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Strategies for Immigrant Minority Small Business Sustainability

Abdulkadir Bede
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Abdulkadir Bede

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Strategies for Immigrant Minority Small Business Sustainability

by

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MA, Saint Mary University, 2008

BA, S.N. University, 1990

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Immigrant entrepreneurs play a significant role in the economic development of the United States. However, some small business immigrant entrepreneurs are less successful than nonimmigrant entrepreneurs. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners use to grow and sustain their businesses longer than 4 years. Using a purposeful sampling technique, the population for this study consisted of 4 small business immigrant entrepreneurs who have sustained and grown businesses for a minimum of 4 years in Minnesota. The conceptual framework for this study was the bureaucratic management theory. Data collection consisted of interviews, field notes, and review of documentation related to business strategies. Data analysis involved a process of disassembling data into common codes, reassembling data into themes, interpreting meaning, and making conclusions. Member checking and transcript reviews were used to enhance the reliability and credibility of the data. Two themes emerged among immigrant small business owners whose businesses failed: inadequate financial posture, and poor business and managerial knowledge. Results showed that small business immigrant entrepreneurs concentrate on differentiation and cost control to sustain and grow their businesses profitably. The study findings can contribute to positive social change by emphasizing strategies that help immigrant entrepreneurs succeed; such strategies have benefits that extend beyond entrepreneurs' immediate family to the broader communities in which they operate by increasing job creation, wealth accumulation, and the development of society.

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Dedication

I thank God, for giving me the determination necessary to complete my graduate studies. This study is dedicated to all my family and friends. Thank you for the years of help and support! I would also like to dedicate this study to all the students working to reach their academic goals. Keep learning, keep growing, keep working, and understand that there are no limits!

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

In the United States, immigrant minority business owners face challenges such as language barriers and, difficulties in obtaining business loans (Bengtsson & Hsu, 2015), which may increase the likelihood of failure. Research on immigrant business ventures may provide knowledge on the success factors for operating sustainable enterprises (Neville, Orser, Riding, & Jung, 2014). However, due to skill set and knowledge base, immigrants often lack effective strategies for growing and expanding their businesses (Moon, Farmer, Miller, & Abreo, 2014). Additionally, poor planning may be a primary business problem for business owners (Quan, 2015).

In this study, I explored the strategies that immigrant small business owners used to grow and sustain their business beyond 4 years in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. I focused on key factors that influenced immigrant minority entrepreneurs' ability to stay in business. In generating more knowledge about small business owners' strategies for promoting business growth and sustainability, I sought to generate increased awareness and understanding of success factors among immigrant small business owners in the Twin Cities. In this section of the study, I discuss and provided background on the business problem, purpose of the study, research question, theories framing the study, and significance of the study. I also provide a review of current literature related to the business problem.

Background of the Problem

In the United States, businesses owned by immigrants are a source of job opportunities, creativity, and competition (Carbonell, Hernandez, & Garcia, 2014).

Immigrants also make up a significant part of the U.S. workforce in a range of industries (American Immigration Council, 2017). Recently, the number of immigrant minority-owned business in the United States has grown significantly (Lee, Fitzgerald, Bartkus, & Lee, 2015). How business owners respond to the ability to stay in business has significant implications for their success (Kerr, Nanda, & Rhodes-Kropf, 2014).

Despite the hard work that immigrant business owners put into their businesses, they still earn less than their colleagues who were born in the United States (Bates & Robb, 2014). One of the reasons is that they often lack effective strategies for growing and expanding their businesses (Moon et al., 2014). Small business owners often fail to implement strategies to stimulate and promote the growth of their businesses (Hutchinson, Donnell, Gilmore, & Reidet, 2015). Many immigrant minority individuals create new businesses every year; however, many have failed within 4 years. Understanding and exploring the factors relating to the survival of small businesses offers new business owners strategies needed to grow and sustain their business beyond 4 years.

Problem Statement

In 2014, immigrant minority owned businesses made up 28.2% of small business in the United States (Waters, Kasinitz, & Asad, 2014). However, immigrant minority business owners in the United States lack access to resources such as business connections and financing (Lee & Black, 2017), and 50% of these business owners have cited a lack of adequate financial resources as a factor for not sustaining business operations beyond 4 years (Arasti, Zandi, & Bahmani, 2014). The general business problem was that many immigrant small business owners are unable to sustain their

businesses due to the lack of resources and business connections. The specific business problem was some immigrant small business owners lack strategies to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. The population for the study included four immigrant small business owners in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota who have sustained their business for at least 4 years. The implications for social change were that the findings of this study might be useful for immigrant small business owners who will be able to hire employees and expand employment opportunities in their community.

Nature of the Study

Research methods comprise qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013). The qualitative method is useful when seeking to describe, explore, or understand a phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The qualitative method was suitable in this study because I explored the strategies that immigrant small business owners implemented to sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. Researchers use quantitative methods to test the relationship between variables (Turner, Balmer, & Coverdale, 2013). The quantitative research method was unsuitable for this research because the rationale of this study did not include testing any relationship among variables. In this study, the mixed methods approach was not appropriate because it would mean combining quantitative and qualitative elements.

Qualitative research designs include case study, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative designs (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). The case study design is effective in studies where little information is available about a phenomenon or an issue (Simons, 2015). In using the qualitative method, I adapted to a situation and found reliable information in contexts where there was limited information available. Researchers use the phenomenological design to study participants' lived experiences about a phenomenon (Tight, 2015), but this method did not fit this study because I did not explore participants' lived experiences about a phenomenon. Researchers use the ethnography design to study culture (Letourneau, 2015; Reich, 2015). The ethnographic design was not suitable because the subject matter of interest in this study was business strategies rather than culture. The narrative design relates to describing and analyzing the lives of individuals to obtain meaning (Flick, 2014). The narrative design was not suitable for the study because the goal was to explore business strategies that immigrant entrepreneurs' used rather than analyzing their lives.

Research Question

The central research question in this study was: What strategies do immigrant small business owners use to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years?

Interview Questions

I proposed the following eight semistructured interview questions:

1. What growth and sustainment strategies did you use when you started a new business?
2. What are your current business strategies?

3. How did your small business strategies contribute to your business growth and sustainment?
4. Which of your growth and sustainment strategies have changed significantly within the previous 4 years?
5. What are the positive aspects of your current strategies?
6. What small business strategies helped you to succeed?
7. What strategies do you implement to achieve growth for the business?
8. What other factors that you have not discussed may have contributed to your success?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was the bureaucratic management theory, which Max Weber developed (Lutzker, 1982). The bureaucratic management theory is one of the most effective theories in practice when it comes to the structure and general administration of most businesses (Grant, 2016). Weber suggested that the success of a business depends on two essential components: a hierarchy structure and a defined set of rules as a guideline for the general organization of the firm (Lutzker, 1982). The central concepts in this theory are hierarchy and rational-legal framework. First, business managers use hierarchy for a systematic ranking and identification of positions by the relative importance of how information and directions flow from a higher authority to a lower position (Grimsley, 2017). This hierarch system allows for proper coordination of activities in an efficient manner. Second, a rational-legal framework is a set of regulations through which business executives can not only supervise their functional competency but also assure that the business operates within and toward the desired

direction (Bunzel, 2007). I used the two concepts under bureaucratic management theory to analyze how immigrant small business owners sustained their businesses for over 4 years.

Operational Definitions

For an understanding of the key concepts of this research, the following definitions are provided:

Growth: Growth is when enterprise generates significant positive cash flows or earnings (Çetinkaya Bozkurt, & Kalkan, 2014).

Immigrants: Individuals to whom the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services has granted the right to reside permanently and work without restriction in the United States (IRS, 2015).

Small business: An independently owned entity and operating with less than 500 employees (Small Business Administration [SBA], 2015).

Small Business Administration (SBA): The SBA is a federal government agency that provides assistance, aid, and counsel to small business organizations to safeguard free enterprise and strengthen the U.S. economy (SBA, 2015).

Self-employment. Self-employed individuals work for themselves in limited business or professional business practice (Faggio & Silva, 2014).

Strategy: Strategy is a series of actions undertaken by a company according to a situation (Mainardes, Ferreira, & Raposo, 2014).

Sustainability: Sustainability is an ongoing business that has survived a minimum of 4 years or more after initial inception and start-up phase (Raudeliūnienė,

Tvaronavičienė, & Dzemyda, 2014).

Entrepreneur: An entrepreneur is an innovator and/or a driver of growth (Henrekson & Sanandaji, 2014).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This section includes the parameters of this study: the assumptions, the limitations, and the delimitations. These helped define research boundaries for this study on strategies immigrant small business owners used to grow and sustain their business beyond 4 years. The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations helped to provide a basis for opportunities for future research.

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts researchers believe to be true but cannot verify (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). The study included several assumptions. The first assumption was that a qualitative methodology is an appropriate methodology to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. Second, the multiple case study design was the appropriate design for the study for collecting detailed information related to the business problem. Third, I assumed that the participants answered the questions thoroughly and truthfully. The final assumption was that immigrant small business owners might use the results of this study to understand different strategies to sustain their businesses beyond 4 years.

Limitations

Limitations are the potential weaknesses of the study (Connelly, 2013). One of the limitations is the transferability of the results of the study. Additionally, purposeful

sampling could have been a source of bias because of the types of immigrants that have participated in the study, their countries of origin, and how fluent they are in the English language. Therefore, it was essential to support the major arguments with clear evidence.

There were several potential limitations that included research method and design, geographic location, sample size, participant bias, and researcher bias. The use of a qualitative method and case study may have limited the type of information and insights gleaned from the study. Participants of this qualitative multiple case study are immigrant minority small business owners that reside in the Twin Cities, which limits generalizability.

The sample size was also limited to four immigrant small business owners who had maintained business operations for more than 4 years. Finally, a potential limitation was that I collected information from immigrant business owners who kept data private and resisted sharing information to benefit other immigrant small business owners.

Delimitations

Delimitations are restrictions or boundaries that researchers impose to research and analysis process (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012). Delimitations include topics or areas that a researcher intentionally imposes. This multiple case study required the participation of a minimum of three immigrant small business owners who have operated a business in the Minnesota.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings from this study may help business owners properly manage their businesses and ensure a continuous growth in terms of productivity and smooth flow of operations. The knowledge gained from the study may enable immigrant small business owners to play a greater role in the country's economic development. More employment opportunities can also develop in the United States due to the expansion of small businesses owned by immigrant entrepreneurs. The findings of the research can also help nonimmigrant small business owners because some of the strategies used by the immigrant entrepreneurs have enabled them to improve their business operations.

