduces debt burden and financial risk (Ludmila et al., 2017)

Small Business Marketing

Small businesses are the *economic engine* of global financial development (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). Hanssens and Pauwels (2016) demonstrated how the use of marketing analytics might improve marketing decision making at various levels of a business.

Multiple aspects of marketing exist, include attitudinal, behavioral, and financial facets (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016). Hanssens and Pauwels suggested that business owners and leaders find value in marketing in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Efficiency is the term used by marketers to express the return on marketing investment (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016). Business leaders focus their marketing tactics on aspects that benefit the accountability and profitability of the business (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016). Pophal (2015) discussed the importance of marketing for small businesses, indicating that small business owners should place emphasis on marketing efforts in pursuit of business success. Hanssens and Pauwels argued that sustained growth is a strategic marketing objective, and communicating the value of marketing internally is vital to sustain business success. Communicating the value of marketing involves communicating various ideas in marketing dashboards, adjusting to the decision maker, and adjusting to the marketing organization (Hanssens & Pauwels, 2016). Pophal recommended that small business owners should set business goals, determine a target market, and decide on the value the business is providing. Small business owners should maintain their focus on a communication strategy aligned with the businesses brand identity (Pophal, 2015).

Kunle Ade, Mufutau Akanbi, and Tubosun (2017) investigated the effects of marketing intelligence on business competitive advantage. Marketing intelligence is a

vital tool needed for business owners striving to survive in the marketplace (Kunle Ade et al., 2017). Marketing intelligence is the collection and analysis of public information about consumers, competitors, and developments in the marketplace (Kunle Ade et al., 2017). Podlesni (2017) investigated effective marketing tools, commenting that marketing is the source from which business flows. Effective marketing philosophies align with proven research and evidence. Marketing is part art, part science (Podlesni, 2017). To maintain a successful business, business owners must understand marketing principles. Business owners must determine which strategies bring the highest return in order to sustain the business. Additionally, sustaining a business requires a dynamic marketing plan (Podlesni, 2017). Small business owners must know how to align their business plan with the competitive market to attain long-term sustainability. Podlesni resolved that marketing is the commitment given to a business by building, connecting, providing, and exchanging contributions that have value for consumers, clients, associates, and humanity.

Technology. A chief driver of a business's marketing success is technology (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). The survival of small business owners is dependent upon their openness to the adoption of technology for marketing (Alford & Page, 2015). The adoption of technology for marketing is vital for small business survivability (Alford & Page, 2015; Eid & El-Gohary, 2013). Alford and Page (2015) reviewed literature, discussing themes that signify the issues that influence the adoption of technology for marketing by small business owners. Small business owners who do not take advantage of technology for marketing lack the knowledge and the inability to measure the return on

investment (Alford & Page, 2015). Furthermore, small business owners who use the Internet are likely to enjoy a sustainable competitive advantage (Alford & Page, 2015). Alford and Page mentioned that small business owners who utilize the Internet have the probability of transforming their business marketing in numerous areas. Small business owners face barriers that prevent them from completely harnessing the potential of the Internet for marketing (Alford & Page, 2015).

Information technology. Information technology is a necessary tool used by business leaders as a strategic tool to improve competitive advantage (Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015). Using information technology, small business leaders produced a substantial competitive advantage to increase competitiveness (Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015). The advancement in information technology is an essential component for business success (Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015; Gerdewal & Seçim, 2014). The use of information technology contributes to the augmentation of the performance of a business as well as the improvement of enterprise resources (Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015). Gerdewal and Seçim (2014) argued that business owners must constantly provide current technology to be successful in the marketplace. Information technology service providers must be able endlessly provide cost efficient, operative, and up-to-date technology (Gerdewal & Seçim, 2014). Business leaders utilize information technology to provide new possibilities and to accelerate business processes (Gerdewal & Seçim, 2014).

Technology is a key component to an organizations overall strategy (Maceli & Burke, 2016; Ramrathan & Sibanda, 2017). Business owners who utilize information technology tools understand that the objective of information technology aims at making

decision making more effective. The key principle behind information technology is improvement in decision making because of business leaders gaining access to more information (Ramrathan & Sibanda, 2017). Kim, Mithas, and Kimbrough (2017) pointed out that the implications of information technology are an increased value of small businesses, improved business process, and increased access to customers. Business leaders use information technology to increase cash flow and enhance their ability to improve in innovation, productivity, profitability, and consumer value (Kim et al., 2017). Information technology is an indispensable element that stimulates an increasing body of research literature for the workplace (Kim et al., 2017). Information technology is significant because business owners and leaders generate an advantage against competition (Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015).

Human Capital

Human capital is a crucial source of a sustainable competitive advantage and a firm's competitive performance (Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015; Vomberg, Homburg, & Bornemann, 2015). Human capital is a vital strategic resource for small businesses that adds distinctive value to organizations. Lin, Wang, Wang, and Jaw (2017) argued that attraction and development are the two key aspects of human capital investment. The investment in human capital by small business leaders enables employees to achieve organizational goals (Lin et al., 2017). Human capital is an employee's explicit and implicit knowledge and capabilities that lead to organizational competitiveness (Lin et al., 2017). Employees' skills, knowledge, and experience shape human capital (Lin et al., 2017; Vomberg et al., 2015). Employees are encouraged to utilize their capabilities while

engaging in the process of creating the organizations offerings (Vomberg et al., 2015).

Vomberg et al. (2015) observed that human capital is essential in the service industry more so than any other industry. Growth in market and financial performance connect to human capital.

Vomberg et al. (2015) examined the concurrent effects of brand equity and human capital as related to firm value. Business owners consider brand equity and human capital as organizational assets (Vomberg et al., 2015). Vomberg et al. determined that the relationship between human capital and brand equity create the most value in a service setting, and applying skills when relating to customers is necessary to create firm value. Conversely, Kryscynski and Ulrich (2015) postulated that employees have a choice to invest in general or firm specific human capital. Employees who invest in general human capital could take their human capital to another employer, however; if employees invest in firm-specific human capital, they can only extract the value from those skills in their present firm (Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015). Firm specific human capital is vital for the organizations competitiveness in the marketplace (Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015).

Social capital is a concept receiving extensive study by researchers in the field of social sciences (Hasan, Hoi, Wu, & Zhang, 2017). Social capital boosts economic benefits for businesses through its impact on financing costs (Cheng, Wang, Zhang, & Zhao, 2017; Hasan et al., 2017). Hasan et al. (2017) argued that social capital is the convergence of effects expanding from social norms and mutual trust that aid in cooperative norms and the solidity of associated networks. Social capital has a positive economic influence on communities, organizations, and individuals (Hasan et al., 2017).

Bank leaders place more trust in businesses located in communities with high levels of social capital (Hasan et al., 2017). Small business leaders need to employ a measure of societal social capital because businesses with higher societal social capital are associated with lower loan spreads (Hasan et al., 2017). Cheng et al. (2017) argued that social capital is a set of beliefs that promotes cooperation, economic growth through information sharing, and decision-making.

Transition

In Section 1, I established the foundation of problem and the need for further research, presented the problem statement, the purpose of this study, and the nature of the study. I justify the use of systems theory as the conceptual framework for this study. I presented the assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study. The literature review includes support for additional research on exploring and identifying strategies some small salon business owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years.

In Section 2, I addressed the purpose of the study, my role as the researcher, and the selection of participants. Other components of Section 2 include the research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical research. The final components of Section 2 include data collection instruments and techniques, data organization techniques and analysis, reliability and validity, and the transition and summary. In Section 3, I reported the findings and results of the study, provided several recommendations for business application and further research, presented the implications for social change, and closed the study with a concluding statement.

Section 2: The Project

Ninety-five percent of all businesses within the United States are small businesses, yet approximately 50% of small businesses fail within 5 years (Holloway & Schaefer, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some small salon business owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. The targeted population consists of small salon owners, over the age of 18, in seven cosmetology salons in Tennessee who have successfully implemented strategies to remain in business longer than 5 years. In Section 2, I discussed: (a) the purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) the research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments and technique, (h) data collection technique, (i) data organization technique, (j) data analysis, (k) reliability and validity, and (l) the transition and summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some small salon business owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. The targeted population consists of small salon owners in seven cosmetology salons in Tennessee because these owners successfully implemented strategies to remain in business longer than 5 years. Thriving small business owners create jobs, contribute to local economic development, and promote social value (Meyskens & Bird, 2015). The implications for positive social change are the potential for small salon business owners to sustain the

livelihood of employees, contribute to the local economy, and reduce local unemployment rates.

Role of the Researcher

A researcher has a complex role (Postholm & Skrøvset, 2013). In qualitative studies, a researcher's greatest responsibility is to mitigate bias (Postholm & Skrøvset, 2013). A vital task of a researcher is to minimize errors in observation and attempt to gain truthful knowledge (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Khoshnava Fomani, Shoghi, & Ali Cheraghi, 2014).

The researcher is the prime instrument for data collection and must be cognizant of the reason for participating in the study to prevent objectionable personal issues (Sanjari et al., 2014). In my role of the researcher, I was the primary data collection instrument to collect data from small business salon owners. Researchers can use journals while collecting data as a tool to reflect on concerns that might arise during the data collection phase (Annink, 2017). I used a reflective journal to address concerns that arise during the collection data phase). I did not allow my views to affect participants or influence the results of the study. Rothstein and Shoben (2013) posited that alleviating individual interpretations throughout data collection is a crucial element in the role of the researcher. The findings of the researcher must truthfully depict the investigated phenomenon, and the data collection process must be as objective as possible (Yates & Leggett, 2016).

To mitigate bias, I did not interview small business salon owners who have previously rendered services to me. My personal connection with the topic of this study is

I was a small business owner for less than 3 years seeking advertisement from small business salon owners in Tennessee. A researcher should avoid recruiting participants with whom a past or existing relationship exists to mitigate bias and increase the trustworthiness of the results (Rothstein & Shoben, 2013). I did not recruit participants with whom I hold a past or current personal or professional relationship. Malone, Nicholl, and Tracey (2014) defined research bias as a systematic error. Malone et al. concluded that biased studies could lose validity depending on the degree of bias present. Participants in research serve as sources of data; therefore, researchers have a duty to protect research subjects. Thomas (2015) postulated that to avoid research bias, researchers must adhere to the values and ethical philosophies outlined in the Belmont Report.

