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Marketing Strategies of Successful Coffee Shop Owners

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College of Management and Technology

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Abi Adeleke

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

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by

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MPA, Indiana University Northwest, 2001

MA, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1988

BA, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 1986

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2019

Abstract

Failure is an issue with small businesses globally; some owners of small businesses lack the knowledge of business administration and marketing strategies necessary to help ensure success. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore what marketing strategies some coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. The targeted population consisted of 5 coffee shop owners in Arkansas who successfully implemented marketing strategies to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Goldsmith's 8Ps of marketing mix was the conceptual framework used in the study. Data were collected from semistructured interviews and a review of publicly available data and company websites. Data were analyzed using the principles of the content analysis method, which included identifying codes and themes. Findings indicated owners of successful coffee shops were actively engaged in the day-to-day business operations and in the community; provided premium products; used social media for marketing, promotion, and branding; used competitive pricing; were precise about the location; provided exceptional customer service and personalization, and had points of marketing differentiation to promote their brand. The implications of this study for positive social change include the potential to support the welfare of the citizens of Arkansas, and owners of coffee shops across the United States that could provide independent coffee shop owners with marketing strategies necessary to sustain business operations, contribute to new job creation and regional economic sustainability.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this study to my children, Michael, Victor, and Abigail. Thank you for the times you have had to wait for Mom. I would also like to dedicate this study to all SMEs and especially, women entrepreneurs on the continent of Africa! Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to my mother and father; you always said I could. I know both of you are up there with God saying, "That is our daughter!" God deserves all the praise for the fulfillment of Jeremiah 29:11.

Acknowledgments

To Dr. Warren Lesser, I am thankful our paths crossed. I could not have asked for a better chairperson. I want to give special thanks to him for his steadfast support and feedback during this journey. I never doubted he had good intentions for me to graduate. I want to thank my second committee member, Dr. Tim Malone for his great insight and input during the oral defense. I want to thank my URR, Dr. Jill Murray for her valuable contribution to my study. I could not have completed my DBA without the help of the committee. I want to thank the DBA Program Director, Dr. Susan Davis for the support and guidance during my DBA journey here at Walden University. I want to thank everyone who gave a listening ear or a word of encouragement. My parents, especially my dad, encouraged me to complete this journey and was the reason I continued after he passed away during my DBA program. To my children, I say thank you! To the participants in my study, I want to thank them for sharing their successful marketing strategies. We have come this far by faith (II Corinthians 5:7).

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

Failure is an issue with small businesses globally (Hyder & Lussier, 2016). Business failure is the termination of participation in an undertaking because it has not met a minimum threshold for economic survival envisaged by the business owner (Fang He, Sirén, Singh, Solomon, & von Krogh, 2018; Hsu, Wiklund, & Cotton, 2017). Some small business owners lack knowledge of business administration including marketing strategies and technology to survive in small business (Alford & Page, 2015; Lotfizadeh & Shamsi, 2015; Nguyen, Newby, & Macaulay, 2015). The purpose of this study is to provide coffee shop owners with marketing strategies to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Understanding how to market the coffee shop business effectively can increase the ability of coffee shops to survive during the first 5 years of operation.

Business survival is an issue with small businesses. In the second quarter of 2015, 234,000 businesses started up; in the same period, 213,000 businesses faced demise in the United States (Small Business Administration [SBA] Office of Advocacy, 2017a). In the state of Arkansas, there were 6,437 establishments with less than 100 employees (United States [U.S.] Census Bureau, 2016). Coffee shops (on-premise brewing) belong to the same North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) description code (722515) as snacks and nonalcoholic beverages bars (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). In the second quarter of 2015, 1,893 businesses started up, and in the same period, 1,765 businesses faced demise in the state of Arkansas (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2017b).

There is no documentation from government agencies unique to the closure of coffee shops. However, Starbucks, the largest coffee shop company, has closed 443 stores throughout the company history: 240 stores in 2009, 42 in 2010, and 161 in 2011 (Knoema, 2016). Scholars have asked whether a marketing plan incorporating an element of personal branding, perseverance, practice, and coproduction, may assist owner-managers in surviving in small businesses (Resnick, Cheng, Simpson, & Lourenço, 2016).

Problem Statement

Coffee shop owners find it increasingly difficult to remain in business because of intense competition and the vagaries of customer preferences (Muhammad & Lee, 2015). Only 54% of small businesses, including coffee shops, opened in the United States in 2012, managed to remain in business longer than 5 years (Bureau of Labor and Statistics [BLS], 2016). The general business problem is that some small businesses owners are unable to survive during the first 5 years of operation. The specific business problem is that some coffee shop owners lack the marketing strategies to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what marketing strategies some coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. The targeted population consisted of five coffee shop owners in northwest Arkansas who successfully implemented marketing strategies to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Positive social change may

result in a reduction in the number of coffee shop failures, thus improving employees' worth and dignity, and reducing the unemployment rates, which can result in building stronger communities through gainful employment.