Implications for Social Change

The findings of this study may be helpful to immigrant small business owners in establishing strategies to grow and sustain their business beyond 4 years. The findings from this study can provide awareness of the opportunities that exist for members of the local community. Community organizers can use the findings to design programs to assist immigrant entrepreneurs with the challenges of a start-up business. By overcoming entrepreneurial challenges, small business owners can realize more profits, which help them improve their standard of living (Faggio & Silva, 2014). An improvement in the standard of living can create a positive social change in immigrant communities. Moreover, the findings of this study can help in creating policies for both asylum seekers and refugees who aspire to be small business owners in the United States.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review addressed purpose of the study to explore immigrant small business owner strategies and the research question based on this purpose.

The following literature review consisted of contemporary peer-reviewed research for studies concerning immigrant minority small business owners. Other sources included governmental citations and scholarly books. For this review, I accessed the following databases: Walden University's Library, Google Scholar, Business and Management, ProQuest, Emerald Management Journals, Academic Search Complete/Premier and Sage Premier.

I used the following keywords in my searches: *immigrant small business, immigrant self-employment, immigrant entrepreneurship, success factors for immigrant small business owners, challenges facing immigrant small business owners, motivation for entrepreneurship, immigrant social capital, immigrant middlemen, and ethnic enclaves*. The literature review contains 140 references, 126 (90%) were peer reviewed, and 135 (90.54%) were peer reviewed articles published within the last 5 years.

Immigration Trends

The United States is a country founded by immigrants who came to escape war, religious persecution, and poverty. Others came to seek fortunes, while others were shipped to the country against their will to work as slaves (Bodvarsson & Van den Berg, 2013). Now, people from all over the world have moved to the United States for new experiences, an improved life, to escape war and poverty, and to seek asylum (Abada, Hou, & Lu, 2014). The U.S. Census Bureau (2015) indicated that there are 42.4 million

immigrants in the United States-legal and illegal. Refugees and immigrants form a substantial subset of the U.S population. For instance, in the 1990s, the United States received more than 13 million people, which represented an average of 1 million immigrants every year (Vissak & Zhang, 2014).

Immigrants have come from over 100 countries, with Mexico accounting for a huge majority of the immigrant population in the United States (Dhingra & Parker, 2015). Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean Islands have been responsible for a majority of immigrants in the United States (Ryo, 2013), which is a significant shift from the European immigrants who moved to the United States during the 18th and 19th centuries. Moreover, immigrants mostly come from different socio economic backgrounds with some being wealthy and highly educated, while others are poor with minimal or no education. Another distinguishing characteristic of the contemporary immigrant population relates to geographic location. For centuries, immigrants settled in the gateway states such as New York, Florida, Illinois, and Texas but now they have settled in nearly all states in the United States (Steil & Vasi, 2014).

Immigrants have played a huge role in supporting the workforce in the United States as well as boosting economic growth (Aleksynka & Peri, 2014). As more immigrants have entered the United State, it is expected that they can provide cheap, available labor that can revitalize the economy. Cities that attracted many immigrants, such as New York and Florida, experienced growth in their economies that was attributed, in part, to the workforce provided by immigrants. For example, in New York, immigrants has made up 44% of the city's workforce, whereas in Los Angeles the

immigrant population has accounted for one-third of the city's economic output (Williams & Williams, 2014). Immigrants contribute to U.S economic growth after becoming fluent in English and becoming U.S. citizens (Wang & Lysenko, 2014). Recent trends also indicated that the immigrant population represents a significant role in creating businesses in the United States and offering employment to thousands of Americans (Elo, Frankenberg, Gansey, & Thomas, 2015). In about two-fifths of all startup businesses in Silicon Valley, one was founded by an immigrant (Lueck, 2017). Immigrants have also been responsible for the formation of nearly 28% of small business enterprises throughout the United States (Chassamboulli & Palivos, 2014; Kerr, Kerr & Lincoln, 2015).

The Bureaucratic Management Theory

The conceptual framework for this study was based on bureaucratic management theory, which is effective for analyzing and reviewing the status of immigrant minority small businesses. Bureaucracy defines the way an organization or business is administered. The term bureaucracy referred to the system of administration in which the implementation of rules is carried out by nonelected officials (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015). To ensure that the administrative body complies with the rules, activities are overseen by a special committee in charge of making policies to guide the company's operations. Research has indicated that the nature of management for a given organization is a critical factor for organizational performance. This system of administration is based on the concept of bureaucracy (Wang, 2013). Bureaucracy has been adopted by most organizations in the private sector, including a majority of large businesses across the

globe. However, it is important to note that bureaucracy can be employed in all business sectors as long as it provides satisfactory levels of managerial efficiency and sustainability. Large companies, such as Union Pacific Railroad, GM, and IBM, have successfully implemented this system of administration (Mueller, 2014). Small businesses owned by immigrants have also adopted bureaucracy to achieve success and sustainability.

Organizational requirements. The typical organizational set-up of bureaucratic administration is implemented using two principal requirements: (a) compose hierarchy levels and (b) form rational and effective decision-making rules and principles to govern the activities of all the members of the organization's community (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014). The second step also involves the integration of members into the newly-established system of decision making to ensure that they abide by all the stated rules. Each of these elements plays a significant role in enabling the organization to realize its principle goals. Hierarchical design divides the company into various levels, with each level assigned a certain level of authority. Based on this system, highly-ranked levels possess more authority than those who occupy lower ones (Bengtsson & Hsu, 2015). Each of the remaining levels answers to those placed immediately above them. The establishment of various decision-making rules and protocols ensures that organizations are governed using the most rational strategies and that the administration policies can guide the company in the right direction.

Principles. A company that uses this system of governance is usually guided by four basic principles. The first principle is the accurate and rational labor division. The

main goals of this principle are to ensure that the organization has maximized the benefits derived from specialization and establishing an equilibrium between power and responsibilities. Specialization ensures that the right personnel are assigned to each of the organization's tasks, whereas the power/responsibility balance ensures there is accuracy in the assignment of resources for various activities (Gond, Cabantous, Harding, & Learmonth, 2016). The second principle of bureaucratic governance is the idea of free and effective flow of information from the highest to the lowest hierarchies. This element is important because communication is instrumental in establishing proper coordination among the various hierarchies. Individuals who occupy various positions in the company are expected to ensure that boundaries are established regarding use of organizational and personal belongings. This has avoided unnecessary losses due to careless use of company property. The third principle is about employing and respecting the organizational regulations (Bengtsson & Hsu, 2015). The nature and design of organizational rules are used as guides for the realization of performance objectives, as well as other goals. Therefore, it is necessary to conform to the rules to achieve optimal performance. The final principle is the use of qualifications to conduct important organization decisions, such as promotion and recruitment of staff.

Application to small businesses. The concept of bureaucracy sends several messages to small businesses owned by immigrants. Most businesses that have not been successful in the past have failed due to improper administration. However, the theory of bureaucratic administration suggests several interventions that small business owners may use to improve the performance and sustainability of their organizations. These

recommendations also act as tips for business growth and stability. When small business owners decide to practice the specialization of tasks in their organizations, they are guaranteed that employee selection is done based on the qualifications of the candidate in relation to the specialized positions and that the right people are employed to perform the organization's tasks (Meisenbach & Jensen, 2017). This system offers the solution to problems associated with the random distribution of responsibilities to people who are not qualified, and solves the problem of task/skill mismatch, which is linked to low returns and persistent risks.

The creation of a hierarchical system of administration can be a beneficial intervention regardless of the size of the business and ensures that there is an efficient assignment of tasks and flow of communication. When communication is designed in a regular pattern, the inefficiencies are minimized and the businesses are able to minimize losses in working time (Roth, 2014). In a hierarchically-designed organization, each level knows where to obtain information for when they need clearance or guidance about anything.

The introduction of rules is also important when it comes to sustaining the viability of small businesses. Rules are guides that ensure all the members of an organization are performing their work correctly and behave in a manner that supports the organization's culture (Otley, 2016). Conforming to these rules is important as it ensures that everyone in the organization supports its performance ambitions. Rules also speed up the decision-making process as they ensure that a protocol is followed when a

given task is to be carried out or when there are problems to solve (Hewapathirana, 2014).

The final recommendation that the bureaucratic theory offers to small businesses is that there is a need to separate personal property from that of the business. Many business owners make the mistake of believing that business property belongs to them because they own the business. The foregoing mentality threatens the overall well-being of a business because it encourages the business owner to use business property at any time without accountability. Consequently, they end up causing an accumulation of losses that paralyzes the ability of the business to achieve its goals. Overall, this theory is an instrumental guide to the small business that wishes to grow and sustain high performance.

Evolution. The practice of bureaucratic administration has been one of the most effective means of administration to large organizations and private companies. Most of its tenets have been used in the search for proper system administration and for identifying the effective strategies in the realization of its goals.

Even though the formation of the bureaucratic management theory is attributed to the work done by Frederick Taylor and Max Weber, the concept has been in existence since the Roman Empire era (Schluchter, 2014). During this time, the theory was applied in organizing empires around political systems. There was the need to develop systems through which many territories could be administered. As a result, the empires were organized with a definite system of administration. The most powerful members of the society occupied the highest hierarchy and these individuals were regarded as the final

decision makers (Bannink, Six, & van Wijk, 2016). Even though the leadership positions during these times were not elective in nature, they represented the interests of each empire. Society was also designed to operate in accordance with rules that governed the behavior of each of the members of society to ensure that they conformed to the traditions of the land.

The bureaucratic management theory has evolved to become more applicable to the field of business. In fact, its most common applications in contemporary society is in business administration (Kassem, 2016). The importance of bureaucracy in politics has lost some of its meaning due to the development of new political ideas that more effective than the bureaucratic system. However, most of the world's largest organizations have preferred to apply this system of administration because it not only offers a good system for making decisions in an organization but it provides a basis on which organizations can establish an environment conducive for quality and progress (Kodama, 2017).

Impact of Immigrant Small Business on the United States Economy

Immigrant small business ownership play a significant role in the United States economy because they create new jobs, promote innovation, increase production, and decrease poverty (Hulten & Ahmed, 2013; Zelekha, 2013). The positive effect of immigrants on small business has been stronger in urban areas that are competitive and open regarding ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity (Hulten & Ahmed, 2013; Zelekha, 2013). Immigrants are nearly twice as likely to create new businesses in the United States as native-born individuals (Rubach, Bradley, & Kluck, 2015). The growing immigrant

population, alongside increasing rates of immigration, has resulted in a higher percentage of immigrant business owners in the United States (Tata & Prasad, 2015). Immigrant entrepreneurs and business owners have a substantial impact on the United States economy as contributors to business ownership, business formation rate, employment, and business income (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015; Kerr & Kerr, 2016).

Business ownership and formation. Stakeholders have not fully explored the constraints faced by immigrant business owners in the United States (Kerr & Mandorff, 2015). Analyzing these constraints can help determine whether there is a potential in these minority groups and whether their contributions to the growth of the U.S. economy can significantly increase (Fairlie, Morelix, Taraeque, Russell, & Reedy, 2016). Though several constraints have limited immigrant business owners in the United States they have been resilient enough to manage the challenges and establish successful ventures that can collectively contribute to the country's economy (Keister & Aronson, 2017).