The Belmont Report is an important document for individuals involved in research (Miracle, 2016). The main purpose of the Belmont Report is to protect the rights of all research subjects or participants (Miracle, 2016). The Belmont Report provides a systematic framework for evaluating research utilizing three ethical principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Camille, Nian-Lin Reena, & Ban Leong, 2016). I adhered to the Belmont Report protocol by giving each participant the right to withdraw from the study at any given time by minimalizing potential risks, protecting the rights of each human subject, and by showing respect to all participants.

By following an interview protocol (see Appendix A), I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews using open-ended questions with small business salon owners to explore business strategies on survivability. Researchers should be concerned about

contributing credible and trustworthy knowledge to a field of study. Researchers establish protocols to address validity, reliability, and ethics within the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). A thorough protocol to conduct semistructured interviews consists of guaranteeing interview questions align with research questions, creating an inquiry-based conversation, and receiving feedback on interviews (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Researchers should follow a protocol for the interview process to obtain quality data and to address directly the research questions (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). I followed the interview protocol for my process of conducting semistructured interviews to collect quality data that is in alignment with my research question (see Appendix A).

Data collection did not take place until after I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University. Interviewing participants is a means for me to ask open-ended questions applicable to investigating ways for small business salon owners to survive in business longer than 5 years. Before collecting data, each participant received a copy of the informed consent form through e-mail. I informed participants that the interview is voluntary, they had the right to withdraw from the interview at any given time without penalty, and all information remains confidential. I secured all research documents in a safe in my home office to which I am the only person with access. After 5 years, I will shred and destroy all participant information.

Participants

Participants in this study were small business salon owners of whom I did not have a personal or professional relationship. Small business owners are individuals who conceptualize, promote, and assume the risk for innovative economic activities in the

form of a business attempt (Turner & Endres, 2017). A small business owner is the proprietor of a business with fewer than 500 employees (Turner & Endres, 2017). The eligibility criteria for participants were: (a) must be a small business salon owner with less than 500 employees, (b) must have been in business for 5 years or longer, and (c) must have implemented successful strategies for survival. Small business owners develop their explanations of success as they put strategies in place that lead to the survival of the business (Turner & Endres, 2017).

To identify potential participants for this study, I used the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance (TDCI) website to view a list of active salon owners in Tennessee. The website database lists 16,625 salons in the state of Tennessee (TDCI, 2018). The TDCI database includes the names, locations, and license status of each salon located in Tennessee.

I used the TDCI database to identify small business salon owners. I contacted these owners to determine eligibility. Once I established that these small business salon owners met the eligibility criteria for participation in this study, I moved forward with the process until I identified seven small business salon owners. I asked each owner to participate and built a working relationship with each participant by making personal contact by telephone using a prepared script (see Appendix B). During the telephone conversation, I obtained the e-mail addresses from the salon owners to provide them with information regarding the purpose of the study, the informed consent form. Johnston (2015) mentioned that researchers must respect an individual's right to confidentiality. Johnston noted that participants who sign consent forms to take part in a study do so with

the understanding that their privacy and confidentiality remains preserved. I obtained informed consent from each participant before conducting the interviews and protected the identity of the participants and the business by not disclosing names in the study. Breaches of confidentiality could destroy the researcher's relationship with the participant and can injure the public's trust in researchers (Johnston, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Rothstein & Shoben, 2013). Throughout each interview, I took notes, recorded all interviews, and stored all information on a password-protected flash drive. Stored documents will remain secure for 5 years in a safe in my home office. After 5 years, I will destroy all evidence, data files, and paper copies by shredding or electronic deletion.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The three research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Almalki, 2016). Almalki (2016) noted that the responsibility of the researcher to select the appropriate method for their study. Qualitative method was the most suitable method for this study because the qualitative method aligned with my research goals and the research question. A primary objective for researchers is to ascertain a research question that has the potential to produce vital insights for understanding a phenomenon (Turner, Cardinal, & Burton, 2017).

The qualitative method was most appropriate for this study because I sought to discover, through exploration, a deeper understanding of a phenomenon through open dialogue and interpretation. Researchers conducting a qualitative method study focus on

gaining meaning from the knowledge of participants (Almalki, 2016). Researchers conducting a qualitative method study ask open-ended questions to investigate the depth of the participants' views on the phenomena of causes that may contribute to the survivability of small businesses (Almalki, 2016).

Researchers using the quantitative method focus on movements across data sets and analyze measurable and quantifiable numerical data (Goertzen, 2017). Researchers collect and analyze structured numerical data using a quantitative approach (Goertzen, 2017). Researchers who utilize quantitative methods establish relational validity (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). The quantitative method was not suitable for the study because I was not exploring relationships between variables using statistical data, nor was I testing hypotheses through the analyzation of numeric data.

Researchers using a mixed-method approach engage in the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, combining both methods to provide concise answers to research questions (Goertzen, 2017; Turner et al., 2017). Mixed-methods researchers build on the notion of an intensified understanding through methodological triangulation (Turner et al., 2017). A mixed-method approach is time-consuming and is similar to the quantitative method in which researchers use this method to observe hypotheses (Turner et al., 2017). A mixed-method approach was not suitable for the study because I did not examine hypotheses through analyzing numeric data.

Research Design

I considered four research designs for the study: phenomenology, ethnography, narrative inquiry, and case study. Case studies are a common research design (Yin,

2018). Case studies are the desired strategy researchers use to understand a phenomenon from various viewpoints within a natural context (Cope, 2015; Manley, Martin, Jackson, & Wright, 2016; Virginia, 2016). Manley et al. (2016) stated that researchers using a case study design investigate a phenomenon in real life settings to answer *how* and *why* questions. Cope (2015) revealed that case studies are supple and can include numerous sources of data.

When choosing to use multiple case study design, researchers collect, present, and analyze data in an open-minded way (Yin, 2018). Case studies are advantageous for explaining, describing, and exploring intricate matters in a natural setting (Harrison & Mills, 2016). Researchers selecting the case study method explore current phenomenon in depth and in real-world context, specifically when the limitations between phenomenon and context may be evident (Harrison & Mills, 2016; Yin, 2018). Anderson, Leahy, DelValle, Sherman, and Tansey (2014) acknowledged that researchers conducting a case study (a) place emphasis on answering *how* and *why*, (b) cannot be manipulated by the actions of those involved in the study, and (c) report contextual circumstances. Researchers using the case study design have the opportunity to explore a limited system through in-depth data collection comprising multiple sources of data and reporting a description of themes. A case study was the appropriate design for this study. I conducted in-depth explorations of current phenomena's within real-life, contextual settings. Researchers use a case study design to explore real life events in a meaningful and holistic way when the case is not distinctive in its context (Negis-Isik & Gursel, 2013).

Researchers who choose the phenomenological design participate in semistructured interviews to gain the participants' views and experiences (Wagstaff & Williams, 2014). Wells (2013) defined phenomenology as the study of principles, including the principle of observation and awareness. Researchers conducting a phenomenological design focus on an individual's experiences because human behavior is resolute by the phenomena of experience rather than unbiased, physically described reality that are external to the individual (Sloan & Bowe, 2015). Phenomenological design was not the appropriate choice for this study because I did not explore a phenomenon through the participants' views or lived experiences.

Cardoso, Gontijo, and Ono (2017) defined the ethnographic design as a process in which the researcher describes the culture of a community. Researchers selecting an ethnographic design make use of prolonged observation in creating a thorough description of naturally happening situations that allow them to expand their knowledge of the phenomenon (Subramony, Hametz, & Balmer, 2014). Ethnography is a method commonly used by anthropologists to explore communities of people and their culture, examining a specific culture from the viewpoints of its members (Negis-Isik & Gursel, 2013). Ethnographic researchers explore communities of people and their culture (Negis-Isik & Gursel, 2013). Ethnographic research was not suitable because I did not study the cultural meanings and practices of a community.

Narrative researchers focus on a person's story and the way individuals give meaning to experiences through their stories (Korpi, Peltokallio, & Piirainen, 2014). Narrative researchers integrate a social context and a critical conclusion that together

form a clear story (McAlpine, 2016). Shapiro (2016) defined narrative research as stories that depict human thought and action. Narrative inquiries have a beginning, a middle, and an end (Shapiro, 2016). A narrative inquiry was not an appropriate design for the study because I did not collect life stories from participants.

A researcher attains data saturation when enough information exists to duplicate the study, and no new information is attainable (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fusch and Ness (2015) ascertained when further coding is no longer possible, the researcher has achieved data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Researchers use data saturation to enhance the credibility of qualitative research (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016). Data saturation occurs when further data collection results in no additional themes (Acaster et al., 2015). To reach data saturation, I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews with the participants. I also used member checking by conducting follow-up interviews with each participant to gain added detailed information until I achieved data saturation. Data became repetitive before I complete all the scheduled interviews, however; I continued with the seven interviews as planned.

Population and Sampling

Sampling is a vital component of qualitative research design (Robinson, 2014). Sampling is the process of selecting research participants from a specified population who have similar characteristics of that population (El-Masri, 2017). Researchers make assumptions about a population that has shared features to their interest; this population is the target population (El-Masri, 2017). Sampling is essential because of the difficulty of collecting data from every individual in a population, unless the targeted population is

small and defined (Suhonen, Stolt, Katajisto, & Leino-Kilpi, 2015). The sampling method that I have selected for the study is census sampling. Researchers who use census sampling systematically obtain and record detailed information from every participant in a population (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2013). I selected census sampling for the study because census sampling allows researchers to attain comprehensive information from every participant in the population. As the researcher, I used census sampling to select every participant in my targeted population. The objective of census sampling method is to select information-rich cases for in-depth study (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016). Studying information-rich cases produces awareness and in-depth understanding rather than practical generalizations (Benoot et al., 2016). Benoot et al. (2016) maintained that detailed cases are cases in which individuals can learn about issues of essential importance to the purpose of the study.

The population for this multiple case study consisted of seven small business salon owners in Tennessee who survived in business longer than 5 years. I selected this population to answer the overarching research question for this study: What strategies do some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years? I selected seven small business owners over the age of 18 who own a salon with 500 or fewer employees and have sustained the business for more than 5 years. I identified participants using the TDCI database. Buowari (2015) conducted a multiple case study of exploring the factors required by small business owners to survive in business, collecting interview data from three business owners. Akaeze (2016) conducted a qualitative multiple case study to explore strategies small auto dealership business owners use to

sustain a business longer than 5 years. Akaeze used purposive sampling to select three small auto dealership business practitioners with the necessary knowledge and skill to contribute to the study. Lum (2017) conducted a qualitative multiple case study to explore business strategies new small business owners used to sustain their business longer than the first 5 years of operation. The target population in Lum's study was five small business owners in the food and beverage industry who had operated their business for more than 5 years located in the San Francisco Bay area. Because my study is similar to the studies conducted by Buowari, Akaeze, and Lum, seven participants was an appropriate sample size to explore the strategies small salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years.