Nature of the Study

I selected the qualitative research method so I can more deeply explore and understand the thought processes of my study subjects. Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions to explore the participants' experiences within their natural setting (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017). In contrast, quantitative researchers use closed-ended questions to examine relationships between or among variables through testing null hypotheses (Zhou, Wang, Zhang, & Guo, 2017). Mixed-method researchers combine both qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study (Johnson, 2015; Shekhar, Prince, Finelli, Demonbrun, & Waters, 2018; Venkatesh, Brown, & Sullivan, 2016). However, for my study, I decided not to use the quantitative method since I was not testing any hypotheses. Also, Yin (2017) noted that qualitative researchers could use multiple data sources to support findings and this feature is consistent with my plan to use data from interviews, observations, and any written materials my study's participants provide.

Several research study designs are accessible to the qualitative researcher, which include (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, (c) narrative, and (d) case study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2017). Ethnographic researchers explore group cultures through observations and interviews (Letourneau, 2015). The ethnographic design was not appropriate for this study because I was not investigating group cultures.

Phenomenological researchers describe participants' perspectives and interpretation of experiencing a phenomenon (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015; Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015). The phenomenological design was not appropriate for this study because I was not exploring the primary meanings of experiencing a phenomenon through the personal perspectives of individuals. Narrative researchers focus on the life stories and experiences of individuals presented through their own stories (Yin, 2017). The narrative design was not appropriate for this study because I was not seeking to explore the life stories of the business owners who participate in the study. Multiple case study researchers are interested in an in-depth exploration of a problem or issue in the natural setting and real-world context of the participants to understand and report on the similarities (and differences) among cases (Park & Park, 2016; Yin). I explored successful marketing strategies that coffee shop owners have used to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Thus, I chose a multiple case study design for my doctoral study.

Research Question

What marketing strategies do some coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation?

Interview Questions

The interview questions I asked the owners of coffee shops were the following:

1. What marketing strategies have you used to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation?

2. What were the key challenges you had in implementing your marketing strategies during the first 5 years of operation?

3. How did you address the key challenges to your marketing strategies during the first 5 years of operations?

4. What marketing strategies helped you to increase your customer base during the first 5 years of operation?

5. How did you establish your pricing strategy compared to the pricing of your competitors during the first 5 years of operation?

6. How did the physical location of your business contribute to increasing your customer base during the first 5 years of operation?

7. What media were most effective at creating more foot traffic into your coffee shop during the first 5 years of operation?

8. What were the main points of differentiation that you emphasized in your promotional messages during the first 5 years of operation?

9. How did you merchandise your products to be more appealing to customers during the first 5 years of operation?

10. What examples of superior service offered by your coffee shop during the first 5 years of operation do you recall?

11. What additional information can you provide regarding marketing strategies you used to sustain business operations during the first 5 years?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this multiple case study was the 8Ps marketing mix theory. Goldsmith (1999) developed the 8Ps of marketing mix theory. Goldsmith determined productivity (and quality) or offering a good deal for the customer, could set a brand apart from its competitors. Goldsmith emphasized the importance of the 8Ps of the marketing mix to carry marketing theory and practice into an era of competitive advantage. The crux of Goldsmith's argument for the 8Ps relevance was the need for managers to create marketing strategies which featured productivity alongside McCarthy's (1960) traditional 4Ps (product, price, promotion, place). Booms and Bitner (1981) added personnel, physical evidence, and process, to form the 7Ps. Goldsmith added productivity to the 7Ps to form an innovative marketing mix, the 8Ps. Mukherjee and Shivani (2016) argued that the traditional marketing mix elements of product, price, place, and promotion were inadequate in achieving the marketing objectives in services. Furthermore, Pomering (2017) suggested that small business owners who use the marketing mix could benefit by successfully adapting to a changing, dynamic marketplace and achieve competitive advantage.

The coffee shop owners' use of the 8Ps of marketing mix which includes productivity could provide a unique positioning and marketing strategy in achieving a competitive advantage over competitors and sustaining business operations. Therefore, Goldsmith's (1999) 8Ps of marketing mix conceptual framework could provide a means for exploring and understanding the marketing strategies coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation.

Operational Definitions

Business failure: Business failure occurs when the business owner exits from the small business sector if the entrepreneurial initiative has fallen short of its (business or personal) goals. Business failure is also the inability of a business owner to build a scalable business model (Nair & Blomquist, 2018).

Business success: Business success is the term researchers have used to describe the state in, which business owners, have achieved entrepreneurial success, through the resourcefulness of the small business owner. Business success occurs when the business owner has maintained a customer-focused strategy in addition to the quality/price ratio of its products and services (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newburry, 2015).

Marketing strategies: Marketing as a strategy focuses on how businesses compete in their markets using segmentation, targeting, and positioning (Ahmad & Saber, 2015). The marketing strategy of a company owner expresses the way the company owner wants to accomplish the company's goals (Marek, 2014).

Small business: Small businesses are independent businesses, with one or more persons, with less than 500 employees (or $7.5 million in average annual sales for many nonmanufacturing industries (Cater & Young, 2016; U.S. Small Business Association [SBA], 2018).

Small business owner: The small business owner is the person who shows, manages, and makes all the necessary management decisions regarding the business with the primary purpose of furthering personal goals (de Oliveira, Escrivão, Nagano, Ferraudo, & Rosim, 2015).