The rate of business ownership among immigrants has been greater than those of nonimmigrants. For example, in 2017, 10.5% of immigrants were operating their own businesses compared to 9.3% of nonimmigrants (Keister & Aronson, 2017). About 90% of these immigrant business owners were also homeowners in the United States and had access to home equity (Keister & Aronson, 2017). Among the 9% of immigrant homeowners, about 41% reported that they used home equity as the starting capital for their businesses. Additionally, 59% of the immigrant homeowners used their home equity as collateral for business funding (Keister & Aronson, 2017).

The rate of business formation, like rates of business ownership, has also been higher among immigrants than nonimmigrants (Boyd, 2016). The rates of business formation among immigrants has been reported at about 0.62% per month, which translated to about 620 business startups per 100,000 formed every month (Gupta et al., 2016). In comparison, the rate of business formation among nonimmigrants has been 0.28%, which meant that for every 100,000 start-ups developed monthly, only 280 were formed (Gupta et al., 2016). Business start-up activity is a good measure of economic growth, job creation, and innovation (Rubach et al., 2015).

Business income. Immigrant business owners have been responsible for approximately 12% of the business income generated in the United States (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015). However, business formation rates tend to decrease with the amount of family income. On the same note, the rates of entrepreneurship have been higher among unemployed individuals than those in the workforce (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015). Therefore, family income and employment have affected the rate of immigrant business formation and ownership (Crichlow & McGarrell, 2016). Another influential factor in business ownership is business income, which has helped immigrant business owners sustain their businesses. Even in areas where employment income has been lower like Silicon Valley, immigrants from China and India owned approximately one quarter of the businesses (Wingfield & Taylor, 2016). In many instances, immigrant business owners have earned more than the employed nonimmigrants in the United States (Shepard, 2016).

Immigrant business owners have a higher family income because they earn from their businesses compared to nonimmigrants who receive their income from their place of employment (Wingfield & Taylor, 2016). Moreover, the rate of business income varies based on the nature of the business. For example, immigrants operating high-tech businesses, such as engineering companies, earned more compared to small business owners such as retailers of the products coming from these same companies (Shepard, 2016).

According to Lafuente and Gómez-Araujo (2016), the strategy used by immigrant business owners to earn more business income was to operate high-tech businesses that dealt with bigger products, such as motor vehicles. The distribution of business income was subject to the variations in size of the businesses and the rate of demand for the products and services that these companies produced (Lafuente & Gómez-Araujo, 2016).

Employment. The immigrant-owned businesses had a high probability of hiring employees compared to the nonimmigrant owned businesses (Hunt, 2015). However, these businesses also tended to hire a smaller population of workers compared to the nonimmigrant-owned businesses. Precisely, the immigrant-owned businesses employed about 8% of workers compared to the native-owned businesses that employed 11.9% of workers (Li, Lo, & Xu, 2017).

In the recruitment processes, it was deducible that immigrant-owned businesses targeted employment of individuals who were skilled in several areas to maximize employee knowledge, while paying them less. The foregoing was a feasible strategy

because a worker could perform several tasks in the company while earning an amount of income payable to a single profession (Zhou & Li, 2016).

For example, in a company, a production manager in an engineering construction firm could have also served as a supervisor. The professional mandate of the individual, which determined the amount of remuneration, was the production manager's role. However, the company could not hire a supervisor for the projects to minimize the cost, therefore, the production manager ended up performing several roles while earning less.

Characteristics of Immigrant Small Businesses in the United States

Immigrants in the United States hailed from over 100 countries, with Mexico accounting for approximately 23% (Dhingra & Parker, 2015). The business ownership rate among Mexican immigrants was 8.4%, which was below the national rate of 9.8% (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015). Consequently, the high number of Mexican business owners in the United States was the result of the large share of Mexican immigrants in the United States, rather than higher rates of business ownership in this group (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015). On the other hand, immigrants from Korea represented only 5.1% of total immigrants in the United States, but have a business ownership rate of 23.1%, which made them the second largest number of immigrant business owners in the United States. Other immigrant groups with significant business ownership rates were Vietnamese (14%), Indians (9.5%), and Chinese (10%) (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015).

Education. There was a nonlinear relationship between entrepreneurship and education. The rate of entrepreneurship was lower among high school graduates compared to those of high school dropouts. However, the rate of entrepreneurship was

almost the same between high school and college graduates (Katigbak, Foley, Robert, & Hutchinson, 2016). Among immigrants, business ownership was higher among the unemployed. There was also a difference in the performance of businesses that were subject to the demographics of education, immigrant status, home ownership, and other features.

Forty-five percent of all immigrant business owners in the country did not have a high school degree (Planes-Satorra & Paunov, 2017), while 15.7% possessed a college degree (Millán, Congregado, Román, van Praag, & van Stel, 2014). These immigrants owned businesses in various sectors in the United States, which included transportation, recreation, entertainment, and accommodation (Chiesi, 2014).

Language. Language proficiency was a determining factor in the success of an immigrant-owned venture, as it enabled the entrepreneur to communicate with potential customers. Hunt (2015) defined language as a measure of human capital during the analysis of immigrant-owned businesses such as those owned by Latinos and Asians. The success of most immigrant-owned businesses relied on the owners' ability to communicate in English. Immigrant business owners who could fluently communicate in English tended to serve more customers compared to immigrant business owners who were not proficient in English. However, most of the immigrant business owners in the country could adequately communicate in English.

Recent studies signified a link between English language proficiency and self-employment. Nonetheless, as connoted by Ingrid (2017), some research points to denied opportunities in compensation due to language constraints. As a result, this factor resulted

in an increased rate of self-employment among the Asian migrants. Among the factors noted as restricting business formation in the United States, the ability to communicate in English was identified as a major factor. Relatively speaking, although the entrepreneurial experience in the country of origin determined the level of success of an individual in the formation of business, other factors such as language proficiency, education, and access to capital were active determinants of immigrant business success (Minkoff-Zern, 2017).

Access to capital. Inadequate access to capital was a threat to the growth of immigrant-owned businesses in the United States where there was a close link between wealth and entrepreneurship. Therefore, access to capital played the greatest role in enabling the immigrant-owned businesses to flourish in the U.S. economy. Matsaganis and Katz (2016) realized that immigrant-owned start-ups required a greater amount of starting capital compared to those of nonimmigrants. For example, about 20% of immigrant-owned businesses began with a capital of approximately \$30,000 or more compared to the nonimmigrant businesses of which 15.9% began with almost the same amount of capital (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013). The most common source of start-up capital for the immigrant-owned business was family and personal savings (Lyons, 2016).

Due to the difficulty in accessing capital, most of the immigrant-owned businesses relied on information from sources in business finance. Yeasmin (2016) noted that immigrant business owners found it difficult to access capital from banks, as well as from other lending institutions. Additionally, they found it difficult to operate a business

unless they acquired loans from family or used their personal savings. Some of the limiting factors to the access of business capital from banks and other formal lenders were the immigrant's status and whether the individual owned a home.

Business experience in the home country. Experience was a significant factor in entrepreneurial performance and was a common attribute among immigrant business owners in the United States (Ferm, 2016). Most of the immigrant business owners had a history of entrepreneurship from their countries of origin. Honma (2016) noted that there was a positive relationship between the home country's self-employment rates with those of the United States. As a result, the self-employed people in their home country were likely to resort to self-employment in the United States. Approximately one-fourth of the employees in Mexico were self-employed individuals; however, only 6% of the Mexican immigrants were self-employed in the United States (Rodrik, 2017).

Immigrants who were business owners in their home country tended to use the strategies they applied there to manage their businesses in the United States (Armitage, Frondorf, & Feldman, 2016; Lanoszka, 2016). Business experience in the home country was widely believed to be a factor that determined the success of immigrant-owned businesses in the United States. Another aptitude that entrepreneurial immigrants exhibited was the ability to identify high-potential industries. After staying in the United States for some time, it was common for an immigrant entrepreneur to quickly learn about the business environment and be able to house the industry that is most suitable to them. Most of the successful immigrant business owners in the United States had a history of entrepreneurship in their home countries.

Ethnic enclaves. There was an ethnic gap among immigrant business owners in the United States that reflected on the variations between the different ethnic groups in immigrant business communities (Thompson & Grant, 2015). There were two examples of varying ethnic resources, which included skills and knowledge on the services or goods and the social sustenance networks that aids in the sourcing of business capital and cheap labor. Additionally, immigrant business owners took advantage of market conditions that sometimes favored products or services oriented toward their ethnic group. Special commodities had their unique markets in ethnic enclaves (Rolle, Billy, Ford, Kisato, & Ford, 2016).

The same situation existed concerning ethnic labor. The ethnic enclaves gave immigrant entrepreneurs an opportunity to provide employment for their own members who often had difficulties in the general labor market. As noted by Garcia (2016), the immigrant business owners in the country used the strategy involving developing job opportunities in their businesses that lead them to employ their coethnics. As a result, they had access to cheap labor, since the limited job market and increased competition for jobs were often unfavorable to ethnic groups. It is reasonable to assume that ethnic enclaves could have been an advantage for immigrant business owners in making their businesses sustainable in their new country.

Legal status. Regardless of the nationality of the owners, all businesses in the United States were subject to legal restrictions, which guided the processes of doing business and made the business environment suitable and equitable for all entrepreneurs.

At least 34.9% of immigrant business owners operated and owned incorporated businesses (Herring & Henderson, 2016).

Legal provisions influenced the key strategies in setting up an enterprise. As a prior condition, for instance, it provided access to several resources, such as business capital lenders or the departments that issued licenses for operating business in the United States. The legal business owners could access courts if any disputes arised. Moreover, the legal status of an individual was necessary for an individual to participate in government contracts (Conroy & Weiler, 2016). Most importantly, legal immigrant business owners were homeowners; therefore, they could use the equity in their home as collateral when accessing loans. The legal status of an immigrant determined much regarding their legitimacy in doing business in the United States.

Small Businesses Failure/Success Rates

A concern for many small businesses was the high rate at which they fail. Industry-level reports suggested that many small businesses failed in the first 2 to 10 years of their existence. Indeed, Sarasvathy, Menon, & Kuechle (2013) suggested that approximately 50% of small businesses failed in their first 5 years of operation. Cross-national studies have established that small businesses faced a risk of failure because of the market factors and the expertise of the owners operating in the markets. However, Tengeh (2013) opined that the rate of failure depended largely on economic conditions and other contextual factors in the business environment. Nevertheless, many regions in the United States experienced disproportionality in economic well-being between White and African immigrants. Consequently, the failure rates of immigrant-owned businesses

tended to be higher than those of nonimmigrants. The rate of business failures among immigrant-owned small business supported the notion that many immigrants tended to start businesses out of necessity with inadequate preparation.