Researchers conducting a qualitative method study use semistructured interviews and member checking to reach data saturation (Tembo, Parker, & Higgins, 2013). Data saturation occurs when information becomes repetitive and no new data develops (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Failure to reach data saturation influences the quality of the research conducted and hinders content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when enough information exists to duplicate the study, the researcher cannot obtain additional new information, and further coding is no longer possible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I conducted face-to-face, semistructured interviews, and used member checking to conduct follow-up interviews with each participant to verify that the data from each interview is accurate. Additionally, I collected data from relevant company documents to engage in methodological data triangulation. Member checking occurs when researchers transcribe the interviews, write up a summary of the data, meet

once again with the participants, allow them to verify my interpretations of the data are correct, and ask participants for additional information (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Researchers use member checking to help confirm the dependability and credibility of the data in the study (Awad, 2014). I used member checking as a means to ensure dependable and credible data. Data became repetitive before I completed the seven scheduled interviews, but I continued with the interviews as planned. I conducted a multiple case study with seven different companies. To ensure that I reached data saturation in this multiple case study, I collected data from seven companies.

Ethical Research

Researchers must present proposals to a research ethics committee prior to collecting data (Walton, 2016). My duty, as a researcher, is to safeguard study participants and to follow the guidelines of Walden University. I obtained permission to collect data through receiving approval from Walden University's IRB. The Walden University IRB approval number for this research study is 06-19-18-0658269. After receiving approval from the Walden University IRB, participants who met the eligibility criteria of the study received a telephone call (see Appendix B) followed with an e-mail. The e-mail contained an explanation of the purpose of the study as well as an attached informed consent form. The researchers must obtain informed consent from each participant before an interview or other data collection method involving human subjects (Britton, Pieterse, & Lawrence, 2017). Ensuring informed consent is part of a researcher's role (Cresswell & Gilmour, 2014). Informed consent enhances ethical practice (Rooney, 2015). I e-mailed the informed consent form to each participant 3 days

before the scheduled interview and explained the content of the form. I obtained informed consent before the commencement of the interview through the participant replying *I consent* to the e-mail containing the attached informed consent form, and by the participant signing the informed consent form prior to the commencement of the interview.

Ethics is vital in research and researchers must provide protection, respect, and privacy for all study participants (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). I adhered to the four ethical principles of respect for autonomy, beneficence, no maleficence, and justice throughout the research process. The four principles of ethical conduct are integrity, justice, beneficence, and respect (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). I respected the rights of the participants and guaranteed the confidentiality of each participant. I did not name any participant during the transcription process and informed participants that they are free to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. I provided participants the opportunity to withdraw in person, via telephone, e-mail, or letter at any time before, during, or after the interview. Participants did not receive monetary compensation for participating in this research study, however; I will provide each participant a copy of the published study.

I protected the privacy and identity of each participant by interviewing each participant separately. I also use codes to identify each participant. No actual names of participants exist in the study. Researchers code the names of participants to protect their identities (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). Participant coding consisted of the alphanumeric codes of PS1, PS2, PS3, PS4, PS5, PS6, and PS7. I stored digital information on a

password protected flash drive and stored printed transcripts and notes taken during the research process in a fireproof locked safe located in my home office for 5 years. As the researcher, I am the only person who will have access to the stored data. After the 5 years, I will shred printed copies of notes, information, and data and destroy the password protected flash drive housing the digital information.

Data Collection Instruments

I selected a qualitative case study method for the study. Researchers use the qualitative method to attain an in-depth comprehension of an individual's insights (Vass, Rigby, & Payne, 2017). Researchers who choose to use the qualitative research method collect essential background contextual information (Vass et al., 2017). Within qualitative research, the researcher is the data collector and data analyst (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Researchers serve as the primary collection instrument in case studies (Warwick-Booth, 2014). As the researcher of the study, I was the primary data collection instrument. In case studies, researchers use numerous sources and collect data in real time and in real-world contexts in order to explore, understand and describe the intricacies of a situation or phenomena (Harrison & Mills, 2016). By utilizing efficient data collection instruments, researchers establish additional elements or concerns not discussed during the initial interview (Ivey, 2017). Methodological triangulation in qualitative research is a way that researchers promote rigor in their study (Tibben, 2015). Researchers must collect data using more than one method to engage in methodological triangulation (Tibben, 2015). Researchers obtain various perspectives

using a variability of data sources (Tibben, 2015). I collected data through semistructured interviews and relevant company documents to engage in methodological triangulation.

Interviewing

The most common data collection approach used by researchers conducting a qualitative study is semistructured, face-to-face interviews (Vass et al., 2017).

Semistructured interviews are a supple method to the interviewing process and are essential for collecting data in a case study (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009).

Researchers who conduct face-to-face interviews have the capability of asking open-ended question (Voldnes, Grønhaug, & Sogn-Grundvåg, 2014). Researchers ask open-ended questions for the opportunity to clarify and explain unclear portions of the interview (Voldnes et al., 2014). I performed data collection through a semistructured interview process with open-ended questions as a means of communication. I asked each participant the same questions and used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) for trustworthiness and consistency. I provided participants with a copy of the interview questions via e-mail in order to prepare participants for the initial face-to-face interview.

Semistructured interviews involve active listening and observation, taking notes, and sufficient preparation. The researcher starts the dialogue by asking open-ended questions to motivate the participants (Yates & Leggett, 2016). I chose a selection of questions based on similar studies whose primary focus was to determine what strategies some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years.

Interview questions play a significant role for qualitative research by outlining the phenomena and supporting the central research (Connelly, 2015). Researchers do not

guide the discussion, but listen and observe the discussions that follow, interjecting as little as possible if the discussion remains on the topic (Yates & Leggett, 2016).

Structured interviews involve establishing a set of predetermined rules for questions, observations, and evaluations (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014).

Unstructured interviews are the reverse of structured interviews. Unstructured interviews offer a set of questions that are not prearranged (Levashina et al., 2014). Various data collection methods exist; choosing the right method is vital since the method of choice can disrupt the importance and validity of the study (Ivey, 2017). Various interview data collection formats include telephone data, web-based, focus groups or self-administered questionnaires (Ivey, 2017; McCormack, Friedrich, Fahrenwald, & Specker, 2014).

Yin (2018) outlined the interviewing process in five steps. I used an interview protocol based on Yin's five-step interview process (see Appendix A). Researchers using semistructured interviews listen actively, observe, take notes, and prepare sufficiently (Yates & Leggett, 2016). The researcher starts the interview by asking open-ended questions to motivate the participants (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Interview questions are vital for qualitative research (Connelly, 2015). Researchers do not guide the discussion and interrupt as little as possible if the discussion remains on the topic (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Researcher may allow participants to ask questions for explanation. The profundity of the interview intensifies when researchers allow participants to ask illuminating questions (Nichols, 2015). The interview process creates consistency in the study by affording researchers an opportunity to collect rich data (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

Researchers can record interview data digitally, take concise notes, or employ a mixture of these methods (Vass et al., 2017). Vass et al. (2017) acknowledged the importance of thorough recordings because recordings are a necessary component of the researcher's data analysis process. With consent from each participant, I took notes and audio record the interviews to ensure accuracy during the transcription process. Obtaining consent is part of a researcher's role and enhances ethical practice (Cresswell & Gilmour, 2014; Rooney, 2015). I obtained each participant's informed consent prior to commencing the interviews. Recordings are necessary for interviews to form the foundation of the study (Vass et al., 2017). I reminded participants of privacy protocols and their right of confidentiality. Finally, I recapped to the participants that they may withdraw from participating in the study at any time.

Documentation Review

Documentation review is a method that researchers use for evidence in case studies (Yin, 2018). I accessed, with written permission from small business owners, business licenses, documents related to annual financial filings, and other company documents that pertain to the business owner remaining in business longer than 5 years. Researchers review documents to confirm the accuracy of data (Levy, 2017). Collecting and reviewing data produces quality results and a comprehensive analysis when researchers utilize documentation review (Connelly, 2013). Documentation review is essential for researchers conducting qualitative studies because of eliminating inefficiencies (Koziel, 2017). Documentation review is the substance of an efficient and effective study (Koziel, 2017). Koziel (2017) suggested that researchers use

documentation review in order to answer questions participants may have once the study is complete. Documentation review is similar to member checking since member checking in qualitative research is a way of confirming accuracy and validity (Madill & Sullivan, 2017).

Member Checking

Member checking is a technique that researchers use for exploring the credibility of results and is validation from the participants (Birt et al., 2016). Researchers use member checking to safeguard the quality of their data (Carroll & Huxtable, 2014). Member checking is the most skillful way of reducing misrepresentation and misinterpretation of data (Carroll & Huxtable, 2014). Researchers engage participants in member checking to validate a summary of the interview transcript and to ensure credible, dependable data (Yin, 2018). Member checking consists of short, follow-up interviews in which the participant reviews the researcher's summarized interpretation of the transcribed interview to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation (Carroll & Huxtable, 2014). I transcribed each interview from the audio recording of each participant's responses to the interview questions, created an interpreted summary of the interview transcript, and met again with each participant for validation purposes. I asked the participants to verify the accuracy of the summary of the transcript, noted any errors or missing information, and then asked the participants for additional information in pursuit of data saturation.

Data Collection Technique

Conducting face-to-face interviews is the most commonly used form of data collection in qualitative research (Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014). Qualitative research is a method used by researchers to provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Macnaughton et al., 2016). In-depth interviews begin with the assumption that the viewpoint of the participants is meaningful (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). One crucial aspect of a good interview is to ask the right questions (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). Researchers should be cognizant that ethical challenges exist in qualitative interviewing (Brayda & Boyce, 2014). I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix A) by ensuring that I asked questions that directly align with the central research question for this study. I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews using an interview protocol (see Appendix A) and reviewed relevant company documents to collect data for this study.