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA): A U.S. governmental agency, which defines what is or is not a small business and provides resources to assist small business owners including existing companies and start-ups (Anastasia, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

In this subsection, I discussed the various assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of my research. Researchers agreed that the researcher should outline the research process and the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations thereof to the reader (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts the researcher of a study assumes to be true (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I made three assumptions in this study. My first assumption was that coffee shop owners would provide adequate and truthful responses during the interviews. My second assumption was that the participants would share useful information on their marketing strategies. My final assumption was that the sample size of 5 coffee shop owners in the study was adequate for a multiple case study.

Limitations

It is inevitable that researchers deal with some limitations in their studies and the present study is no exception. Arbussa, Bikfalvi, and Marquès (2017) explained that the researcher of a study of small-medium enterprises might need to overcome some of the sized-caused limitations. One of the limitations of my study was the choice of a multiple case study, which may not represent all information possible from studies with more

subjects from the same industry (Yin, 2017). The second limitation of my study was that the sample size was small and was from only the state of Arkansas.

Successful coffee shop owners might limit the research scope due to my exclusion of unsuccessful coffee shop owners. An exploratory multiple case study of five small business owners of coffee shops from Arkansas may not yield enough data to answer the research question and may not be representative of the population of coffee shop owners in the United States or other countries. The findings of the study may not apply to small businesses with over 100 employees. The third limitation of my study may include the specified area (northwest Arkansas and metropolitan area of Little Rock, Arkansas) for the study location. I may not be able to generalize the information gathered from this study to locations with high population densities. The final limitation of my study was that the interviewees might not be willing to share in-depth marketing strategy information in an interview setting.

Delimitations

Delimitations are limits purposely presented or placed by the researcher to restrict the scope of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Snelson, 2016). The first delimitation was that the study participants were from the coffee shop industry and excluded other small businesses and services. Other delimitations of this study included the sample size, population, and the location of Arkansas. I was focused on successful coffee shop owners because I was interested in the coffee shop industry. I gathered data from the owners regarding the marketing strategies they used to run successful coffee shops. The final delimitation was that I only interviewed small business owners who had successfully

used marketing strategies to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation.

Significance of the Study

The findings from a qualitative case study may add value to the business community by documenting how coffee shop owners use marketing strategies to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Coffee shop owners may benefit from study findings in providing awareness on becoming successful. Learning from successful coffee shop owners may provide insights to help potential coffee shop owners in adopting a successful marketing strategy during the first 5 years of operation. Finding the right value proposition to be successful during the first 5 years of operation includes the consideration of the traditional marketing mix elements of product, price, place, and promotion as well as the newer elements of participants, physical evidence, and process (Mukherjee & Shivani, 2016). The knowledge obtained from study outcomes could benefit potential coffee shop owners through a better understanding of traditional and more contemporary marketing strategies, which may increase the businesses' survivability and contribute to beneficial social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

The knowledge gained about the marketing strategies used by coffee owners to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation could provide awareness of the survivability of other coffee businesses. With effective marketing strategies, coffee shop owners could better appeal to customers in their marketplace. Other coffee shop owners can adopt these insights to increase better or sustain sales.

Implications for Social Change

The potential social change benefits from the proposed study include sustained employment of coffee shop employees in Arkansas, which can improve self-worth and human dignity for employed individuals. Small business coffee shop owners may find study outcomes so helpful that they hire more employees in Arkansas. Also, increased business and employment may result in more tax revenues for communities, which can help local citizens

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this section was to provide a review of the past literature that relates to the present study and to enhance the body of existing research. Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou (2016); Maggio, Sewell, and Artino (2016) posited the purpose of a literature review is to provide, review, critically examine, and synthesize contributions of earlier researchers. Furthermore, Thakurta, Müller, Ahlemann, and Hoffmann (2017) stated in conducting a literature review, a researcher might also identify bias, scholarly gaps, and develop newer insights. Therefore, a crucial part of any research study is the synthesis of the literature review, which goes beyond just summarizing the literature to developing a theory (Okoli, 2015).

In this literature review, my primary goal was to understand and describe the literature about marketing mix relevant to coffee shops. Reviewing relevant literature to date and earning the readers' confidence about the validity, reliability, and relevance of the study findings are some of the steps in the research process (Templier & Paré, 2015). I used the Walden University business and management online databases as the primary

databases for this study. The databases I utilized included: (a) Business Source Complete, (b) ABI/INFORM collection, (c) SAGE Journals, (d) ScienceDirect, and (e) Emerald Insight.

Key search words used in the databases included combinations of the small business owner, small business success, small business failure, marketing, strategy (-ies), coffee shop, small business or SME, and marketing mix. The primary source of information for the literature review was peer-reviewed journal articles. I also used dissertations, seminal articles, and books about marketing strategies which contribute to small business survivability. Finally, government publications with statistical information about the health of small businesses are also a vital source of information for this study.