Wang (2013) opined that the ability of a business to penetrate the broader economy was a strong determinant of success. According to the study, the peoples' beliefs, the community, and success measurement frameworks in which a small business operates ensured the spatial balances and possibilities. Furthermore, the structural arrangements tended to favor the nonimmigrant White population, which tended to place immigrant business enthusiasts at a disadvantage.

Access to capital was among the determinants of business success researched in many studies. Bates and Robb (2013) revealed that immigrants from any continent had fewer chances of obtaining loans, experienced high denial rates, feared rejection of their loan requests, or received smaller loans than nonimmigrants. Similarly, Lofstrom and Bates (2013) revealed that the initial constraints in the acquisition of capital carried forward toward the growth and survival of the business. Moreover, small business owners may have failed to secure loans because of their low net worth, especially for businesses that required huge capital inputs amid lending restrictions. Without adequate capital, a business may have failed to fulfill its objectives. As such, Blount, Smith, and Hill (2013) suggested that the high rates of failure and low profitability were connected to the constraints in the acquisition of startup capital, among other factors such as inadequate education, human capital, and management skills. Indeed, Bates and Robb (2014)

supported the observation by claiming that access to equity capital hindered the success and growth of many inner-city businesses operated by immigrants.

Some immigrants entered a host country with a range of social networks created in their home countries to provide technical expertise to the host country (Martinez, Cummings, & Vaaler, 2015). After settling in the host countries, they may have ended up engaging in entrepreneurship to increase their sources of income. The success of the businesses from the first generation to subsequent generations could have determined the entrepreneurial spirit, as well as business success and longevity. Nordqvist, Wennberg, and Hellerstedt (2013) investigated the issue of succession of family businesses among immigrants. Their study relied on 117 published studies to develop cluster data. They found that first-generation business owners had three avenues to relieve themselves of their businesses: selling the business, closing the business, or passing it on to a family member. Strikingly, the study found that family businesses in which members had appropriate and adequate social and human capital often stayed aloft after being passed on to the second- and third-generation members.

Acculturation and Assimilation

Many scholars have focused on the viewpoints of acculturation and assimilation on immigrants and minority groups in business within the United States. A stream of literature has focused on acculturation as a factor that determined the success of businesses. Essentially, acculturation played a role in the upward and downward mobility of immigrants. Scholars agreed that injustice and discrimination were detrimental to the upward economic mobility and acculturation of immigrants (Binggeli, Dietz, & Krings,

2013). According to Lofstrom and Bates (2013), ethnic differences in asset levels of immigrant business owners played a part in the clarification of the ethnic disparity in the entrance ratio. The disproportionate roles that immigrants played in industrialized nations were a crucial part in determining their success rate in business ventures. Lofstrom and Bates found that minority groups, including African immigrants, faced higher entry barriers to business than Whites, which reduced their rate of entry into entrepreneurship. For instance, African immigrants who had not adapted to the new environment through abandoning cultural norms and language have faced challenges associated with cultural differences.

Traditional assimilation theorists had opined that the socioeconomic realization of immigrants had increased with increased levels of assimilation, as well as the length of time spent in the United States (Bratsberg, Raaum, & Røed, 2014; Tiagi, 2013). The researchers suggested that generations of the marginal groups assimilated progressively, sought higher education, acquired well-matched business skills, and gained competitiveness in the market (Tiagi, 2013). However, Binggeli et al. (2013) claimed that race and skin color were challenges that determined the prospects that immigrants could access. The study found that African immigrants faced more discrimination in hiring. Furthermore, studies have shown that African immigrant entrepreneurs had challenges in accessing financial capital for startup when compared to Whites (Belleflamme, Lambert, & Schwienbacher, 2014; Lofstrom & Bates, 2013; Mijid & Bernasek, 2013).

Some studies have used the segmented theory of assimilation to explain why some immigrants continue facing challenges in business ventures. The segmented theory

of assimilation argued that several fundamental forces influenced the social agility of immigrants differently. Consequently, immigrants tended to experience different patterns of integration in their respective societies (Bell, Marquardt, & Berry, 2014). Furthermore, the lack of the requisite knowledge and skills in business operations tended to exacerbate the challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs have faced (Sarasvathy et al., 2013).

Researchers, such as Bell et al. (2014), argued that barriers such as discriminatory practices in the market limited the work-related mobility and business success of Blacks.

Business Sustainability

A business was sustainable when there are no negative impacts on the community, society, economy, or local environments triple bottom line. Business growth was an essential goal for any business that developed sustainable strategies (Strohhecker & Größler, 2012). While promoting to achieve a sustainable business, an entrepreneur must have understood the evolving culture, employees, and a healthy life base (Blachfellner, 2012). Business sustainability had a positive impact on the permanence of business operations.

In light of small business sustainability, Blaga (2013) identified a sustainable business as an organization that had a sustainable strategy and a competitive advantage in a market that had challenges, stakeholder's expectations, and opportunities. An industry could become sustainable by adopting an improved system of governance that would promote economic performance. A sustainable business was created by being transparent and sharing risk and power with stakeholders (Blaga, 2013).

An entrepreneur who was committed to sustainability demonstrated the following business actions: (a) ensured the health and safety of the business and its employees, (b) promoted innovation as a form of competitive advantage, (c) met the expectations of lenders and stakeholders, (d) improved employee morale in the workplace, (e) provided user-friendly products and services to its consumer, (f) attracted and retained talented staff, and (g) provided products and services that are eco-friendly (Blaga, 2013).

Sustainability was the capability to preserve the survival scale of the business to continue generating profit (Lourenco, Jones, & Jayawarna, 2013). Small business owners strived for sustainability by ensuring continuous growth and steady revenue, which required certain actions and strategies. Leadership skills and knowledge were strategic to the success of small businesses (Frid, 2015). An entrepreneur's strengths, expertise, and capacity could influence the business prosperity and sustainability (Frid, 2015). Motivation, proficiency, efficiency, and personality of a small business owner were essential characteristics of small business success and sustainability (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013).

Business Strategies and Goals

Ibrahim (2015) emphasized the importance of a small business owner selecting the appropriate business strategy. The business strategy sets a pattern of objectives, purposes, and goals for the business (Ibrahim, 2015). Small business entrepreneurs and other small business owners who adopt appropriate strategies, implement the right policies, and engage in good practices can perform credibly in business to sustain commercial activities and remain profitable beyond 4 years. Small firm owners combine

both character and perseverance to manage crises efficiently, and entrepreneurial persistence is a practical strategy that small firm proprietors use to develop resilience to sustain operation and persevere in difficult situations (Liñán et al., 2013). It would be logical to ask what determines strategic persistence in the face of potential business failure and how persistent entrepreneurs manage difficult times. Persistence is the tenacity to follow through on a set path and to continue along a particular course of action to accomplish a goal, regardless of the difficulties faced (Dahles & Susilowati, 2015; Liñán et al., 2013).

The intensity of entrepreneurs' persistence determines the differences in the levels of their enterprise activities (Liñán et al., 2013). The two sources through which entrepreneurial and other small business owners' persistence originates are the paradox of success and the fear of failure (Amankwah-Amoah, 2014). The paradox of success refers to people's beliefs regarding why and how success happens, the conviction that nothing great occurs without effort, and the mind-set that people must keep working to succeed until they achieve their goals (Amankwah-Amoah, 2014). Entrepreneurs with a paradox of success mind-set, like individuals with a high internal locus of control (Sandberg et al., 2013), are relentless in their quest to succeed and are persistent because they believe their actions determine the outcome.

The fear of failure makes people persistent, as small firm owners cannot afford to fail because remaining in business was their best chance to earn a living, and so, they develop resilience and continue trying. Some entrepreneurs become persistent because they have investments in the company that are too large to consider quitting

(AmankwahAmoah, 2014). Small firm owners are in unpredictable business environments and should develop strategies to overcome cycles of major challenges to business operation (Dahles & Susilowati, 2015). Resilience, perseverance, and persistence in times of difficulty are practical management policies that stem from entrepreneurs' mindset and useful strategies for preventing and managing firm-specific or industry-specific problems to remain in business.

To manage their companies successfully and improve performance, entrepreneurs and other small business owners can develop strategies to improve their enterprises' outcomes by learning from the failures of either themselves or others or by engaging in training activities. Business owners can draw on the expertise gathered from people's unfortunate experiences to develop success strategies without compromising values (Amankwah-Amoah, 2014). Incidents of business failure are upsetting and sometimes inevitable, but the lessons to learn from the bad experience are not always negative.

Individuals who learn from the failure of others can obtain information crucial to enterprise success and gain potential strategies for survival, thereby benefiting from unsuccessful entrepreneurship (Testa & Frascheri, 2015). The social-psychological process of learning from the outcomes of an unsuccessful enterprise is perhaps the most valuable lesson from an experience of business failure (Ucbasaran et al., 2013). By learning from entrepreneurs' failure experiences, especially those in a related trade, sector, industry, or environment, small business owners can develop strategies that can help them to survive.

Business Plans

A business plan is a strategic instrument that an entrepreneur creates and formalizes in the developmental of a startup venture (Frese & Gielnik, 2014). The entrepreneur used the business plan to demonstrate the structure, viability, implementation, and execution process of a new business venture (Finch, 2013). The entrepreneur could use the business plan to mitigate the potential risks and weaknesses while optimizing the potential strengths and opportunities of the industry's landscape (Germak & Robinson, 2014). Business plans served as investment decision-making tools for lenders, business angels, and venture capitalists (Lerner & Malmendier, 2013).

The SBA provided a model for writing a business plan (SBA, 2014d). The study provided how to write an insightful and impressive business plan for small businesses. According to the SBA (2014b), a business plan should tell a compelling story about the applicant's business by explaining who, what, when, where, how, and why of the company. The plan should have focus and be clear, define business objectives, and goals. The plan should be a living document regularly updated. The study provided a template and guidelines featuring nine essential elements to address the creation of successful business plans. The study also provided lessons for starting and managing a small business while emphasizing that a good business plan be mandatory for any business. A business plan is necessary to raise funds to start or grow a business and as an instrument to regulate business practice (SBA, 2014c).

A good business plan represented the business person's business ideas and gave a snapshot of the current situation of the company and its projected growth and expansion

(Frese & Gielnik, 2014). Details of a business plan should have outlined aspects of the business operation. The business owner should have maintained one as a work-in-progress that evolved because of influences of the external business environment. A good business plan made the owner knowledgeable on the elements that could affect continued success and growth (Lerner & Malmendier, 2013). A business plan also served as the communication tool of the company to potential investors, creditors, and banks just like a resume of a job applicant (SBA, 2014d). A business plan was priceless if not mandatory.

Internal Controls

Internal controls were a process used by businesses large and small to achieve certain objectives revolving around the (a) operations of the business, (b) reliability of the financial statements of the business, (c) compliance with the laws and regulations the business falls under, and (d) safeguarding of the assets of the business (Daniels et al., 2013). When employers did not implement these processes correctly, the ability for an employee to commit fraud against the business increased (Hess & Cottrell, 2016). Most discussions about internal controls revolved around public businesses, however since fraud can happen in any business, the discussion of internal controls needed to happen in every business from the largest public business to the smallest mom and pop business.