I used audio technology to record every interview to ensure dependability and the ability to transcribe the interview responses. In addition to recording the interview, I took notes to document any reflexive thoughts I might have during the interviewing process. I paid attention to body language and nonverbal signs made by each participant. Interviews lasted for approximately 45-60 minutes and occurred in a private meeting room located inside a public library at a date and time determined by the researcher and the participant. I obtained informed consent from each participant prior to the commencement of the interview. I greeted each participant formally, restated the purpose of the study, and asked if the participant had any questions prior to starting the interview. I reminded the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I followed the same

interview protocol and process for all seven interviews. Researchers confirm dependability by repeatedly applying a specific technique to the same objective yielding the exact results each time (Simon & Cooper, 2016).

I organized my data using NVivo 12 computer software. NVivo 12 computer software is a useful tool for coding data into themes (Mina Min, Anderson, & Minge, 2017). NVivo 12 is a software product that provides digitally coding texts or images that allows its users to coordinate evidence and make methodically rich data records (Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo dos Santos, & Teixeira, 2016). Researchers who use NVivo 12 software can manage data in a single location, including text, spreadsheets, video, audio, or images, and can add, modify, link and cross reference data, or record ideas in the form of memos (Oliveira et al., 2016). Researchers use NVivo 12 software to help organize and analyze qualitative data (Crowe, Utey, Turner, & Fulop, 2017). After the participant validated the summary of the interview transcript for accuracy during member checking, I used NVivo 12 to facilitate coding the data into themes.

Qualitative research methods assist researchers in accomplishing an exhaustive understanding of an individual's insights (Vass et al., 2017). Researchers collect relevant data when choosing to use the qualitative research method (Vass et al., 2017). The researcher becomes the primary data collector and data analyst when using the qualitative research method (Birt et al., 2016). Researchers aid as the primary collection instrument in case studies (Warwick-Booth, 2014). As the researcher of the study, I exploited numerous sources to gather information, including business licenses and financial records that document the businesses' longevity. Researchers use several sources and collect data

in real time and in real-world contexts to explore, understand, and define the details of a phenomenon (Harrison & Mills, 2016).

The advantages of the data collection technique include the researcher's ability to conduct semistructured interviews using open-ended questions and the researcher's ability to use audio technology for accuracy (Tibben, 2015). The data collection technique increases the dependability of the study (Tibben, 2015). Researchers use open-ended questions to discover a deeper understanding of the phenomenon while enabling the participant to express their thoughts (Tibben, 2015). Researchers use an interview protocol as a guide for ensuring that each participant answers the same questions and undergoes the same interview process (Tibben, 2015). An additional advantage is that researchers can process findings instantaneously and can present immediate feedback (Sanjari et al., 2014). Another advantage is the researcher gains the benefit of learning from the participants who are experts in the studies topic (Kenno, McCracken, & Salterio, 2017). The advantages of document reviews are the data has already been collected and simple access to company information (Wieland et al., 2014). Internal company documents are a valuable source of information for researchers and serve as a unique source for evidence about a company's daily activities (Wieland et al., 2014).

The disadvantages of the data collection technique include the quality of data collected, and the process being time-consuming and costly (Kılınç & Fırat, 2017). An additional disadvantage is a probable need for a large number of interviewees (Kılınç & Fırat, 2017). The data collection might also be challenging ethically if situations develop and researchers have to deal with opposing issues and choose among different

methodological strategies if a conflict arises (Sanjari et al., 2014). Complex ethical and methodological issues can arise when researching sensitive topics (Fahie, 2014). A study without ethical foundation loses its credibility (Tibben, 2015). The disadvantages of document reviews are time consuming and linking the data to the research question (Tarin, 2017). Researchers use research questions to guide the study (Tarin, 2017). Researchers review organizational documents related to the study's topic obtained using qualitative methods (Tarin, 2017).

Member checking in qualitative research measures validity (Madill & Sullivan, 2017). Member checking is a reflexive approach to knowledge production that inaugurates rigor by completing triangulation and is effective for obliterating misrepresentation (Caretta, 2016). Member checking encompasses the presenting of the data and the analysis and interpretation of findings back to the participant who contributed the data to approve that the meaning interpreted by the researcher is what the participant envisioned (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016). Researchers use member checking to return a summary of the interview transcript to the participant to review for accuracy (Birt et al., 2016). During member checking, the participants verify the researcher's interpretation of their responses to the interview questions (Birt et al., 2016). I provided copies of the summarized interpretation of the interview transcript to each participant within 10 days following the initial interview. During the follow-up member-checking sessions, I asked each participant to answer the following questions: (a) What revisions to my interpretations of your responses are needed to accurately reflect the information that you

intended to provide? (b) What information in my interpretations of your responses requires additional explanation or clarification? (c) What other information can you add?

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative researchers capture descriptive data, capture the voice of individuals, answers questions of how and why, and provide an understanding of participants' experiences (Alderfer & Sood, 2016; Vaughn & Turner, 2016). I used audio recording technology to capture the participant's voice and ensure accuracy during each interview. Each interview question will align with the research question to answer what strategies some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. I transcribed each audio recorded interview precisely and evaluated each interview for patterns or themes. I identified participants by letters and numbers beginning with *PSI*. *PS* signifies the participant, and the numbers identify each participant starting with *I* as the first participant interviewed and so forth. I organized patterns and themes utilizing an Excel spreadsheet and NVivo 12 software. I put patterns and themes into categories and assigned a code to each theme. NVivo 12 software is an efficient, user-friendly software program that researchers use to sort, organize, and classify data until the research question is thoroughly answered (Paulus, Woods, Atkins, & Macklin, 2017). I categorized the codes under a list of themes that develop during the data collection and analysis stage. Researchers use themes to develop strategies for identifying the information gathered from the data (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Coding alongside themes assists in highlighting priorities by providing focus to the process of analyzing qualitative data (Vaughn & Turner, 2016).

To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of each participant, I followed the requirements of Walden University's IRB for protecting the rights of human subjects. To guarantee compliance concerning the protection of human subjects, researchers must implement processes that align with the rules and regulations of the IRB (Lisa Murtha & Lipkin, 2017). The IRB demonstrates the need for ethical direction and responsibility regarding research with human subjects (Domenech Rodríguez, Corralejo, Vouvalis, & Mirly, 2017). The IRB seeks to ensure that researchers do not violate the rights of humans under the guise of research (Domenech Rodríguez et al., 2017). The IRB safeguards the rights, dignity, well-being, and safety of research participants (Sherchand, 2017). To protect the well-being, rights, and safety of the participants, I assigned unique identifiers to all saved digital recordings, transcripts, and documents. I stored and protected digital information on a password protected thumb drive. I will safeguard and store all information, including reflective notes, journals, and signed consent forms in a locked fireproof safe in my home office for 5 years. After the 5 years, I will shred all printed data. I will also destroy the password protected flash drive housing all digital information. I am the only person who will have access to all stored data. All raw data will be stored securely for 5 years.

Data Analysis

A comprehensive data analysis provides a truthful interpretation of the knowledge of each participant and his or her experience (van den Berg & Ma, 2014). Data analysis comprises of audio recordings, reflective notes, transcripts, rich descriptions, and member checking (Mutiganda, Hassel, & Fagerström, 2013). I analyzed the research data using

Yin's five-step interview process (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (d) interpreting the meaning of the data, and (e) concluding the data (Yin, 2018). Utilizing and analyzing various sources of data allows researchers to address a substantial range of subjects while giving validity to the study (Yin, 2018).

Four types of triangulation exist: (a) data, (b) investigator, (c) methodological, and (d) theory (Joslin & Müller, 2016). The most commonly used type of triangulation for qualitative research is the methodological triangulation (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Researchers use triangulation to identify phenomena, offer alternate viewpoints to intricate problems, and to gain a holistic understanding of organizational problems (Joslin & Müller, 2016). Researchers also utilize methodological triangulation to synthesize various methods to gather data (Yin, 2018). Researchers integrate triangulation within a study to enhance the understanding of a phenomenon (Amankwaa, 2016). To determine survivability strategies of small businesses owners in Tennessee, I aligned the interview questions with the central research question. I used semistructured interviews as one means to collect data to use the methodological triangulation approach. Researchers using methodological triangulation can integrate multiple sources of data in order to provide various pictures of the phenomenon (Drouin, Stewart, & Van Gorder, 2015).

To engage in methodological triangulation, researchers use multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon, which may include reflective journals, interviews, and field notes (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). I collected data from multiple sources for methodological triangulation. I collected data from face-to-face interviews with small business salon owners, reflective notes, and

company documentation. I also reviewed and analyzed the transcribed recordings of participant interviews to recognize and categorize patterns and themes regarding strategies small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. I used methodological triangulation to ensure the dependability of the data and the credibility of the findings.

Compiling

Compilation of data is a complex process that takes place before the studies data analyses (Nielsen & Hjørland, 2014; Yin, 2018). Compiling data occurs through reviewing memos and field notes, observational data, company documents, collecting information from face-to-face interviews with participants, using an interview protocol, transcribing each participant interview, and coding interview transcripts (Nielsen & Hjørland, 2014; Yin, 2018). Compiling data requires a substantial amount of field knowledge (Nielsen & Hjørland, 2014). To compile data, I digitally recorded and took notes during each face-to-face interview. I transcribed and evaluated each interview, and coded each transcript while searching for themes and patterns in the interview data. Identifying and coding raw data demonstrates an important visual representation and the progression of the data from raw to aggregate themes in the qualitative research process (Whaley & Gillis, 2018). Finally, I reviewed a compilation of company documents, including financial statements and business licenses.

Disassembling

Qualitative researchers provide a step-by-step explanation of their coding, beginning with the processing of the raw data, its disassembly into meaningful thought

fragments, its ordering into fragments of analogous meaning, and the description of underlying categories of meaning (Köhler, 2016; Yin, 2018). Researchers disassemble data into fragments and use a subset of codes and categories for demonstrative purposes (Firmin, Bonfils, Luther, Minor, & Salyers, 2017; Yin, 2018). Researchers choose categories and themes most frequently used that have a high face validity (Firmin et al., 2017). I alphanumerically coded participants by utilizing the following PS1 through PS7 with PS1 being the first participant interviewed. I also separated fragmented data into subscore and core themes as suggested by Firmin et al. (2017), and adjusted codes accordingly in order to create a link between codes and identified conceptual themes in the data.

Reassembling Data

Reassembling data encompasses collecting and classifying data into groups utilizing computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo (Palinkas et al., 2015). The use of CAQDAS has expanded for researchers to analyze data faster (Palinkas et al., 2015). Researchers use NVivo 12 software to collect, organize, analyze varied data types, detect patterns, and sort themes (Paulus et al., 2017; Oliveira et al., 2016). I used NVivo 12 software during the data reassembly phase in which I detected themes and continued to analyze and organize the data.