Table 1 includes a breakdown of the material reviewed:

Table 1

Sources of Data for the Review of Academic Literature

Publications	Published within 5 years of expected graduation date	Older than 5 years	Total	% of sources
Journal articles	155	4	159	90%
Government websites	6	0	6	3%
Seminal works/books	6	4	10	6%
Others	1	0	1	1%
Total sources	168	8	176	100%
% of sources	95%	5%	100%	

The approach I selected for this study included a section with background information about 8Ps of marketing mix and small business characteristics. In this review, I discussed the chronological history of the marketing mix, marketing strategy, and small business survivability. I included discussions in the literature regarding the major themes and subthemes of the study. Major themes for review in this study included the 4Ps, 7Ps, and 8Ps of marketing mix, marketing strategies. Subthemes included the application of successful marketing strategies, and small businesses and change.

8Ps of Marketing Mix Theory

The 8Ps marketing mix of Goldsmith (1999) was the conceptual framework for this research study. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what marketing strategies some small business owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Goldsmith developed the 8Ps of marketing mix theory. Goldsmith determined that personalization of products could set a brand apart from its competitors. Goldsmith emphasized the importance of the 8Ps of the marketing mix to carry marketing theory and practice into an era of personalization. The crux of Goldsmith's argument for the relevance of the 8Ps, was the need for managers to create marketing strategies which featured personalization alongside McCarthy's (1960) traditional 4Ps (product, price, promotion, place), Booms's and Bitner's (1981) 7Ps (adding personnel, physical evidence, and process), to form an innovative marketing mix, the eighth P. Mukherjee and Shivani (2016) argued that the traditional marketing mix elements of product, price, place, and promotion were inadequate in achieving the marketing objectives in services. Furthermore, Pomering (2017) suggested that small

business owners who use the marketing mix can benefit by recalibrating the traditional 4Ps to a changing, sustainable society.

The coffee shop owners use of the 8Ps of marketing mix, which includes personalization, could provide a unique positioning and marketing strategy in achieving a competitive advantage over competitors and sustaining business operations. Therefore, Goldsmith's (1999) 8Ps of marketing mix conceptual framework could provide a means for exploring and understanding the marketing strategies that coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation.

Small Business

In the United States, the role of small businesses in the economy is significant. According to the Office of Advocacy, a small business has two unique features, (a) it is independent, and (b) has fewer than 500 employees (SBA, 2018). Small business success is crucial to the stability of society and the economy, particularly the local economy and job creation (Guzman & Lussier, 2015; Memili, Fang, Chrisman, & Massis, 2015). According to the SBA officials (2018), small businesses make up 99.9% of U.S. employer firms, 99.7% of firms with paid employees, 48.0% of private sector workers, and 41.2% of private-sector.

History of Marketing Mix Theory

Neil Borden invented the term marketing mix in his 1953 American Marketing Association presidential address and formalized it in his Borden (1964) article. Borden based the marketing mix phrase on a suggestion of a colleague's article (Culliton, 1948)

on the marketer as a mixer of ingredients. The original marketing mix framework

consisted of 12 elements.

The 12 elements of Borden's marketing mix were: (a) product planning, (b) price

planning, (c) brand, (d) channels of distribution, (e) personal selling, (f) advertising, (g)

promotion, (h) packaging, (i) display, (j) servicing, (k) physical handling, and (l) fact-

finding and analysis. Borden also developed a list of four elements of the marketing mix

of manufacturers: (a) consumer's buying behavior, (b) trade behavior, (c) competitors'

position and behavior, and (d) government behavior. In the short term, the use of the

marketing mix shows marketers how to determine the allocation of expenditures among

the different elements in effective marketing methods. In the long term, the marketer can

use the marketing mix to design a combination of marketing ingredients based upon long-

range planning to ensure business owners successfully meet the demands of the changing

marketplace. Mutandwa, Taremwa, and Tubanambazi (2015) asserted one of the factors

that determined the performance of small and medium enterprises is marketing.

Therefore, a small business owner must employ marketing skills to ensure sustenance of

business operations. In this study, I applied the 8Ps of marketing mix framework to

discover the marketing strategies that coffee shop owners used to sustain business

operations during the first 5 years of operation.

4Ps of Marketing Mix

McCarthy (1960) built upon Borden's (1964) marketing mix framework, but

reduced Borden's twelve elements and offered the 4Ps marketing mix conceptual

framework. The critical components of McCarthy's 4Ps marketing mix conceptual

framework were product, price, place, and promotion. McCarthy used the conceptual framework to explain translating marketing planning strategies into a holistic practice, enabling managers to configure their product or service offerings to match customers' preferences. McCarthy's (1960) 4Ps marketing mix conceptual framework comprised (a) product, (b) price, (c) place, and (d) promotion. Scholars define marketing mix as the combination of marketing ingredients or tools marketing managers use to achieve the response company leaders desire in their target market and achieve the goals of the company (Arafah, Nugroho, Takaya, & Soekapdjo, 2018). Other researchers define marketing itself as a set of activities and exchanging offerings which, have value for customers, clients, partners, and society (American Marketing Association, 2016).