Lenard, Yu, and York (2013) stated internal controls might have assisted business leaders to achieve effectiveness and efficiency of operations, reliability in financial reporting, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Given the updated purpose and design of internal controls, public firms and the hired external auditors had a new requirement to express an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal

controls over financial reporting or to reveal the presence of internal control material weaknesses (Albring et al., 2016). Internal controls were effective when management and auditors were unable to locate any material weaknesses or loopholes in the policies (Svanberg & Öhman, 2016).

Small Business Owners and Government Support

The main government supports for small business were grants, subsidies, loans, tax breaks, innovation funding, and business regulations to facilitate market efficiency (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Small businesses might have thought those rules could limit their efforts, the relationships between the value chain, policy makers, researchers, and clients could improve small business owner success and sustainability, as well as achieve a balance of economic, social, and environmental issues (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Small business owners should care about their employees, customers, and the community and worked to create positive social change (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). As a result, sustainable enterprises could survive such major shocks as global recessions, worker strikes, executive scandals, and boycotts by environmental activists (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Policy makers believed that society would greatly benefit from a more transparent exchange of information and a clearer distribution of responsibilities (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Education could assist consumers in improving decision-making rather than adding to their confusion (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014). Collaborative opportunities for small businesses existed not only in knowledge production and corporate skills development, but also in fostering innovation as a means to sustainability (Haifeng & Kingsley, 2014).

Government support for both financial and non-financial assistance was significant for the success and viability of small businesses (Uddin & Bose, 2013). Small business owners used business-friendly environments and lenient regulations to stimulate new business development, create new employment opportunities, and foster innovation (Phillips et al., 2014). The role of government included creating jobs and providing entrepreneurial skills training and support, which were significant for the growth of the economy, the welfare of communities, and the sustainability of small businesses (Phillips et al., 2014).

Factors that hinder the emergence of small business owner entrepreneurship were the lack of start-up funds, the difficulty of accessing technology, lack of adequate networks, lack of sufficient information, operational challenges and procedural hurdles, lack of backup systems, no mentoring support, and the fear of failure (Llyaraja, 2015). Small business owner was a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation that required energy and passion to be able to succeed (Llyaraja, 2015). In fact, entrepreneurial education was necessary for enhancing entrepreneurial behavior and mindset and building self-confidence and self-efficiency for organizational leadership (Llyaraja, 2015). An entrepreneurial orientation enhanced financial skills, marketing strategies, social networks efficiency, the creation of innovation, and the ability to identify opportunities in the marketplace (Llyaraja, 2015).

Small Business Profitability

Potential small business owners and entrepreneurs lacked funding resources and access to capital markets. Brau, Cardell, and Woodworth (2015) noted entrepreneurs 39

require financial worthiness to obtain mainline bank funding; thus, rely on accumulated savings and borrowed funds from family and friends. Microfinance lending companies offered higher interest rates, albeit these firms were lucrative to small business owners seeking funds (Brau et al., 2015). About obtaining riskier funding options, Roberts (2013) concluded that higher interest rates did not infer a high rate of repayment failure from microfinance lending agencies. Microfinance lending agencies tended to experience a higher profit margin, however, had higher operating costs (Roberts, 2013). In concert, creative options for lending such as hybrid loans for entrepreneurs who exhibited a positive repayment history was a way to increase business profitability (Brau et al., 2015).

Researchers aligned financial performance and entrepreneurial success. Lumpkin, Moss, Gras, Kato, and Amezcua (2013) found that using the composite measures of entrepreneurial orientation to include: risk, innovativeness, autonomy, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness lead to positive financial performance. Social motivation and relationship building were an opportunity to reap economic benefits for entrepreneurs (Lumpkin et al., 2013). Further, entrepreneurs who were socially active could interact with multiple stakeholders to drive business profitability (Lumpkin et al., 2013; McKeever, Jack, & Anderson, 2015). Entrepreneurs sought opportunities for profit by social awareness and relationship building skills.

Business strategy was a factor when owners sought profitability, performance, and growth (Blackburn, Hart, & Wainwright, 2013). Blackburn et al. (2013) indicated that understanding business owners' insight for growth was key when seeking

profitability. Blackburn et al. surmised that hands-on businesses owners positioned themselves for 40 accelerated growth; whereas, a lack of oversight may have led to stagnation. Blackburn et al. considered the age of the business owner as a factor leading to optimal collaboration and ultimate growth. Finally, Blackburn et al. (2013) found that the business owners' educational attainment was a factor when growing and managing the business; thus, not relevant to daily operations.

Business failure was not always the end of an entrepreneurs' portfolio. Once a business failure occurred, there was a likelihood of subsequent business endeavor (Yamakawa, Peng, & Deeds, 2013). Yamakawa et al. (2013) explored ways that 41 entrepreneurs not only rebound from failure, but also, they learned from failure. Yamakawa et al. (2013) noted that failure motivated entrepreneurs to seek new venture creation.

Geographical Location

The strategic decision to locate in a particular area depended on how conducive and uniqueness the area was in supporting the startup business (Casey, 2014; Goetz & Rupasingha, 2014) versus characteristics of other available locations which may not have been conducive to supporting self-employment and growth of the business (Wang, 2013a). Small business owners had to employ strategic decisions based on their company's respective business model to align core competencies with the newly presented opportunities within the chosen geographical market (Lechner & Gudmunsson, 2014). The precise geographical location of the company, which generally occurred in the post launch phase, played a pivotal role in performance measures with respect to firm

growth and sustainability (Friese & Gielnik, 2014). By being in close geographic proximity to available resources, networks, customers, and community alliances, the business may have counterbalanced the liability of novelty by facilitating the marketing of the products or services that were available (Casey, 2014; Partanen, Chetty, & Rajala, 2014).

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

From a positive standpoint, the strategic decision to geographically locate the firm within a predominantly alike ethnic community could have created unique opportunities to exploit for profit based upon the supply and demand of the ethnic community being served unlike adjacent non-ethnic communities locally, thus exploiting an ethnic niche (Hyra, 2015; Wang et al., 2014). African Americans who owned small businesses were heavily concentrated in Black residential locations that typically had lower home values and less collateral valuable assets (Rueben & Queen, 2015), thus contributing to the limited access to bank credit (Bates & Robb, 2013; Mijid & Bernsak, 2013).

Transition

Section 1 was an introduction to the foundation of the study and the background of the current issue of study. My focus in this study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small-business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. The population for the study included four immigrant small-business owners in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota who had sustained their business for at least 4 years. The study interview process included interviewing the owners of these businesses, collecting data and reviewing documentation, and observing the characteristics and operations of these businesses.

Section 2 included details about study participants and the recruitment criteria Use, as well as a detailed explanation of the research methodology and the research design. Additionally, Section 2 included a description of the data collection instrument, organization of information and analysis, and the procedures for ensuring reliability and validity. Section 3 also included discussions regarding application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further study, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 2: The Project

Using a multiple case study approach, I explored the strategies that immigrant small-business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. In this section, I discussed the purpose of this study, explain my role in the research process, and introduced the research method and design. I also included the questions and protocol I used in interviewing the participants and discussed issues related to ethics and reliability and validity of data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small-business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. The population for the study included four immigrant small-business owners in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota who had sustained their business for at least 4 years. The implications for social change were that the findings of this study be useful for immigrant small-business owners who were able to hire employees and expand employment opportunities in their community.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher for a qualitative study is to collect data, analyze the data, developing themes, and write the results of the findings (Collins & Cooper, 2014; Kyvik, 2013). Qualitative researchers have freedom in their research methods, the way they conduct interviews, and the techniques they use to analyze data (Bansal & Corley, 2012). I developed an interest in this research because I am an immigrant minority small-business owner in the Twin Cities. After noticing that some immigrant-owned small

businesses had poor performance compared to similar native-born-owned small businesses, I wanted to investigate the challenges and strategies that this group of business owners faced while trying to conduct business in the United States.

In qualitative studies, a researcher acts as a human instrument in data collection, identifying an existing scholarly problem and answering it (Yin, 2014). Data collected by researchers can be mediated in this way, though others have observed that data is mediated through instruments like inventories and questionnaires. However, this requires researchers qualifying their interest in the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For example, researchers should explain why they chose to conduct a study and aspects involved in conducting it. To do this, I kept a journal detailing the processes and procedures that were necessary in conducting the research, which also fulfilled the need to keep a record of reactions, reflections, and insights into myself. From a social constructivist viewpoint, research was participatory and involved the exchange of ideas between me and participants (see Kahlke, 2014).

As a researcher, I was involved in data collection, organization, and analysis process. Researchers can fulfill two roles: emic or etic (Palinkas et al., 2015). An emic is an insider who is fully involved in an activity or program that is part of the research process. An etic is an objective outsider who is less involved in the research activities and is simply concerned with observing the process (Palinkas et al., 2015). Initially, I facilitated the process of basic research in an etic role, but I was eventually absorbed into the active conduction of the research and fulfilled an emic role. As an etic researcher, I

was involved in asking probing questions, listening, and asking further questions as a means of clarifying and ensuring accuracy of the information provided.

Participants

The intent of my research study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small-business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. In this study, data were collected from immigrant small-business owners in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Any immigrant who was in the category of immigrants recognized by the U.S. government were eligible to participate in the study, which included Asian Americans, African Americans, and any other immigrant, regardless of whether they were male or female (see Bates & Robb, 2014). Additionally, it was a requirement for the participants to speak and understand English and possess active business licenses at the time of the study. The licenses must have been issued by the relevant authorities in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Apart from possessing these licenses, their businesses must have been in operation at the time of the study.

I gained access to the participants by identifying the business owners who met the basic requirements from registers available at the Minnesota official registration website. All the participants needed to speak and understand English and possess active business licenses at the time of the study. The licenses must have been issued by the relevant authorities in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Following identification of several eligible participants, I searched for their contact information. The information included telephone numbers, email addresses, physical and mailing addresses, and any other information that enabled communication (see Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016).

Qualitative researchers should have built a relationship as soon as they meet participants to facilitate access to the participants' experiences (Wines & Frels, 2013; Yin, 2014). Through gaining participants' trust, I established a working relationship with participants by explaining the nature and goal of the study, its purpose, expected outcomes, and participants' responsibilities. I invited candidates to participate, scheduled their interviews, obtained their signed consent forms, and ensured that they received a copy of the research results.

Research Method and Design

This section contains a discussion of the data collection techniques I used in this study. This section includes the research method and research design, research population, sampling type, and an elaboration on ethical research. The instrument for data collection, technique of gathering data, organization of data, data analysis, and reliability of data are also included.