Interpreting Data

Qualitative researchers provide descriptive data interpretation by sorting and developing themes related to the purpose of the study (McLeod & Childs, 2013; Sarros, Luca, Densten, & Santora, 2014, Yin, 2018). Qualitative researchers retrieve and evaluate

key and secondary information to compare patterns and themes (McLeod & Childs, 2013; Sarros et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). After retrieving and organizing themes in the research data, I provided a descriptive interpretation of related patterns and themes obtained from interview data and company documents. In order to interpret the study's data, I categorized and interpreted links between key and secondary data related to the purpose of the study comparing patterns and themes.

Drawing Conclusions

After thoroughly assessing the study, qualitative researchers complete data analysis systematically by describing the outcome of the study and documenting its synthesized findings (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014). During data analysis, the researcher connects the interpretation of major themes and patterns from primary and secondary data to the study's research question (Nielsen & Hjørland, 2014). Thematic and content analysis approach identifies concepts and allows researchers to summarize and evaluate data (Flood et al., 2017). I connected company documents, interpreted interview, and interview questions to the research question, scholarly literature, and reflective notes to systems theory. I described the findings of the study and reported the findings to provide an understanding and confirmation of systems theory.

Key Themes

Qualitative researchers code interview transcripts and other research data to reach a consensus of key themes (Rowe, Rosenheck, Stern, & Bellamy, 2014). Researchers use major themes from research data to support and provide an understanding into the conceptual framework and relevant scholarly literature (Sarros et al., 2014; Unkovic et

al., 2016). I used major themes obtained from interview transcripts and company documents to support and provide an understanding of systems theory. Researchers seek to identify recurring themes within the data to augment the credibility of the findings of a study, establish key themes, and connect themes to the literature review and conceptual framework (Pringle, Collins, & Santry, 2013). I compared the frequency of the themes that emerged from the data acquired from participant interviews and company documents to confirm, support, and add insight to current and future studies.

Software Plan

I used NVivo 12 software during my detection of patterns and themes presented in the research study. I audio recorded each interview, transcribed verbatim, and coded the data using NVivo 12 software. Researchers use NVivo 12 to organize data based on the established categories (Oliveira et al., 2016). During the data analysis stage, researchers utilize NVivo 12 to analyze and review work in progress, identify common themes, present the insights noted during the coding process, and work with the data in other applications such as Microsoft Word or Excel (Oliveira et al., 2016). Researchers use NVivo 12 to manage the intricacies of conducting qualitative research (Houghton et al., 2013). Qualitative researchers use various sources of information including interviews, field notes, audio recordings, company documents, newspaper clippings, and memoranda (Paulus et al., 2017). Researchers use NVivo 12 software to collect, organize, and analyze varied data types (Paulus et al., 2017). I used NVivo 12 software during the process of organizing, coding, and analyzing data. NVivo 12 software, operating within the Microsoft Windows operation system, is a manageable software for novice

researchers to use for qualitative data analysis (Paulus et al., 2017). MAXQDA is a Windows based software similar to NVivo 12 that researchers use to analyze qualitative data used for content analysis (Oliveira et al., 2016). MAXQDA and NVivo 12 contain important features relevant to thematic content analysis (Oliveira et al., 2016). Although similar, I did not choose MAXQDA because the cost to purchase MAXQDA is higher than that of NVivo 12.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers seek dependability instead of reliability (McNeil et al., 2015). Researchers conducting qualitative research seek credibility, confirmability, and transferability of the findings instead of validity (Hill & Bundy, 2014). Researchers who institute constancy, truthfulness, and impartiality within a study increase the trustworthiness and integrity of the research findings (Van den Berg & Ma, 2014).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the level in which the results of a study are replicable (Grossoehme, 2014; Leung, 2015). Researchers rely on dependability to assess the consistency of the study's results (Onen, 2016). In qualitative research, trustworthiness and transparency regarding the conduct of the study are critical to the practicality and integrity of the findings (Leung, 2015). The dependability for qualitative research lies with constancy and is one of the main characteristics researchers consider when determining the quality of data used in their studies (Leung, 2015). The phenomenon of a study becomes reliable the more times the findings can be replicated (Connelly, 2015).

Researchers determine dependability in the application of research practices that mirrors the reflectivity of research practices, analysis, and conclusions (Connelly, 2015). A study is dependable if findings replicate with similar participants in similar environments (Cope, 2014). Dependability is the constancy of the data over corresponding situations and the extent to which the procedures of research is documented, permitting unbiased individuals outside the research to critique and audit the research process (Cope, 2014; Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams, & Blackman, 2016).

Researchers use member checking and transcript review to ensure dependability and validity (Onen, 2016; Yin, 2018). To ensure dependability in the research, I used member checking to protect the quality of the data. Member checking involves follow-up interviews that allow each participant the chance to review the researcher's interpretation of the transcribed interview in order to confirm accuracy (Carroll & Huxtable, 2014). Researchers conduct follow-up meetings with participants for an opportunity to add missed information during the primary interview (Carroll & Huxtable, 2014). I followed up with each participant to ensure accuracy and give the participants an opportunity to review my interpretation of their interview responses. I made the necessary changes to the summary of the transcript by notating the additional information from the participant's original response.

Reflexivity in research improves transparency in the researcher's subjective role in conducting and analyzing data (Darawsheh, 2014). Researchers utilizing the reflexivity approach apply necessary changes to ensure the credibility of their findings (Darawsheh,

2014). Member checking is the most competent way of decreasing misinterpretation of data (Carroll & Huxtable, 2014; Cypress, 2017). Member checking is the practice of the sharing research data, interpretations, analytic categories or conclusions with research participants (Chang, 2014). I incorporated the principles of credibility, transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability in this study to maintain the quality of the qualitative research. To ensure dependability, I utilized member checking by giving participants an opportunity to assess my interpretation of the interview data, correct any errors or misinterpretations, and provide additional information.

Credibility

A vital criterion for a study is the credibility of the findings (Amankwaa, 2016). Credibility is the extent to which the researcher exemplifies the actual meanings or truth of the research participants (Moon et al., 2016). Researchers establish credibility through techniques, such as data and method triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, reflection, reflective journaling, and extended meetings with study participants (Connelly, 2015; Moon et al., 2016). Researchers find that credibility is the truth of the data or the participant understandings and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Cope, 2014).

The researcher's description of his or her experiences along with authenticating the research findings enhances credibility (Cope, 2014). The authenticity of a study refers to the ability in which the researcher articulates the participant's experiences and feelings in a truthful manner (Cope, 2014). A qualitative study is credible when the explanations of an individual's experience become recognizable by individuals that share the exact

experience (Cope, 2014). Dependability and credibility share every facet of the research, comprising the focus of the research, the context, the selection of participants, the collection of data, and the amount of data collected (Moon et al., 2016). I ensured credibility by using the member checking process to collaborate with the participants in confirming that the data from each interview was accurate.

Transferability

Transferability is a vital aspect to the application of research findings and refers to the point in which the phenomenon or results described in the study apply to future research (Moon et al., 2016). A qualitative study meets the requirements of transferability when the findings have significant meaning to individuals who are not involved in the study and readers can identify the study's findings with their own experiences (Cope, 2014). To help with transferability in the study, I meticulously documented the research procedures, collected dependable data, analyzed the data objectively, and ensured credible findings.

Confirmability

Researchers prove confirmability of a study by recounting how interpretations and conclusions form, demonstrating that the study's findings are a direct result of the data (Cope, 2014). The researcher's capability to prove that the data represents the participants' response and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints demonstrates confirmability (Cope, 2014). Researchers exhibit confirmability in qualitative research by submitting rich quotes from the participants that illustrate emerging themes (Cope, 2014). To ascertain confirmability, researchers compare the raw data and conclusions ensuring

that the findings from the study are verifiable (Alparslan & İcbay, 2017). To ensure confirmability, I audio recorded each interview and took reflective notes to ensure the accuracy and reflections of each participant's perspective without inserting my personal biases or interfering with findings. I used the data collected from participants as the basis for the findings of this study.

Data Saturation

Researchers performing a qualitative method study use semistructured interviews and member checking to obtain data saturation (Tembo et al., 2013). Data saturation occurs when information becomes repetitive and no developing new data emerges (Marshall et al., 2013). Researchers failing to reach data saturation affect the quality of the research, which hampers content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation occurs when researchers obtain adequate data to duplicate the study, the researcher can no longer obtain further information, and additional coding is no longer possible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To reach data saturation, I conducted face-to-face, semistructured interviews and used member checking to conduct follow-up interviews with each participant to authenticate that the information from each interview is correct. Furthermore, I collected data from pertinent company documents to engage in methodological data triangulation. Member checking transpires when researchers transcribe the participants' interviews, summarizes the data, meets once again with the participants, allow the participants to verify the researcher's interpretations of their responses, and then ask the participants for additional information that might help answer the research question (Houghton et al., 2013). Data became repetitive before I completed

all the scheduled interviews. I documented this fact, and continued with the interviews as planned. I conducted a multiple case study with seven different companies. To ensure I reached data saturation in this multiple case study, I collected data from all seven companies

Transition and Summary

In Section 1, I provided support for the need for further research on what strategies some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. I explained the problem, the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, the conceptual framework, and the potential significance of the study. I noted several assumptions, limitations, and delimitations, and included a review of the relevant literature.

Section 2 contains information regarding the (a) purpose statement (b) role of the researcher, (b) selection of participants, (c) research method and design (d) population and sampling, (e) ethical research guidelines, and (f) data collection and analysis process. I explained the proposed procedures for identifying eligible participants, obtaining informed consent, and following an interview protocol. I discussed the means proposed to ensure the confidentiality of the participants as well as the dependability, credibility, and confirmability of the data. I discussed the planned procedures to reach data saturation.

In Section 3, I presented a comprehensive analysis of the study's findings, implications for social change, recommendations for actions stemming from finding, and recommendations for further research. I presented the reflections and conclusion of my study. I related the reflections of my study to the implications of social change and future

research. I ensured that the findings of my study aligned with the research questions and conceptual framework. In Section 3, the interpretations of the data presented contains information on how my findings apply to small business survivability.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. From June 25, 2018 – July 8, 2018, I collected data from seven salon owners located in Tennessee by conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews. I engaged the seven knowledgeable participants in the cosmetology industry in member checking for them to verify whether I concisely documented and interpreted their responses to the interview questions. I used member checking to gain additional insight from the participants, and I continued this process until no new themes, patterns, or codes emerged.