7Ps of Extended Marketing Mix

Booms and Bitner (1981) added 3 more Ps, applicable to service industries, namely: (a) people, (b) process, and (c) physical evidence. Booms and Bitner recognized the influence of (a) physical evidence (b) people, and (c) process, may help transform marketing planning strategies into practice. Researchers revealed that the owner's utilization of the various variables of the marketing-mix model might contribute to the success of small businesses (Al Badi, 2018). In criticizing the 4Ps, Kent (1986) thought of these four important elements, termed the holy quadruplets, as no more than a handy mnemonic for recalling the elements of McCarthy's marketing mix, and not a conceptual framework. Bruner (1988), following the critique of Kent, postulated McCarthy's 4Ps model of the marketing mix had outlived its usefulness and needed new paradigms.

Bruner (1988) recommended new paradigms which would keep the relevant portions of the earlier conceptual framework while re-examining the relevance of McCarthy's 4Ps in the era of modern marketing. Researchers dismissed the 4Ps as a traditional concept needing retirement in favor of the 4Cs, with emphasis on the more customer-focused marketing philosophy (Zafar, 2017). The critical components of 4Cs were (a) convenience to buy (substituting for the place), (b) consumer cost (substituting for the price), (c) communication (substituting for promotion), and (d) studying consumer needs and wants (substituting for the product). Gummesson (2017) advocated a shift from traditional marketing to a more customer relationship-oriented approach.

Consumers in international markets differ regarding product preferences and economic buying power. Researchers evaluated the recalibration (versus standardization by country of origin) of marketing mix components including product features and distribution channels in global and emerging markets (Sert, 2017). Sert found the market factors, including customer, cultural preferences, and legal considerations affected the local adoption of marketing mix elements, namely, products and promotion. Kotler and Keller (2016) stated that as marketing trends evolved, it is pertinent to add people (the human capital), a fifth, but a crucial component to the implementation of a company's marketing plan. Fan, Lau, and Zhao (2015) adopted the 5P model of marketing mix conceptual framework, adapting McCarthy's 4Ps, but incorporating people. The introduction of people (customers) is crucial in the era of big data management of marketing intelligence (including data mining methods), in developing and implementing of competitive marketing strategies in the information age (Erevelles, Fukawa, &

Swayne, 2016; Fan et al., 2015). When the marketer adds the customer to the marketing

mix, the role of the marketer shifts to one of creating value to the customer and for the

society at large (Pomering, 2017).

The marketer could shift focus from traditional marketing to more strategic

marketing focused on the co-creation of value with customers and sustainability

(Pomering, 2017). In examining the role of customer participation in emerging markets,

Chang and Taylor (2016) asserted that engaging customers in the innovation strategy may

improve the short-term outcomes of a new product development project and may create a

long-term competitive strategy for the business owner. The market, industry and

economic (including manufacturing) are factors which influence the adoption of price in

international markets. The preferences of companies also influence the adaptation of

place (including distribution, inventory, and supply chain) in international markets. In

discussing the use of marketing mix in global markets, researchers found the place and

price components of marketing mix had a more significant impact in both emerging and

developed countries, while the product and promotion components had more impact in

emerging markets in comparison to developed countries (Bahadir, Bharadwaj, &

Srivastava, 2015).

In exploring emerging markets, Dadzie, Amponsah, Dadzie, and Winston (2017)

argued that the 4Ps of marketing was not always suitable for emerging market business

conditions and proposed the 4A marketing mix, comprising affordability, accessibility,

acceptability, and awareness marketing capabilities. Affordability means ensuring that

customers are able and willing to pay for the products and services; accessibility means

ensuring the products and services are readily available and accessible to buy.

Acceptability means ensuring that the products and services meet and exceed customers'

needs and awareness means ensuring that customers know about the products and

services and the brand. In their study of the usefulness of the 4As using samples from the

product and service sectors of the market, in Ghana, an emerging market, the authors

found that the implementation of a marketing strategy focused on affordability and

accessibility was a vital ingredient for business sustenance and market share growth. The

authors also found that marketing strategy must be on acceptability, affordability, and

accessibility marketing capabilities in emerging business markets to maximize financial

performance.

In connection with business markets, Marek (2014) suggested that company

owners who carefully examine marketing mix elements of place and price may operate

more profitably, provide value for customers, and sustain their businesses for more

extended periods. Internal and external factors shape a company's marketing strategy.

Therefore, an understanding of the strategic and competitive environment may impact the

development of a business owner's marketing capabilities and in turn, may lead to an

effective marketing strategy (Qureshi, Aziz, & Mian, 2017). Coffee shop owners who

study the marketing mix could also shape the marketing strategy of an organization.

Marek posited that vital components in building a company's competitive strategy

included the quality and availability of products, branding, service delivery, pricing, and

a good reputation. Researchers who previously studied the tourism industry highlighted

the importance of identifying and implementing service quality and service delivery

components that impact customer satisfaction and customer retention (Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Del Chiappa, 2016).

A business owner could create value for the customer through customized marketing strategies to drive their satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability, resulting in higher rates of business success (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). Marketers must obtain concise information about their customers' preferences as input into strategic marketing decisions. Furthermore, in a survey of 400 coffee shop customers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, researchers Mohamud, Khalifa, Abuelhassan, and Kaliyamoorthy (2017) found that coffee shop operators must focus on responsiveness, reliability, assurance, customer satisfaction, trust, and price acceptance, which are factors that positively affect the customers' experiences resulting in customer retention and increased market growth. By obtaining concise information about customers' preferences, the marketer could revise the traditional marketing mix of product, price, place, and promotion components to align with the customers' gravitation towards the e-commerce marketplace (Pogorelova, Yakhneeva, Agafonova, & Prokubovskaya, 2016).