Research Method

I used a qualitative research method to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners used to sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. Qualitative research is a means of understanding how individuals respond to social or human problems by examining variables in the setting in which the researcher discovered them (Yin, 2014).

Using a qualitative approach allowed me to delve into the motives behind the problem being studied from the perspective of the studied population (see Yin, 2014). The quantitative research method was unsuitable for this research because the rationale of this study did not include testing any relationship among variables. The mixed methods

approach is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Bernard, 2013), which was also unsuitable because I did not apply a quantitative method.

I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions in an informal interview approach, which is consistent with a qualitative multiple explorative case study. Researchers use the qualitative method to uncover a description of the essence of a phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013). This method was adequate for gathering information from individuals who had experienced the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014).

Research Design

Qualitative research designs included a case study, ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative designs (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). The case study design is effective in studies with little information about a phenomenon or an issue (Simons, 2015). In using the qualitative method, I found reliable information in contexts where there was limited information available. Researchers use the phenomenological design to study participants' lived experiences about a phenomenon (Tight, 2015), which did not fit in this to study. Researchers use the ethnography design to study culture (Letourneau, 2015; Reich, 2015), which was not suitable because the interest in this study was business strategies rather than culture. The narrative design relates to describing and analyzing the lives of individuals to obtain meaning (Flick, 2014). The narrative design was not suitable for the study because the goal was to explore business strategies that immigrant entrepreneurs' use rather than analyzing personal stories. Member checking allowed the participants to verify the accuracy of the data collected and furthered enhanced the validity of the data (see Koelsch, 2013). Member checking allowed me to verify data

saturation from interviews, and I interviewed participants until no new themes or information was evident.

Population and Sampling

Qualitative studies do not have a commonly-accepted sample size because the ideal sample is contingent on the purpose of the study, research questions, and richness of the data (Elo et al., 2014). The population for this study was comprised of at least four immigrant small business owners, and more if needed to achieve saturation, in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota who had sustained their business for at least 4 years. I used a purposeful sampling method to select the participants for the study. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sample based on characteristics of a population and the goals of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Purposive sampling is important in situations where a researcher needed to reach a targeted sample quickly (Ragin, 2014).

In qualitative studies, the adequacy of the sample size depends on the characteristics and context of the study (Kasim & Al-Gahuri, 2015). To ensure saturation, I explored the participants' responses until no new information emerged from the discussion. Data collection concludes when the researcher can argue that there were no new concepts to obtain (Elsawah et al., 2015). All participants must have met the following criteria: have been an immigrant minority and have a running business with active license. The interview questions were comprised of eight open-ended questions to allow participants to share their experiences. In qualitative research, being open and transparent to the participants during the interview promotes quality (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Paine, 2015).

Ethical Research

All Walden University research must comply with the university's ethical standards, U.S. federal regulations, and any applicable international guidelines. To ensure ethical research, I provided participants a consent form with the nature of the study, the purpose, and the possible benefits that can result from the study. The consent form included a detailed explanation of expectations, a statement of consent, a statement of confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the participation. The consent form also included the researcher and university contacts, Walden IRB approval number (approval no. 06-21-18-0575642), and statement of consent.

I explained the process and I ensured the identity of participants remained confidential. They could withdraw from the study at any stage by writing a withdrawal letter. To protect their privacy, I did not publish their names or the name of their businesses. I did not use any personal information or identity for any purposes outside of this research. I address participants as P1, P2, and P3 and also the company names as C1, C2, and C3. To ensure that the participants were duly informed, they have read and signed the informed consent. The privacy of the participants will be kept secure and away from unauthorized access for 5 years after completion of the study.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument (Lewis, 2015). I was the medium through which data are derived from all sources. Therefore, it was important for me to use the other instruments that facilitated collection of data.

In this research study, I relied on semistructured interviews to collect data from the participants. Marshall and Rossman (2016) stated the interviewer were required to build a trusting relationship with the interviewee. Before the actual date of the interview, I will practice the interview process several times to ensure that it takes the form of a conversation instead of a question/answer session. The conversation model encouraged during the interview process helps with reliability and validity. To put the participant at ease, Higginbottom, Pillay, and Boadu (2013) suggested including an informal opening before starting the interview. As the researcher, it was my duty to ensure that the participant felt comfortable and was ready to give accurate information. The open-ended structure of questions enabled double-checking and administering of follow-up questions (Cope, 2014). Such a condition promoted reliability and validity of this instrument as a tool of data collection. An Interview protocol was included in Appendix A. Member checking was appropriate in case study research as it provided credibility, as well as enhanced reliability and validity of the data collected (Houghton et al., 2013).

Data Collection Technique

The technique that I used during the data collection was face-to-face interaction with the participants during the interviews. The foregoing technique involved the researcher asking probing questions to the participant and the participant answering the questions accordingly (Cuthill, 2015). The entire interview process was recorded by a digital recorder for further analysis. Additionally, I took conscious measures to write the aspects or points that appeared important, thematic and/or controversial. After the participant gave an answer to a question that I found complex or the participant may not

have understood, I rephrased the question to determine whether the participant understood the question and whether the response was what the participant intended (Kornbluh, 2015).

Face-to-face interviews were advantageous because they prompted participants to issue truthful and uninvestigated responses. Since the essence of qualitative research is to determine the experiences of people in relation to a certain phenomenon, asking questions that required real-time responses was the best way of obtaining honest responses (Steelman, Hammer, & Limayem, 2014). In my study, the best way to obtain the strategies of sustainability used by immigrant minority small-business owners was to ask them interview questions. However, they were also disadvantageous as they put the participant in an uncomfortable situation, especially when the venue might not have been suited to their interests (Gitlin, 2014). Member checking allowed participants the ability to evaluate the adequacy of data and its results in research and to ascertain the meaning of participant's responses (Reilly, 2013). After I transcribed each interview, I performed member checking by providing participants with a summary of the transcription to ensure that I have accurately captured each participant's interpretations and meanings. Such a condition meant that this data collection technique was applied selectively (Burlig, 2016). As an interviewer, I encountered advantages and disadvantages when using the interview technique. Among the advantages, I spoke with literate and illiterate individuals; relationships with interview subjects were easily formed; participants responded in as much detail as they chose; more valid information about participants and their attitude, values, and opinions were obtainable through other methods; and the response rate to an

interview was higher than with written questionnaires. Among the disadvantages, interviews usually required a staff of people and the process was both expensive and time-consuming; additionally, the quality of the data was a function of the interviewers' ability and was subject to whatever biases they had. Interviews also created a large volume of information; transcriptions were costly and time-consuming to produce.

I performed a document review of information gathered from the participants as second source of data. A document review was a mechanism to validate unobtrusive documentation from the company (Yin, 2014). An advantage of a document review was that the information is specific to the company and not retrieved from a secondary source (Yin, 2014). Another advantage was that company documents have a rich archival history (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A subsequent advantage was the financial effectiveness of obtaining documents directly from the company instead of paying for postage. A disadvantage of using company documents was that scripted and biased information could arise (Yin, 2014). Research participants could have withheld access to company documents in a disadvantageous manner (Yin, 2014). Another disadvantage of a company document review was that the time spent finding archival information could be extensive (Myers, 2013).

Data Organization Technique

Data was stored in two main forms: digital audio recording devices and manual form. To ensure integrity of the devices, I was the only one with passwords and access. The devices were stored in a harmless location where possibilities of any form of loss and destruction were purged. Following Fox and Alldred (2014), the data was also kept in a

manual form (i.e., data was recorded in a research journal). The journal detailed all the elements concerned with data collection. The most important elements of this journal was to time the identity of the participants, venue of interviews, and the responses issued with respect to each of the questions listed in the interview document. The research journals were reduced into digital records through scanning and stored in password-backed devices (Williamson, 2015). The original records were locked in security-enhanced cabinets for security on my personal computer with a copy on the cloud drive. The devices were programmed to ensure that the data are stored for 5 years after completion of the study. In a qualitative study, confidential and ethical concerns for data collection are essential (Kim, 2012). All data files in my computer were password protected. The backup files will be locked in a fireproof safe for 5 years before destruction.

Data Analysis

The research question for this study was: What strategies did immigrant small business owners use to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years? An appropriate data analysis process for case study research was triangulation (Yin, 2014). Triangulation was preferred to other systems of data analysis considering that it enabled scholars to compare, contrast, and confirm information collected from diverse sources to determine the existence of a certain phenomenon (Pitre & Kushner, 2015). In this study, information was collected from three different sources and triangulation was used to compare, contrast, and confirm the strategies used to ensure sustainability of small businesses owned by immigrant minorities. According to Bernard (2013), a researcher must have considered differences in human experience so that a vigorous depiction can be

accessible. I began by inspecting interview data for any emerging patterns or behaviors. I then analyzed the data and categorized it into important and unimportant data and discarded any immaterial information. In the following stage, the main activity was to group recurring and related themes from each source. I then attempted to derive meaning from each of the patterns and themes. Finally, I built a textual-structural description and clarification of the participants' experiences, including the recurrent themes and patterns.

Missing data was addressed by inspecting the responses of the participants and extrapolating on their experiences and descriptions. The same process was used for testing and assessing the assumptions. Essentially, multiple analysis, contrast, and comparison of data were provided a chance for assessing the accuracy of each assumption (Pace, 2016). During data analysis, I followed the five-step process Yin (2014) described as consisting of (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. The data analysis consisted of sorting and coding the information from transcripts, field notes, and business documents with NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The NVivo software program did not automatically identify themes in the data and sort them into categories. However, the program allowed researchers to visualize the data, thus facilitating the identification and codification of themes (Edwards-Jones, 2015).

Methodical triangulation improved credibility with the use of multiple data sources to authenticate data and made sure data was complete for compilation and analysis (Houghton et al, 2013). To ensure the credibility of a case study, the use of methodological triangulation may have provided a better understanding of the

phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Researchers used methodical triangulation for acquiring more insight into the research problem, minimizing inadequacies and inconsistencies caused by using one data source (Anney, 2014). Thus, methodological triangulation was a suitable analysis technique when researchers used interviews and multiple data collection methods to analyze businesses' internal and external documents (Mata & Portugal, 2015).

Reliability and Validity

I ensured reliability and validity of data and research by ensuring accuracy in the methodology section. Darawsheh and Stanley (2014) noted that reliability and validity of data depended on how well a researcher executed the methodology section. Given that the parameters of my research were concerned with immigrant minorities and business sustainability as the main variables, choosing participants vested in the business world ensured that I chose the best sample for data collection. Additionally, the use of semistructured interviews as the main method of data collection ensured that the participant interviews were accurate and verifiable.