After each participant validated the summary of the interview transcript, and after I collect data from interviews and company documents, I used Yin's (2018) five-step process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding the data to analyze data. I engaged in methodological triangulation to crosscheck the interview data with the document data. I used NVivo 12 computer software for theme identification. My research question was: What strategies do some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years? Four strategies emerged as key themes: (a) business growth strategy, (b) customer relationship strategy, (c) financial capital strategy, and (d) marketing strategy. Section 3 contains an introduction, presentation of the findings, application of professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for actions, recommendations for further research, reflections, and conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question addressed in this study was: What strategies do some small business salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years? Seven experienced small business salon owners in Tennessee participated in the study. These business owners had successfully been in the salon industry for more than 5 years. I conducted semistructured interviews to obtain awareness of strategies these owners used to remain in business longer than 5 years. In addition to conducting semistructured interviews, I reviewed data from relevant company documents, such as business licenses, certifications, and financial records, to engage in methodological data triangulation.

I conducted the interviews in a private meeting room located inside a public library or other private location at dates and times determined by the participant and myself. Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes. Researchers use interview questions within qualitative research as a means to collect data from participants who possess the knowledge and experience needed to answer the research question (Connelly, 2015). After each interview, I transcribed the interviews and uploaded them into NVivo 12.

The conceptual framework for this qualitative multiple case study was systems theory. The major themes that emerged from my analysis of the interview data and company documents resulted in my deeper understanding of systems theory for solving complex business problems. Von Bertalanffy (1972) presented systems theory as a means for business leaders to use a holistic systems approach to facilitate business success. Business owners meet sustainable business objectives through using a harmonious

systems approach during strategy implementation (Montgomery & Oladapo, 2014). The participants applied systems theory by utilizing several strategies in a holistic approach to achieve the salon's objectives to remain in business longer than 5 years.

To protect the identity of the salon owners, I replaced each owner's name with an alphanumeric code, such as PS1, PS2, PS3, PS4, PS5, PS6, and PS7. After collecting data from interviews and company documents, I used Yin's (2018) five-step process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding data to analyze the data. Researchers utilize and analyze various sources of data to address a substantial range of subjects while giving credibility to the study (Yin, 2018). Each of the seven small business salon owners interviewed had unique business models. Four key themes emerged as the strategies the participants used to remain in business longer than 5 years: (a) business growth strategy, (b) customer relationship strategy, (c) financial capital strategy, and (d) marketing strategy.

I used the first theme, business growth strategy, to reflect on the importance of increasing the growth of a small business salon to remain in business longer than 5 years. I used the second theme, customer relationship strategy, to analyze the positive outcome and value of interpersonal skills as it relates to building customer relationships, building skills, and increasing the growth of the company. I used the third theme, financial capital strategy, to determine capital needs as related to the financial stability of the business. I used the fourth theme, marketing strategy, to demonstrate the positive outcome of marketing the company. In Table 1, I display the themes I identified from my interviews with the small business salon owners who participated in this study.

Table 1

Themes Representing Small Business Salon Owners' Perspectives

| Themes | Percentage of participants' perspectives |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Business Growth Strategy | 100% |
| Customer Relationship Strategy | 100% |
| Financial Capital Strategy | 100% |
| Marketing Strategy | 100% |

Theme 1: Business Growth Strategy

The seven participants in this study implemented various strategies to increase the growth of their business in order to survive longer than 5 years. The findings indicate that business owners should use more than one strategy to sustain their business or increase business growth. These growth strategies align with the concept of systems theory which maintains the stance that components of a system converge with each other rather than operating alone to measure the properties and functioning of that system. Von Bertalanffy (1972) presented systems theory as a theory that necessitates several factors to work together as a whole to facilitate business success. This finding also confirms the research of Zeuli and O'Shea (2017) in that small business owners gain strength in their knowledge and skills through education, training, and product development.

Findings of this study, coupled with a review of the participants' business plans and licenses, indicated that putting these strategies and tactics in place is vital for company growth. Tactics refer to the specific methods the participants in this study used

to increase the growth of their business. Post analyzing data, I identified four tactics that the participants used to implement growth strategies. Table 2 displays the four tactics and the percentage of participants who had used the tactics to implement business growth strategy.

Table 2

Tactics for Implementing a Business Growth Strategy

| Tactics | Percentage of participants' perspective |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Continue Education and Training | 100% |
| Maintain Proper Skills | 100% |
| Make Use of Technology | 57% |
| Be Reliable and Dedicated | 100% |

Continue education and training. All participants reported that education was necessary to initiate the growth of businesses in the salon industry. Education and training have a substantial effect on the overall growth of small businesses while stimulating innovation in the workplace (Bercu, 2017). PS1 and PS2 agreed with Van Rijn et al. (2013) in that the growth of a small business remains dependent on the business owner's knowledge and skills gained through education and training. PS1 stated, "I graduated from cosmetology school in 1994 and trained under a licensed cosmetologist-business owner for 2 years to sharpen my skills and to build up clientele." PS2 reported, "Before I owned my salon, I worked under a licensed cosmetologist-business owner as a shampooer. I retained 50% of my clientele when I started my salon

in 2010.” PS4 stated, “I gain additional education by attending hair shows that increase my skills in keeping current on the latest styles.” PS6 mentioned, “I constantly read books to educate myself on how important interpersonal relationships are. I grow my business by learning how to be interactive with my clients and learning how they think.” I reviewed company documents to confirm that each participant held current licenses. All participants stated that they put in 1500 hours in cosmetology school to obtain their licenses and cosmetology certification. These findings are consistent with the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance in that cosmetologists must obtain certification as well as proper licenses and permits to operate (TDCI, 2018). PS3 was excited to show me additional certifications in Non-Surgical Hair Replacement and a Certificate of Achievement in the scientific approach in color design.

Maintain proper skills. All participants attended hair shows in major cities to increase their skills and knowledge in the hair industry. All participants have become educators to new cosmetologists entering the field, by either facilitating personal classes or speaking at seminars. PS5 mentioned that part of the regimen to maintain skills was attending hair shows and hosting local hair shows in Tennessee. PS5 stated, “I am an educator for hair shows.” PS5 also mentioned that hosting a live, weekly radio show and publishing a book to help educate younger stylists. PS5 stated, “I’m always being a student, while leading as well.” Business owners and employees must develop new skills as the demand in the marketplace increases (Alasadi & Al Sabbagh, 2015). Small business owners maximize their potential through education and training (Alasadi & Al Sabbagh, 2015). The findings confirm the research of Alasadi and Al Sabbagh (2015) in

that business owners should maintain and develop new skills in the industry to meet the demand of the increasing marketplace. PS6 stated, “It is important to reinvent yourself in this industry because it is saturated. You must constantly do something different and cannot become complacent. It is vital to continue learning.”

Make use of technology. Social media is an online platform for businesses to market services and to manage customer relationships (Naneetha, 2018). This finding confirms the research of Puente (2017) in that small business owners rely on technology as a driver for attracting loyal customers and increasing productivity. The use of social media and adopting relevant technology for marketing is vital for small business survivability (Puente, 2017). PS3, PS4, PS5, and PS6 mentioned using technology for scheduling appointments, posting photos of their work, posting recorded videos, and creating live feeds of services offered as well as displaying results of their client’s hairstyles. PS3, PS4, PS5, and PS6 all use social media to promote their salon. The two most popular sites used are Facebook and Instagram. PS1, PS2, and PS7 noted during their interview that they do not use technology to assist them with scheduling client appointments. All participants mentioned that word-of-mouth is the greatest form of technology that exists in the salon industry. As noted by von Bertalanffy (1972), business leaders need to use systems theory regarding the incorporation of technology to work in a holistic approach to achieve company objectives.

Be reliable and dedicated. All participants acknowledged that dedication to their business led them to remaining in business longer than 5 years. PS3 stated, “Because of my dedication, I made it through the recession.” PS6 also mentioned that surviving the

2008 recession occurred because of dedication to the business. PS1 noted how remaining dedicated to the business resulted in almost 20 years of successful operations. PS1 stated:

I make sure that I am always here and on time for my clients. I consider my time as well as my customers, I only increase my prices when necessary, and I make sure not to keep my customers too long in my salon.

PS2 stated, “I am dedicated to my salon and to using only professional products on my customers.” PS2 mentioned that professional products are products that regular people cannot purchase. PS6 also mentioned the importance of using professional products. PS6 stated, “It is vital to understand the products you use on your clients.” PS7 ascertained during the interview that dedication to the business helps to attain a trusted name throughout the community.

Theme 2: Customer Relationship Strategy

Investing in customer relationships is an integral part of remaining in business (Naneetha, 2018). I confirmed through a review of certifications, annual business license renewals, and financial records that small salon business owners increase the sustainability of their business through implementing a customer relationship strategy.

The use of a customer relationship strategy is consistent with participants’ responses and the research of Naneetha (2018), who noted that customer relationships are an essential source of a sustainable competitive advantage and a firm’s competitive performance because of the level of confidence and trust the owner builds with the client. Each participant discussed the various tactics that work together as a whole instead of in parts in relation to the success of their salon, which is in alignment with von Bertalanffy’s

(1972) systems theory. Table 3 displays the two tactics that emerged regarding how the participants implemented an appropriate customer relationship strategy to improve their relationship with their clients.

Table 3

Tactics for Implementing a Customer Relationship Strategy

| Tactics | Percentage of participants' perspective |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Learn the Needs of Your Customer | 100% |
| Always be Professional | 100% |

Learn the needs of your customer. All participants agreed that customer service is a vital component of the growth, success, and sustainability of their business. Each participant mentioned the importance of kind and courteous business practices to retain customers and increase clientele. The research of Cooper et al. (2016) confirmed that small business owners must strive to recognize the need for innovative customer service to build lasting customer relationships. The efficacy of innovation influences the business leader's inclination to identify and act on opportunities. PS2 stated:

Customer service is important for business survival. It is important to make your customers comfortable while they are in your salon. It is equally important to ask the necessary questions; it is also essential to do what your client asks of you as their stylist in terms of service.