In support for customers' gravitation towards the e-commerce marketplace, Kotler and Keller (2016) posited business owners should begin to adopt an integrated marketing mix of digital communication which aligned with the uniqueness of the e-commerce marketplace. Small businesses are using digital marketing tools to provide products and services directly to current and potential customers (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Prasetyo and Lo (2016) stated that it is possible to develop each variable of the marketing

mix for a more robust discussion. In the next section, I began my review of the literature

with a discussion of the traditional, tested 4Ps of marketing mix

4Ps of Marketing Mix – Product

A consumer's personal preferences and extrinsic attributes (brands and

packaging) are critical factors of consideration in creating value for the customer

(Samoggia & Riedel, 2018). Therefore, making unique products that stand out in the

market and appeal to customers is a crucial ingredient to attaining competitive advantage

and may increase a company's profits (Hsu, Lu, Chien, Hsieh, & Wang, 2017). Beyond

the creation of superior products and services, a company may attain a higher competitive

advantage through customer engagement (Hidayanti, Herman, & Farida, 2018).

Companies have incorporated customer feedback in the ideation, product development,

and launch stages of new and improved upon products (Chang & Taylor, 2016). Chang

and Taylor found that customer participation in new product development may maximize

a company's reputation with existing customers but may not impact or may even damage

the relationship with potential customers without an existing relationship. In a study of

459 coffee consumers conducted in Belo Horizonte, MG, Brazil, researchers found that

product features, followed by the coffee's taste, type of coffee, and its roasting point were

the most critical considerations in the consumer buying decision process (De Sá, de

Paiva, Souki, & Moura, 2017).

The ability of the packaging of a product to entice customers to buy a product

makes packaging a "silent salesman" or "salesperson on the shelf." The design of the

coffee packaging and sustainability labeling convey a message to the consumers

including an appreciation of quality in the consumers' minds (Samoggia & Riedel, 2018).

While the income of consumer may be one of the reasons for the frequency and choice of

coffee, coffee drinkers are loyal to their preferred brand and do not readily switch.

Shariff, Sapawi, and Wee (2016) affirmed product attributes (labels, brand, appearance,

functionality, price, and taste) correlated positively with customer satisfaction and

retention of preferred brands.

Customer brand preference, positive customer experience, and customer

satisfaction were some of the factors responsible for retention. In discussing product

offerings, Wang and Yu (2016) found that content sensory, packaging design and

branding, and content, functional attributes in ready-to-drink coffee beverages impacted

consumer-perceived value and consumer repurchase intentions. Business owners of RTD

coffee beverage shops could enhance consumer repurchase intentions of products by

focusing on the packaging and branding, and content sensory attributes in their marketing

strategies (Wang & Yu).

4Ps of Marketing Mix – Price

Pricing plays a vital part in customers' choice of products. Pricing is also a

significant factor in the determination of a business's profitability. It is common for

customers to do a price check on an item before purchase. Flatten, Engelen, Moller, and

Brettel (2015) posited that pricing capability is a business owner's ability to integrate

resources to control the best price for maximum profit. In a service-based environment,

hybrid bundle pricing capability is a way to achieve corporate profitability (Meyer,

Shankar, & Berry, 2017). Hybrid bundle pricing is dependent on the understanding of the

drivers of a customer's willingness to pay for the bundle of services. These drivers include service autonomy, service complementarity, and overall bundle quality. If customers decide the price of a product or service is too high, they are going to take their business elsewhere. To grow the customer base and achieve a competitive advantage in the coffee shops, a business owner must pay attention to pricing (Rajasekaran, 2015). The marketer's use of pricing strategies may involve price differentiation, dynamic pricing, service bundling or partitioning, and consumer-driven pricing. Conversely, some business owners may base their pricing strategies on competition or cost-based pricing (Liozu & Hinterhuber, 2015).

Regardless of the pricing strategy a marketer chooses to adopt, the best pricing strategy requires the collaboration of all stakeholders. As it relates to coffee, Samoggia and Riedel (2018) found that customers' perceptions of coffee packaging, branding and the prices of coffee increased the customer's purchase intention. Another pricing strategy which may increase the customer's purchase intention is the Pay-What-You-Want (PWYW) pricing strategy which empowers the customer to choose their price. Park, Nam, and Lee (2017) found that when the marketer adopted the PWYW pricing strategy and combined it with charitable giving and a suggested price, the business yielded net revenues as substantial as what would have come in through fixed pricing. The PWYW pricing strategy may influence customers' buying decision (Park et al.) The optimal pricing strategy of a service company may require the business leaders to understand the delay sensitivity of, established and potential customers which may enable them to create

a competitive advantage based on their priority service pricing (Cao, Wang, & Xie, 2017).