Reliability

To ensure that the data used in the research was dependable, Leung (2015) advised that a researcher must use reliable data sources. According to Darawsheh and Stanley (2014), reliable data sources are those whose findings can be replicated while achieving the same results. In this case, it cannot be argued that if the same interview questions were administered to the participants, similar responses would have been given. The criteria used to ensure trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability,

and confirmability (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). Researchers achieved confirmability when the next researcher validated study findings. Cope (2014) indicated that researcher bias in a study was a trigger for lack of confirmability. I avoided personal bias by bracketing my preconceived notions and using a journal to capture my thoughts. I collected quality data without any personal bias to enhance confirmability in this study. Cope (2014) surmised that a way to assure confirmability is with the addition of robust quotes from the participants. The strategies for attaining trustworthiness included assessing adverse circumstances, utilizing peer interviews, applying lengthy assignation and tenacious observation, reviewing paths, and developing member checks (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). Additionally, I interviewed participants who had first-hand experience with the phenomenon I was investigating. Thus, the data derived was dependable.

Validity

In brief, validity tests the design of a study and seeks to determine whether the results provided might be generalizable to the population of interest. To guarantee validity of the study, I ensured that my data sources were credible. Researchers established credibility when the findings were believable and, therefore, trustworthy (Moon et al., 2013). To this effect, all the participants must speak and understand English and possess active business licenses at the time of the study. The licenses must have been issued by the relevant authorities in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. As a result, to achieve construct validity, I used open-ended questions designed to promote answers that described the business strategies of small business immigrant owners. I further tested

construct validity by comparing and aligning the themes identified during data analysis with the study purpose and central research question. At the data saturation point, information was redundant or repetition of previously collected data (Marshall et al., 2013). In this study, data saturation occurred when there was no new information emerging from the review of the data coming from the interviews, document review, and field notes. Data saturation occurred when consistent themes started to overlap. The use of member checking enhanced the validity of this study since member checking entailed having the participant verify their responses for accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012). Harper and Cole (2012) defined member checking as the process in which the investigator authenticates the accuracy of the data collected. I used member checking by requesting confirmation of the interpreted data from interviewees as suggested.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 included a restatement of the purpose of the study as well as a comprehensive description of the role of the researcher and the study participants. I provided the rationale for applying a qualitative methodology and a case study research design over other research methods and designs. In this section, I presented a description of the population sampling technique, the interview questions, and a discussion of ethics. Furthermore, I provided a description of the type of data for the study, the data collection method, and the data organization approach including a discussion on the data analysis technique, reliability, and validity. In Section 3, I will present the study findings and a detailed discussion on how this study may apply to professional practice and contribute to

social change. Finally, Section 3 will contain recommendations for further study, recommendations, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. I completed interviews with four immigrant small business owners based in Minnesota. Additionally, all study participants shared documentation related to their business strategies, and I took notes during the interviews. I used methodological triangulation and member checking to aid in the analyzation, definition, and confirmation of derived major themes across multiple data sources.

The findings of this study uncovered four main themes concerning strategies immigrant small business owners apply to sustain and grow their business beyond 4 years: (a) marketing strategies, (b) customer service, (c) lowering expenses, and (d) location. My data analysis also revealed the main barriers immigrant small business owners faced to sustain and grow their businesses were scarce resources. Immigrant small business owners' approaches to overcoming these barriers and gaining competitive advantage was concentrating on differentiating themselves from competitors and managing resources efficiently.

Additionally, immigrant small business owners can achieve more success and improved sustainability by incorporating newer technologies into their business practices and embracing the use of intangible resources. Immigrant small business owners need to have a competent flow of resources and sufficient human capital to maintain business

growth and sustainability. This group of small business owners needs to select the appropriate communication methods and markets to sell their products or services.

Presentation of the Findings

The central research question for the study was the following: What strategies do immigrant small business owners use to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years? In this study, I selected a purposive sample; I recruited four participants for this research who were immigrant business owners who met the participation criteria and who started and ran their businesses in the Twin Cities in Minnesota.

I used semistructured interviews and field notes to understand the strategies that small business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. The interview questions on strategies used in this study included the following:

1. What growth and sustainment strategies did you use when you started a new business?
2. What are your current business strategies?
3. How did your small business strategies contribute to your business growth and sustainment?
4. Which of your growth and sustainment strategies have changed significantly within the previous 4 years?
5. What are the positive aspects of your current strategies?
6. What small business strategies helped you to succeed?
7. What strategies do you implement to achieve growth for the business?
8. What other factors that you have not discussed may have contributed to your success?

After receiving IRB approval, and obtaining a publically accessible list from the Minnesota chamber of commerce, I contacted the immigrant small business owners by phone and confirmed that the owners have been operating in retail industry for at least 4 years. Then, I made appointments to interview the owners and collected physical artifacts on premises. I conducted the interviews with the participants on their premises.

Interviews and field notes allowed me to triangulate methodological data. Triangulation enhances the breadth of the research for understanding the findings by diminishing the shortcomings of a single strategy of data collection (Cronin, 2014). Using census sampling, I obtained pertinent information by visiting participants and asking permission to interview them at their businesses. Before interviewing the participants, I introduced the research project and myself. For those agreeing to participate, I requested each participant read and to sign the consent form so that they could understand the scope of the study, their rights, and the protection of personal information. My analysis of all interview responses, field notes, and documentation collected from the four study participants entailed the five-step process Yin (2014) described as consisting of (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. I identified four essential themes related to how immigrant small business owners strive to be successful in business: (a) marketing strategies, (b) customer service, (c) lowering expenses, and (d) location.

Theme 1: Marketing Strategies

Dzisi and Oforu (2014) considered a sustainable marketing strategy a key element that supports performance and growth in a small business. The four study participants

talked about marketing as a critical element that helped them remain in business beyond 4 years. P2 stated that he would have a dedicated team member to manage social media. He added that this was an area that he was weaker in, so a team member who is strong in social media would be a great asset to the company. P4 talked about how as a marketing strategy, social media gives the company a lot more coverage of their area at a lower cost, which relates to more customers seeing the business.

Another marketing strategy that participants noted was market research. P2 noted that routine market research helps forecast the market and gauge the business environment. P1 revealed that understanding seasonal trends helps prepare for any foreseeable changes. P1 shared, “Sometimes business may experience highs and lows, but as long as one conducts market research and understands market trends, business will remain successful.” P3 asserted, “Knowing the target market improves marketing strategies in terms of product awareness, market share, and profitability, which are important strategies for business performance.” The four participants confirmed the importance of understanding the business environment and trends. P2 emphasized the importance of understanding seasonality trends, the highs and lows of business, and being prepared every season.

Other strategies included developing a business plan and having a consistent relationship with clients. One of the participants had a marketing plan that was consistent with previous research (Dzisi & Oforu, 2014), covering the 5 Ps of marketing and serving as an artifact that helped support my data triangulation for Theme 1. In making the plan, P3 stated that it would be a driving factor in the long-term success of the firm. Aside

from having a business plan, P1 also relied on word-of-mouth marketing when she first started her small business and focused on being consistent and available for her clients.

I concluded that small business owners who have a basic understanding of marketing have a higher probability of remaining in business longer than their counterparts who do not. I based this on the data I reviewed about marketing and its relationship to helping immigrant small business owners make it past 4 years. Owners' understanding included general knowledge about marketing as well as how to apply this knowledge to their specific products, services, and industries.

Theme 2: Customer Service

Participants identified good customer service as an important element of their businesses. A good customer relationship is important, which successful business owners recognized. Most participants stated that good customer service is key for growth and sustaining business. According to Armstrong (2013), small firms provide good service to sustain customer loyalty and create word-of-mouth advertising. Providing good customer service is essential to maintaining a successful business.

Good customer service remains an important concern for growth. Owners should be cognizant about honoring commitments and providing every customer with the best service, considering the relationship with customers. Delivery of promised product to customers was one of the factors for P2 that contributed to the sustainability of business. P3 credited the importance of keeping products available for growth and sustaining business and the use of proper planning for maintaining inventory. P4 used good customer service as a business strategy. P4 believed that caring about customers helped in

the sustainability of business. Good customer service keeps customers coming back and may eventually increase the volume of sales because it is about being attentive to customers and being better than the competition. Small business owners seek ways to differentiate their businesses from those of competitors by offering a unique service experience to attract and retain customers (Van Riel, Semeijn, & Peters, 2012).

Good customer service also entails providing responsive and responsible service that is timely, professional, and courteous to all customers. P1 emphasized that his customer base changed. P1 products targeted customers, but the population within the area of the business changed. P1 was flexible enough to respond effectively to changing demographics. Flexible small firm owners can generate opportunities by recognizing customer markets with unfulfilled needs (Armstrong, 2013).

The participants also recognized the importance of building relationships and improving communication with customers. Business owners should ensure customer satisfaction by focusing on fair treatment, accuracy, and timeliness. To remain competitive, customer service like this is important (Cook & Wolverson, 2015). Developing good customer relationships and sustaining that relationship are a significant challenge for business owners but doing so produces substantial rewards. The participants in the study made a strong case for developing and maintaining good customer relationships. A good customer relationship is sustainable if it permeates the business. Customers are at the core of retail business, and serving and attracting customers as a strategic performance indicator (Cook & Wolverson, 2015).

Theme 3: Lowering Expenses

Lowering expenses is consistent with Lin and Wu (2014), who suggested that business owners need to reconstruct or transform available resources to deal with competition and adapt to market changes. All participants reported that to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years, it was necessary to manage resources in a manner that kept lowering expenses so they could maximize profits. Participant 3 stated, “One of the things we also do is that we cut our expenses to the maximum so our overall expenses will be relatively low to maintain decent profit without doing the high margin of the big-bucks stores.” Participant 4 explained, “We try to be as efficient as we can with what we have. We try to be as careful as possible when we tap into resources, so we can make good use of them and to be very careful not to lose them.”

Participants also shared that to keep lowering expenses, they needed to deal with multiple vendors and negotiate merchandise prices effectively to get lucrative deals. Participant 1 shared, “We try to work out something with the wholesale supplier to try to get a better price or we find an alternative product.” Participant 2 said, “You have to bargain buying products all over to reduce your cost and get more profit while selling at lower prices.” These findings align with Campbell and Park (2017) and Nyberg et al. (2014) suggesting that resources such as human capital, entrepreneurial orientation, social capital, and strategic management contribute to enhancing small business performance.

In summary, study participants’ responses suggested that to sustain and grow their businesses profitably with limited capital and resources, they differentiated themselves from competitors through personable customer service, offering popular products at low prices, and managing their resources to keep operational cost to a minimum. The

strategies uncovered in the responses of the study participants align with the principles of the bureaucratic management theory. Business owners achieve competitive advantage when they implement strategies that competing firms cannot replicate easily (Day, 2014; O'Donnell, 2014).

The findings of this study revealed that with limited capital and resources, the success of immigrant small business owners depended heavily on their management skills. The immigrant small business owners with the management capabilities to properly plan and execute the previously described strategies were able to gain competitive advantage better than the ones without proper management skills.