PS3 stated, "It is important to trust your clients in order to establish a healthy relationship with them. No client is the same, so you have to learn to adapt to their habits." PS4 mentioned during the interview that the advantage in learning the needs of your

customers is a repeat customer. PS6 stated, “You have to learn your customers likes and dislikes. It is important to show care and concern for every customer. You not only retain your customer, but you have a happy customer.” PS6 also noted that, “going the extra mile to learn a customer’s name and favorite things to do” is advantageous in growing the customer base and getting to know the customers on a personal basis.

Always be professional. Schlabach, (2017) revealed that acting in a professional manner is an attribute business owners use to contribute to respectable business practices and demonstrate *right* behavior. The responses from the participants and findings from the research of Shohani, Abedi, and Rasouli (2018) indicated that professionalism is a vital concept that improves the value of a business. Professionalism includes a set of attitudes that demonstrate levels of authentication and commitment (Shohani et al., 2018). This finding confirms the research of Glasper (2017) in that small business owners who promote professionalism and trust by focusing on the tactics that are significant to the needs of their customers might survive in a competitive marketplace. Even though the participants agreed that professionalism contributes to business survival, they presented various views on what actions they deemed as professional. PS1 noted during the interview that professionalism emanate from being a veteran stylist. PS1 has been in the salon business for 19 years. PS1 mentioned that a positive attitude “comes from a lot of prayer, dealing with a plethora of people, and personal demonstrations that gives the opportunity to meet a multiplicity of potential customers.” PS1 stated, “Since there is so much competition in the industry, professionalism is a chief attribute to possess as a salon owner.” PS2 noted during the interview that a positive attitude goes a long way and that

professionalism is paying attention to the health of the hair, prayer, and using professional products. PS3 specified the importance of possessing excellent problem-solving skills to operate in a professional manner. PS4 stated, “I increase clients and show professionalism by keeping my doors open with a smile. I also ensure that the salon has a calm, laid back, family atmosphere.” PS5 equated professionalism to character and integrity. PS6 stated, “I let everyone else fight for 2nd place.” PS6 maintained that this type of attitude along with helping others in the community shows a professional and caring nature as a stylist.” PS6 upheld that a positive attitude helps to succeed in business. PS7 stated, “I make it a point to practice professionalism in public and in my business. Professionalism has sustained me for 39 plus years in this business” (referring to the salon industry). All seven participants worked under the tutelage of other salon owners, learning the causes of success and failure of a small salon before committing to starting their own business. Effective, professional leadership is an essential component for small business owners to balance the concepts of reaching sustainable growth and profitability (Muenjohn & McMurray, 2016).

Theme 3: Financial Capital Strategy

The findings indicate that all participants used a financial capital strategy, yet most of the participants self-financed their business. Out of the seven participants that I interviewed, only one salon owner obtained a small business loan for salon equipment. The findings of Amel and Mach (2017) supported financial stability is essential for thriving businesses, however; small business loans are on the decline. This finding confirms the research of Conroy, Low, and Weiler (2017), who noted that adequate

capital remains essential for the survival and growth of a small business; however, only 10% of small business owners use a loan for expansion and capital improvements. In alignment with von Bertalanffy's (1972) system theory, small business salon owners must take a holistic approach to ensure adequate financial capital exists for business operations. Table 4 displays the percentage of small business salon owners who self-financed their business in comparison to using small business loans.

Table 4

Tactics for Implementing a Financial Capital Strategy

| Tactics | Percentage of participants' perspective |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Self-Financed Business | 85.71% |
| Utilized Small Business Loans | 14.29% |

The finding that debt financing is not a factor for business survival refutes the research of Cheng (2015), who noted that business owners who do not have access to business loans experience a higher failure rate than owners who access capital markets to obtain business financing. PS1 was the only participant that utilized a small business loan, yet all seven participants survived in business longer than 5 years. PS1 mentioned that using cash flow and retained earnings helped meet the financial needs of the salon, but eventually found the need to obtain a small business loan to purchase salon equipment, such as hair dryers and workstations. Six participants noted that they self-financed their businesses by using retained earnings, forgoing taking cash draws out of the business in excess of their personal needs, and being somewhat frugal in their personal lives as well

as their business operations. All seven participants mentioned that they worked for other stylists for various number of years to save money for start-up obligations. PS1 noted that price increases occur only when necessary to survive, cover the cost of operations, or remain consistent with local market pricing. PS1, PS3, PS4, PS5, PS6, and PS67 rent booths within their salons to other stylists for additional income to sustain their businesses. PS2 stated, “My business is generally slow in the summer months, so I have to rely on my husband for additional financing to cover operational expenses, but only when necessary.” The participants mentioned several other minor financial tactics that helped cover the cost of conducting business, such as the occasional use of credit cards for short-term financing, saving tip monies for emergencies, and selling personal assets to ensure the business maintained adequate financial capital to survive.

Theme 4: Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy is the fourth theme of this study. Each participant focused on marketing strategies that would benefit the profitability of the salon. Bringing attention to customers utilizing a marketing strategy is vital to the growth of a business (Ramasobana, Fatoki, & Oni, 2017). Many small business owners prefer to market through Internet technology and social media, which broadens the advertisement (Ramasobana et al., 2017). The findings of this study confirms the research of Ramasobana et al. (2017) in that marketing through social media, local paid media, signage, and community involvement are effective means of advertising. Business owners who concentrate on strategies most satisfying to the needs of their customers might succeed longer than 5

year in a competitive market. Table 5 displays the tactics and percentage of marketing tactics used by the participants.

Table 5

Tactics for Implementing a Marketing Strategy

| Tactics | Percentage of participants' perspective |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Take Advantage of Social Media | 57.16% |
| Give Back to the Community | 14.29% |
| Utilize Newspaper and Radio | 28.55% |

PS3, PS4, PS5, and PS6 took advantage of social media. These four participants utilized Facebook and Instagram as marketing tools to sustain their business by taking appointments, using hashtags, posting videos, and posting before and after pictures of their clients. An additional marketing strategy that PS2 utilized was a punch card. PS2 explained that once the punch card is completely full, the client receives a free service of their choice. PS1 uses a referral strategy similar to PS2 by using a punch card, but instead gives out business cards to customers and writes their name on the back of the card. When PS2 receives three cards back with the same client's name on the back of the card, that client receives a free service.

PS6 gives back to the community by sponsoring local events. PS1, PS2, and PS7 utilize newspaper and radio as marketing tools to remain in business. PS1 stated, "I use radio and newspaper to announce special days and discounted services." All the participants mentioned word-of-mouth to be the best marketing tool for every small

business salon owner. All participants mentioned that they have used public events to demonstrate their expertise and market their businesses.

Findings Aligned with Systems Theory

The tenets of systems theory are (a) a holistic approach instead of a simplistic summation of the parts, (b) the requirement for interconnections, and (c) controlling the system (von Bertalanffy, 1972). The finding of this study aligns with the tenets of systems theory in that the small salon business owners used a variety of strategies and tactics in a holistic manner to sustain the longevity of their business. Business systems include decision-making, financial, accounting, supplier, marketing, and internal systems that are necessary for business survival (Appelbaum et al., 2017). The participants recognized the need to take a systems approach to implement a business growth strategy, customer relationship strategy, financial capital strategy, and marketing strategy in a harmoniously manner to remain in business longer than 5 years. I deemed systems theory as an effective and useful lens for this study because a holistic systems approach to business management remains essential for business survival.

Applications to Professional Practice

Small business owners in the salon industry need contemporary research findings to execute the strategies some small business salon owners use to survive longer than 5 years. This research is applicable to the survivability of small businesses because the objective of this study was to explore strategies small business owners need to remain in business longer than 5 years. Small business owners and leaders are the primary initiators of innovation and economic growth and must implement effective strategies to survive in

a competitive environment (Cheng, 2015; Zeuli & O'Shea, 2017). Small business leaders should heed the advice of von Bertalanffy (1972), who noted that a holistic systems approach is a necessary strategy for business success. Developing sustainability strategies is an advantageous activity for small business owners to thrive in a changing, competitive marketplace (Shields & Shelleman, 2015). The findings of this study may prove helpful to new business owners who have been unsuccessful in determining strategies to remain in business longer than 5 years. The findings may also encourage entrepreneurs to start a new business. Small business salon owners or new small business owners might implement the recommendations from this study to develop the strategies needed to survive in business longer than 5 years.

Small business owners may apply the findings regarding a business growth strategy to improve the growth and sustainability of their business. Having a proper growth strategy in place may prevent the failure of small businesses. Sarmiento et al. (2016) ascertained that lack of growth planning oftentimes led to failed businesses. Business owners commit to people, profit, company growth, and the environment to improve the sustainability of their businesses (Johnson et al., 2017). The findings of this study indicated small business salon owners used specific growth strategies to increase clientele and survive in business longer than 5 years.

Owners of small business might apply the findings to develop an effective, customer relationship strategy. Customer relationships are an organizational asset (Vomberg et al., 2015). Business owners building customer relationships form the most value in a service setting; applying skills when relating to customers is an essential

component for creating firm value and sustainability (Vomberg et al., 2015). The findings of this study indicated that small salon business owners recognized the business value of implementing a customer relationship strategy.

Small business owners might apply the findings of this study regarding implementing a financial capital strategy. Additionally, small business owner might take note of the fact that only one of seven participants in this study obtained external financing through business loans. Wilson (2015) revealed that small business owners have little confidence in bank lending as evidenced by the decline of the number of owners using bank financing. As posited by Ludmila et al. (2017), effective supervision of financial capital reduces debt burden and financial risk. Small business owners may apply the tactics used by the participants in this study to avoid debt financing and the risks associated with business debt.

Small business owners could apply the findings of this study to implement a marketing strategy. Kunle Ade et al. (2017) established that marketing strategies are vital tools needed for business owners striving to survive in the marketplace. All participants in this study strategically aligned their business and marketing plans to meet the objectives of their salon and attain long-term success. Podlesni (2017) postulated that small business owners must know how to align their business plan with the competitive market to achieve long-term sustainability. The findings of this study indicated that business owners use a variety of marketing tactics, such as the use of the Internet, social media marketing, effective signage, and community involvement.

The application of the findings from this study could lead to sustainable businesses. Sustainable business leaders concentrate on sustainable strategies and survival of the business (Eswarlal & Vallesi, 2014). Von Bertalanffy (1972) presented systems theory to demonstrate the need for several factors to work together as a whole to facilitate business success. Future entrepreneurs and small business owners who are seeking to start and sustain a business may use the strategies identified in this study. Small business owners can use the findings of this study by applying these strategies if they are seeking to have a successful business longer than 5 years. Start-up small business owners who implement the detailed, actionable tactics, strategies, and recommendations from the findings of this study might develop the strategies necessary for surviving in business longer than 5 years.