Kienzler (2018) advocated for the value-based pricing, a customer-focused model based on the customer's perceived value as a transition from the traditional one-size-fits-all pricing strategy. In addressing a broad array of customer needs, wants, and willingness to pay for the product or service, marketer strategists, unveiled the good-better-best market segmentation to expose the customer to several price points. Kienzler further posited value-based pricing innovation allows the business owner to gain competitive advantage, increase profits, and ensure customer value and customer satisfaction. Offering different price points and product types may allow a small business owner to grow their business.

4Ps of Marketing Mix – Place

Coffee shop owners could emphasize creating the ambiance (interior design, décor (lighting, smells, music level) and thematic integration of the local community for the experience of the third place. Zhang, Kim, and Goodsir, 2019 found that ambiance was a vital element in customer's perception of value for money spent on the coffee cup. Third places are public gathering places that contribute to the strength of a community (Yuen & Johnson, 2016). Customers use third places to interact and engage outside of work and home (Van der Merwe & Maree, 2016). Sugiyama, Shirahada, and Kosaka (2015) posited in the case of Starbucks; the company announces its business model as one which provides the third place with an array of beverages. Therefore, the baristas receive training in achieving third place qualities such as friendliness, hospitality, and

recognition (and retention) of customers which includes remembering favorite beverages. Customers are service receivers in a sustainable relationship with the service provider as they spend time interacting with others or in solo technology-related activities in the coffee shop.

In the era of technology, coffee shop owners attempt to create a welcoming environment which resembles a home away from home, fostering a place of socialization and lingering. In support of this development, Ardekani (2016) posited coffee shops, especially specialty coffee shops, are transforming from a place of socialization (third place) to a multifunctional space to work, read and use electronic devices within environments of economic opportunities. Additionally, the customers' expectations of third places in the era of technology now include a wider variety of features including the provision of free wireless connection (Wi-Fi).

4Ps of Marketing Mix – Promotion

Social Media as a means of promoting the business. Promotion is a crucial component of the marketing mix. Social media gives business owners the opportunity to expand their digital footprint beyond their immediate geographical location (Warren & Szostek, 2017). Promotion mix determines the positioning of the product in the target market (Thabit & Raewf, 2018). Companies and organizations must attract and retain customers so that the business operations may survive. Consumers are embracing more omnichannel platforms in their research of products, purchase, and consumption of goods and services, and communicate with others about their experiences with these products and services (Stephen, 2016). This communication may help owners in the development

of product and services. This assertion is congruent with Choshin and Ghaffari (2017) in the sense that a business owner's success in e-commerce depends upon determining, embracing, and implementing effective factors in e-commerce. In the dynamic marketplace, the small business owner may face marketing challenges without proactive social media adoption (Ogbuji & Papazafeiropoulou, 2016). Elena (2016) also made a compelling argument for the use of social relationship management as statistics revealed higher percentages of people skipped TV commercials, who never opened or unsubscribed from direct email marketing campaigns.

To use social media as a marketing tool, business owners must have a marketing communication strategy (Key & Czaplewski, 2017). Furthermore, the business owner must develop a plan for where they want to have an online social media presence, social media content, and the return on the investment in the online presence (Kujur & Singh, 2016). For social media marketing to be successful, marketers must develop social media geared towards (a) helping people improve existing relationships or building new ones; (b) leveraging the power of celebrities; and enhancing (c) customer collaboration (Zhu & Chen, 2015). Taecharungroj (2016) found that on Twitter, the brand Starbucks utilized a three-pronged approach of information-sharing, emotion-evoking, and call-to-action content.

Taecharungroj (2016) found that six types of replies, namely, information, apology and support, positive comment, question and inquiry, chit-chat, and gratitude. Business owners face the challenge of how to distribute resources to the alternative complaint-handling initiatives in a way; the outcome satisfies each customer (Cambra-

Fierro, Melero, & Sese, 2015). Procrastination is not an acceptable complaint-handling technique. No complaint should go unattended for more than 24 hours (Ramsey, 2016). Deleting a negative comment may hurt a company. The impact of negative postings may be immediate, and businesses cannot afford to be tone-deaf about the potential effects of customers' actions on their brands. Thus, business owners must monitor the quantity and content of comments on social media concerning goods and services in real-time (Sexton, 2015). Managers may use complaints to learn what is working and what is not within the different departments or sales team and resolve customer issues (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, & Krush, 2016). The use of social media as a marketing strategy involves effectively handling of customer complaints in a manner which satisfies the complainant and the observers of the complaints (Einwiller & Steilen, 2015). The use of customer relationship management (CRM) or social customer relationship management (sCRM) databases or techniques gives the marketer the required visibility to this performance review (Carmen & Marius, 2016). The effectiveness of the exposure is dependent on understanding what customers value via social media platforms. In the era of personalization of goods and services, Ramaj and Ismaili (2015) asserted that the business-to-business (B2B) marketer must monitor the social media as a data collection point for insights into the consumer's preferences, likes, and dislikes and in turn, plan interaction and engagement.

Customer relationship management as a means of promoting the business.