Theme 4: Location

Deciding on a business location is an important decision for small business owners, especially start-ups. Selecting a location necessitates proper planning and research (Small Business Administration, 2015). The participants regarded location as a strategic contributor to their success. To summarize, location is critical to a business success.

P3 indicated the importance of a good location. The participant originally started business on a side street with little visibility and less traffic than on the main street. When P3 moved his business to the main thoroughfare, and gained more exposure and traffic, his business grew substantially. P3 acknowledged the move as a crucial strategic decision. Roslin and Rosnan (2012) considered store locations as long-term investment that may become a competitive edge for retailers. Selecting a poor location can be detrimental to a small business.

P1 identified that finding the right location was a strategy in starting her business. The participant recognized early on the importance of location for business growth. SBA (2015) acknowledged that firms choose a location based on exposure to customers. The time invested by P1 in researching site locations paid significant benefits in terms of providing a continual stream of customers. P2 echoed P1's comments about the importance of finding the right location.

P4's strategy for sustaining business focused on aligning the right location with targeted customers. Location is one of the strategic decisions confronting any retailer (Pope, Lane, & Stein, 2012). The participant relocated to an area near several car dealerships to attract additional customers. Unfortunately, this strategy caused financial woes, which led to forfeiting sales. Pope, Lane, and Stein (2012) view a poor location as lost capital and a drain on profits. Prior to moving to the new location, P3 experienced unprecedented success. After a year at the new location, P4 faced declining sales and increased overhead expenses. The financial problems became too burdensome for continued sustainability. Rather than close the business, P3 relocated his business to increase traffic flow. The business's strategic new location provided additional foot traffic and matched the participant's target market profile. Moreover, the participant retained regular customers.

Location can play a role in different demographic factors. Small business owners must be strategic in determining the right location for their business because it can be a determining factor in the success and sustainability of the business. Finding a good business location is important for successful operations and overall growth.

This finding was consistent with literature from Lechner and Gudmundsson (2014), which suggested that differentiation, particularly if based on customer service, speed, and flexibility, is an effective strategy for small businesses to compete. Differentiation as a business strategy involves fulfilling customer needs in a unique way to achieve superior value (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). This finding also aligned with the findings of Duarte and Bressan (2016), who suggested product quality, staff capabilities, reputation, and service quality as the most important resources to gain competitive advantage. These resources aligned with the differentiation attributes of the bureaucratic management theory. The main premise of the bureaucratic management theory is that managers need to ensure resources are valuable, rare, and nonsubstitutable to promote competitive advantage (Campbell & Park, 2017).

Applications to Professional Practice

Future small business owners and stakeholders may find the recommendations in this study informative as they attempt to develop small business growth strategies. The study results revealed four themes as the main strategies small business immigrant owners use to sustain and grow their businesses beyond 4 years. These findings may facilitate the groundwork for recommendations for strategic actions as well as further research studies. Furthermore, the results of this study may improve business practice by promoting and facilitating the development of management guidelines or training materials for small business immigrant owners. Small business startups, as well as

existing small businesses to include immigrant small business owners, could use the findings to grow their businesses, and make their businesses survive beyond 4 years.

Business owners need adequate access to resources to achieve operational competence and to achieve prospects (Bates & Robb, 2015). The resource limitation threatens immigrant and minority small businesses owners who operate in the inner city; moreover, greater barriers exist in this metropolitan environment than in minority communities (Bates & Robb, 2014). With the existence of barriers, a higher number of small business may close, or owners relocate because resource limitations affect performance (Weterings, 2014).

The results of the study may help to fill in the gap of knowledge regarding what business strategies influence the growth and sustainability of immigrant small businesses owners. Small business immigrant owners could better understand and apply new strategies to improve business performance. Consequently, immigrant small business owners could learn from the study findings the right management strategies to overcome business barriers, enhance available resources, and achieve competitive advantage. Immigrant small business owners could improve the growth and sustainability of their businesses by applying knowledge from this study. Finally, the finding from this study may promote further research of the business dynamics of immigrant business owners.

Implications for Social Change

Implications for positive social change include the clarification of strategies that make immigrant small business owners grow and sustain operations beyond 4 years. Immigrant small business owners have a higher rate of business establishment than non-

immigrant business owners do; thus, they play a significant role in the U.S. economy (Aliaga-Isla & Rialp, 2013; Foreman-Peck & Zhou, 2013). Successful small businesses to include immigrant small businesses foster economic growth, expand employment, improve cultural expansion between host and home countries of immigrants, and expand global trade through exporting. Successful small businesses engender better health conditions for community members than do members of communities with failing small businesses (Blackburn et al., 2013). Immigrant small business owners using the results of this study could help improve the employment posture in metro Twin Cities, which could help reduce the unemployment rate in Minnesota. Small businesses create more jobs than large businesses (de Wit & de Kok, 2014).

The findings of this study could help to enhance the profitability and survival rate of immigrant small businesses. If immigrant small business owners are able to improve their profit margins and hire more employees, they will also be improving their contribution to the economy of their community as well as the US economy as a whole (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015). The growth of immigrant and minority small businesses results in contributions to employment levels in their communities (Bauernschuster, 2013; Goldman et al., 2014; Halabi & Lussier, 2014; McFarland & McConnell, 2013; McHenry, 2015; Preston, 2014). Results of this study could help immigrants from other parts of the world to innovate and internationalize their small businesses in both their host and home countries.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. The results of the study explored four emerging themes: (a) marketing strategies, (b) customer service, (c) lowering expenses and (d) location. The identified emerging themes may assist existing and future immigrant small business owners in developing strategies to remain in business beyond 4 years. Such strategies might include reinforcing marketing strategies, properly leveraging offering popular products along with customer service for firm sustainability (Chatterjee & Das, 2015; Omrane, 2015; Winborg, 2015). Business sustainability makes firms resilient, so they will be able to confront a changing environment (Michel et al., 2015).

As the researcher for this study, I will disseminate the findings of the study through training, seminars, scholarly journals, business journals, and entrepreneurship conferences. As such, the findings of this study may empower potential immigrant small business owners with knowledge and strategies needed to reduce high business firm failure rates amongst this ethnic group as discussed by Smith and Tang (2013). Understanding business sustainability helps create long-term financial value and reduces the negative effect on the environment, employees, and community (Michell et al., 2015).

Immigrant small business owners preferred obtaining business-related education from informal sources (Canedo et al., 2013; Z. Moon et al., 2013). Therefore, a recommendation for action is for agencies, such as the SBA and Chamber of Commerce, to develop and conduct workshops on business-related topics. The recommendations

from this study might provide the SBA insight of ways to better assist immigrant small business owners.

Recommendations for Further Research

A researcher will choose a method and design that is appropriate for the research objective, to account for affordable resources, and to answer the research question (Venkatesh et al., 2013). I used a qualitative case study because it is suitable for the study purpose and the resource constraint. The limitations were the sample size, the research method and design, and the demographic of the participants.

The study findings add to the limited research on firm growth and sustainability for immigrant small businesses in Minnesota. Additionally, the study findings extend the existing research that extrapolates the need for increased firm growth and firm sustainability among immigrant small business owners. Future studies could expound on the steps and actions taken by successful immigrant small business owners to access needed capital via bank financing to fund the growth of their existing business enterprises.

In this qualitative case study, the primary limitation was the sample size of four participants. Further studies may include involving a larger sample size of participants to obtain more information. However, triangulation was achieved in this study with multiple sources of data as discussed by Houghton et al. (2013), while data saturation was reached with no new data, no new themes, no additional coding, and replication of the study could be obtained. A study in a different location other than Twin Cities of Minnesota is recommended for future research. A study conducted outside of Twin Cities of

Minnesota may determine if the results have applicability elsewhere. Alternative research methods and designs should be considered for future research that could uncover new additional information and possibly mitigate participant and researcher bias.

Reflections

Standing on the shoulders of other scholar-researchers, I gained incredible knowledge from literature reviews, especially about small businesses. My experience during the DBA process was both a great learning experience and a challenge. I learned the importance of selecting the appropriate research method and design within a doctoral level study. In addition, I learned about the strategies employed by a successful immigrant small business owner to achieve firm growth and sustainability. The amount of detail and time commitment needed for the study challenged me. I eliminated any preconceived notions that I had before conducting the participant interviews and followed the interview protocol to minimize any possible effects on the participant.

I used to have my preconceived ideas, bias, and values. Going through the process, before starting the data collection, as a scholar-practitioner, I needed to understand how to identify and mitigate my bias. Before I could obtain the permission for data collection from IRB, I had to understand the requirements, ethics, and the obligations for the researcher. This study changed my thinking by increasing my knowledge of the need for more viable and sustainable African American firms to aid in the growth of the economy (Smith & Tang, 2013), while positively impacting minority neighborhoods and residents (Parker, 2015). Specifically, the results enlightened me on the importance of traits such as marketing strategies, lowering expenses, and customer

service on firm growth and sustainability by a determined entrepreneur as demonstrated by the participant in this study. Further, the results also uncovered the relevance of properly leveraging existing resources such as location for firm growth and sustainability, also demonstrated by the participants in this study. Thus, the study and the ensuing results changed my thought process to become a business consultant to nascent entrepreneurs to aid in developing strategies for positive firm performance and firm sustainability. After completing this study, I realized there are still so many things I never knew; one never stops learning.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that immigrant small business owners used to grow and sustain their businesses beyond 4 years. I completed interviews with four immigrant small business owners based in Minnesota. Additionally, all study participants shared documentation related to their business strategies, and I took notes during the interviews. I used methodological triangulation and member checking to aid in the analysis, definition, and confirmation of derived major themes across multiple data sources. I collected data achieving methodological triangulation from several data sources as described by Houghton et al. (2013), while reaching data saturation when no new data, no new themes, and no additional coding could be attained from the information as shown by Fusch and Ness (2015).

The data collection process for this study included semistructured interviews and an assessment of company documents. The findings of this study will serve as an

additional source of information for immigrant small business owners regarding strategies to remain successful. The findings also resulted in recommendations for further studies and actions. The findings may also contribute to positive social change with small businesses growth and sustainability creating employment and wealth in the communities they serve.

Four themes emerged from the data analysis. Based on bureaucratic management theory, the research findings revealed that immigrant small business owners place values on research to grow and sustain operations. The findings also revealed several strategies that immigrant small business owners can use to grow and sustain operations: (a) market strategies, (b) customer service, (c) lowering expenses and (d) location.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

- I. Start with self-introduction to participant(s).
- II. Settle in, organize note pad, and set up audio recording device.
- III. Provide copy of Consent Form and review the form with participant.
- IV. Turn on recording equipment.
- V. Give the participant a copy of the interview questions to follow along.
- VI. Begin interview session by introducing participant with a previously established code name, date and time of the interview session.
- VII. Start by asking the first question on the list of interview questions.
- VIII. Ask follow up questions for clarity and in-depth answers.
- IX. End interview when after the last question on the list and remind participant(s) about member checking.
- X. End of interview protocol.