Implications for Social Change

Small business owners play a critical role in creating jobs in the United States (SBA, 2014). Small businesses comprised 99.7% of U.S. employer firms, 64% of private sector jobs, 49.2% of private sector employment, 42.9% of private sector payroll, 46% of private sector output, 43% of high tech employment, 98% of firms exporting goods, and 33% of exporting value (SBA, 2014). Small business owners boost economic growth by generating job opportunities and self-employment (Babu & Kasilingam, 2015). Holloway and Schaefer (2014) concluded that 50% of small businesses fail within 5 years. Small business failure results in financial inadequacy for business owners and increased unemployment rates.

The implications for positive social change include the potential for small salon business owners to generate employment, sustain the livelihood of employees, contribute to the local economy, and reduce local unemployment rates. Small business owners remain essential for local competitiveness and productivity (Ludmila et al., 2017). Small business owners who survive in business create employment, increase economic development, and promote social value (Meyskens & Bird, 2015). Additionally, the findings in this study may have a positive effect on future entrepreneurs eager to start a business. The application and implementation of recommendations may contribute to the financial stability of small businesses. Communities may benefit economically because of lower unemployment rates, improved standard of living for residents, and local economic stability.

Recommendations for Action

I offer recommendations for action to new business owners, future business owners, and existing business owners. New, newly existing, or future small business owners might implement the recommendations from this study to survive in business longer than 5 years. The key themes that emerged included: (a) business growth strategy, (b) customer relationship strategy, (c) financial capital strategy, and (d) marketing strategy. Business strategies include decision-making for growth, financial, accounting, supplier, marketing, and internal systems, which are all necessary for business survival (Appelbaum et al., 2017).

I recommend that future, new, or existing small business salon owners develop and implement a business growth strategy according to the specific needs of their

business. All participants expressed the importance of education and skills to initiate the growth of their business. One participant pointed out the importance of working under a professionally, licensed stylist for a determined amount of time before starting a business. Another participant stressed the importance of attending hair shows to sharpen skills. All of the participants agreed that on the necessity for business owners to maintain current skills in the industry, make use of technology, and be dedicated to survive and grow in a competitive market.

I recommend that small business owners establish a strong customer relationship strategy. Building relationships with customers is a vital source of a sustainable competitive advantage and a firm's competitive performance (Kryscynski & Ulrich, 2015). The findings indicated the importance of business owners to recognize the needs of customers and always act in a professional manner. I recommend that business owners recognize the value of excellent customer service, maintaining positive rapport with customers, and nurturing the health of trust-based, customer relations. In alignment with systems theory, the findings indicated that the participants used a customer relationship strategy to accentuate their growth and financial capital strategy.

Small business owners should implement a financial capital strategy to remain solvent longer than 5 years. The findings of this study indicated that business survival is not dependent on debt financing. I recommend that small salon business owners seek to finance their operations through retained earnings, avoidance of wasteful spending, and remaining frugal until ample cash flow from the business exists to increase owner salaries, upgrade equipment, or expand the business. Self-financing business operations would

reduce the risk of business failure because of the owner's inability to service a business loan.

I recommend that owners of small business develop an effective marketing strategy within their holistic approach to remaining in business longer than 5 years. The findings of this study indicated that small salon business owners used several marketing tactics to grow their clientele, improve their reputation, and increase their financial viability. Small salon business owners should recognize that word-of-mouth advertising was the most valued marketing tool of the participants in this study. With the exponential growth in the use of social media, I recommend that small business owners use social media marketing to improve sales, business growth, and profitability.

The implementation of vital and effective strategies may contribute to business owners holistically sustaining their business longer than 5 years. The holistic approach is the concept that successful business owners and leaders use to integrate systems strategies into an organizational strategy for long-term sustainability (Fiandaca et al., 2017; Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). I recommend that small business owners use systems theory as a guiding concept for business survivability.

Publishing in quality academic journals is a challenge, yet disseminating scholarly findings is a goal for most researchers to contribute to scholarly literature (Ahlstrom, 2017). I intend to disseminate the findings through submitting articles for publication in the Jackson Business Journal and the Women's Business Journal. I plan to present the findings at the Tennessee Business Showcase and Economic Development Conference and the Small Business Association of the Jackson Area Chamber of Commerce.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies small business salon owners use to survive longer than 5 years. Further research is critical because small business owners play a vital role in society, accounting for most new job creation (Albornoz, 2016). Small businesses are vital to the U.S. economy (SBA, 2014). The findings from this study indicated the necessity for further exploration of strategies used by small salon business owners to survive in business longer than 5 years. I recommend that researchers conduct further research to address the limitations in the study. I relied on the knowledge and interpretations of seven small salon business owners in Tennessee for the credibility of the interview data; therefore, I recommend a larger sample be considered in a different geographical region, especially since the study's conclusive findings might not transfer to other geographic regions or business cases. Researchers using a qualitative case study design, collecting data from small salon business owners in different regions might expose further strategies for the success and survival of small businesses.

Researchers may also consider conducting a quantitative or mixed-method research study to explore strategies small salon business owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. I recommend that researchers test the significance of the relationships among various variables, such as growth rate, capital availability, business longevity, and market variations. Researchers could also couple a quantitative correlational study with a qualitative method to cross check and triangulate statistically analyzed numeric data with interview data collected from participants using open-ended questioning. A quantitative or mixed-method study regarding small salon business

owners remaining in business longer than 5 years would result in findings that would generalize to a larger population.

Reflections

My experience at Walden University, as a doctoral student, has been an opportunity for me to gain knowledge regarding the strategies small salon business owners use to survive in business longer than 5 years. The leading factor that motivated me for this study was my personal interest to learn why most small salons appear to be thriving, but eventually end up failing within the first 2-3 years after opening. My Mom was a small salon business owner for less than 2 years, who pushed me through my educational journey. I also owned a small business in Jackson, Tennessee that failed after 3 years.

As I reflect on the background, preconceived notions, biases, challenges, and benefits of this doctoral quest, my initial thoughts before conducting the research were small salon business owners close because of poor customer service, capital, and low clientele. Conducting this study expanded my comprehension and knowledge of the strategies used by small business owners to survive longer than 5 years. I faced the challenge of obtaining full commitment from participants because they were hesitant about sharing private information with a stranger, my not completely knowing what to expect from the participants, and locating sources that aligned with my study. Researching sources necessary to complete my study was also a challenge. However, through research, I learned that most small salon businesses close because of lack of growth strategies, lack of interpersonal skills, lack of capital, and lack of marketing

strategies. Although challenging and time consuming, the doctoral study process has been highly gratifying. The process was full of emotions, engaging, tough, yet exciting. I learned the value of patience because of this process. I enjoyed building relationships with colleagues, my mentor, professors, and I especially enjoyed becoming a scholarly writer. I learned to maximize my time and to delve deeper in topics that I may not understand as well as topics that I am passionate about. I learned over the course of my study to be persistent and that change is inevitable.

I had the rewarding experience of interviewing seven small business salon owners in Tennessee and building a relationship with successful business owners. The participants in this study provided the vital information needed to answer the research question. After building relationships with the participants, they were happy to help me in my journey. I am forever grateful for their contribution to this study. Although challenging, because of completing this study, I am inspired to launch a small business-consulting firm after graduation.

Conclusion

The strength of the U.S. economy remains dependent on the success of small businesses (Hayes et al., 2015). Small business owners are the primary initiators of innovation and economic growth, but fail at alarming rates. Fifty percent of small businesses fail within 5 years (Holloway & Schaefer, 2014). Through the lens of systems theory, the purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the strategies some small salon business owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. Using purposeful sampling, I selected seven small salon business owners as participants because they

implemented strategies to survive in business longer than 5 years. I collected data from seven salon owners in Tennessee through semistructured, face-to-face interviews and a review of business licenses, certifications, and financial records. During data analysis using Yin's (2018) five-step process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding the data, four major themes emerged: (a) business growth strategy, (b) customer relationship strategy, (c) financial capital strategy, and (d) marketing strategy. The findings indicated that implementing strategies to maintain business growth, build relationships with customers, secure sufficient financial capital, and engage in effective marketing are essential for small salon business owners to survive in business longer than 5 years. New and existing small business salon owners might implement the recommendation from this study to remain in business longer than 5 years. The implications for positive social change include the potential for small salon business owners to generate employment, sustain the livelihood of employees, contribute to the local economy, and reduce local unemployment rates.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

The interview protocol will consist of the following steps:

(a) Ensure receipt of informed consent; greet the participant; make an opening statement; turn on audio recording device.

(b) Ask the interview questions as follows:

1. What strategies did you use to remain in business longer than 5 years?
2. What strategies did you use to initiate the growth of your business during the first 5 years?
3. What marketing strategies did you use to survive longer than 5 years?
4. What financial strategies did you use to sustain your business for the first 5 years?
5. What strategies did you use to manage the key processes and systems within your business?
6. What strategies were most effective for your business surviving longer than 5 years?
7. What barriers did you face to remain in business longer than 5 years?
8. How did you overcome the barriers to implement the strategies used to remain in business longer than 5 years?
9. What additional strategies did you use to remain in business longer than 5 years that we have not discussed?

(c) Ask probing questions for additional information and clarity.

(d) Ask participants to verify themes and codes noted during the interview.

(d) Follow-up with additional questions as needed for clarity regarding themes.

(e) Record reflective notes during and after the interview.

Appendix B: Telephone Script

Hello, my name is Delita Johnson. I am a doctoral student at Walden University conducting a study on the strategies some small salon owners use to remain in business longer than 5 years. I identified you as a potential participant in my study through a search on the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance website. I would like you to consider being a willing participant in my study, agree to participate in a 45-60 minute face-to-face interview, and agree to a 30-minute follow-up meeting so that you could review my interpretation of your interview responses. The eligibility criteria for participation are a small business salon owner with less than 500 employees, been in business for 5 years or longer, and have implemented successful strategies for business survival. If you meet the eligibility criteria, would you be willing to participate? I would also request permission to review company documents related to your strategies to remain in business beyond 5 years, such as business licenses, documents related to annual financial filings, and financial statements. I will provide you with a confidentiality agreement before reviewing any of your documents. I would need your e-mail address to send you an informed consent form and the confidentiality agreement. You can provide informed consent by replying *I consent* to the e-mail. Thank you so much for your consideration.