The essence of customer relationship marketing (CRM) is the interactions between the buyer and seller. Customer relationship management is a vital strategy for business success. Hidayanti et al. (2018) posited that the rapid development of the

Internet had accelerated the transition from traditional means of customer relationship management towards electronic Internet customer relationship management. Smaller companies have close interaction with customers. Small business owners can leverage this relationship to promote their businesses, strengthen customer loyalty, and increase customer retention beyond the limits of one-time transactions. Zhang, Watson, Palmatier, and Dant (2016) noted that the understanding and managing of customer relationships are central in the marketing of businesses.

Consumers' loyalty contributes significantly to the long-term sustenance of a business (Utami, Bayani, & Eprilisanti, 2018). Utami et al. found that coffee shop operators experienced higher customer loyalty because of higher service quality. Moreover, Marek (2014) posited that business owners could more easily focus on promoting their brands and customer loyalty than larger competitors because of the limited geographical market coverage of small-to-medium size enterprises. As I conducted a review of the literature on the marketing mix, I focused on marketing mix ingredients specifically relevant to coffee shops, with an emphasis on creating value for the customer.

Small business owners could benefit from reaching out and incorporating customer feedback into product development and service delivery. Customer engagement marketing is a company's strategy to incorporate and measure customer contributions including feedback into its marketing functions (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017). Harmeling et al. asserted that customer engagement goes beyond the immediate economic transaction, to incorporate voluntary word of mouth blogging and to provide

customer ratings for a product or service. Customers use various social media platforms to evangelize their own experiences with more customers (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017). Researchers group social media platforms into four main functional categories, namely, creativity, relationship management, entertainment, and newsgathering (Killian & McManus, 2015). Hudson, Huang, Roth, and Madden (2016) posited that electronic word of mouth had more reach than the traditional word of mouth sharing of product or service experience.

Both the business owner and customers can utilize social media platforms function as a medium of creativity, content creation, and customer engagement. Russo, Confente, Gligor, and Autry (2016) stated that the inclusion of social customer relationship management resulted in ongoing customer engagement. The essence of customer engagement also incorporates customer contributions to product development and offering. Similarly, Kumar and Pansari (2016) opined that customer engagement incorporates the level of connectedness among customers and employers. Examples of this customer engagement include customer purchases and post-purchase actions like posting content on social media and customer referrals. However, Hollebeek, Srivastava, and Chen (2016) argued that the effectiveness of customer engagement marketing depended on the company's ability to identify and leverage customer-owned resources to contribute to the company's overall marketing strategy objective.

Gupta et al. (2018) stated that customer feedback avenues include surveys (one-to-one, telephone, online), customer forums, and social media. However, the authors agreed that concerning feedback evaluation, it is challenging to find objectivity in the

feedback as customers usually indicate their personal and subjective insight of satisfaction and importance. Simon and Tossan (2018) found that customer engagement with a brand via social media including reading and re-posting content was a part of the reciprocal responses of grateful consumers and a sense of belonging to the brand community.

7Ps of Marketing Mix – Personnel, Physical Evidence, and Process

Booms and Bitner (1981) created the extended marketing mix to incorporate services. In doing so, Booms and Bitner added 3 new elements (people, physical evidence, and process) to the 4Ps of marketing mix to include services. The proponents of the 4Ps of marketing mix used employed it about tangible products (Lau, 2016). Booms and Bitner argued that by adding the 3 new elements, he wanted to draw attention to the expressed importance of these elements to service-firm managers. Therefore, the focal point of the 7Ps of marketing mix was customer satisfaction coupled with service quality (Kushwaha & Agrawal, 2015). Booms and Bitner asserted that personnel (people) was a crucial element in achieving excellent service quality in a customer-centric environment.

Furthermore, all businesses need people, the human actors to provide quality service to the consumers of the service. However, company managers played a role in creating work environments conducive for the provision of quality service to customers and improving the organizational outcome (Kim et al., 2017). However, Dhar (2015) supported the importance of people element as a critical component of marketing mix. Dhar found that the perception of training related activities positively impacted employees' commitment level to the company and subsequently impacted the service

quality. Furthermore, Rauch and Hatak (2016) asserted that highly qualified employees were more committed to advancing the company's objectives.

Booms and Bitner (1981) argued that physical evidence was the environment in which the service took place including other intangible aspects (the ambiance, the background music, and the physical layout of the company). Physical evidence could include corporate branding, packaging practices, and bundling of services. Booms and Bitner argued that the components of physical evidence contributed to the customer's perception of value. Researchers confirmed the direct relationship between the overall physical image of a destination, customer satisfaction, and intention to recommend (Prayag et al., 2016).

Consistent with Prayag et al. (2016), Lau (2016) summed up physical evidence as the tangible products which may assist the business owner in the delivery of exceptional service. The tangible products include the appearance of the building, landscaping, employees' uniforms, and layout of the business space (Loo & Leung, 2016). The business needed process as a way the business and the consumer interface in a systematic manner to achieve the company's desired objectives and the customers' expectations and satisfaction. The process relates to the execution of service production and delivery (Loo & Leung). Lau (2016) stated that the process involved a series of incidents in the delivery of a service to the customer. Hidayanti et al. (2018) found that customers want to be involved in the creation of products, services, and company processes which meet the customers' needs. The process of delivery of service to customers may be a time-sensitive construct which has a significant effect on organizational performance.

8Ps of Marketing Mix – Personalization

In the 1990s, Goldsmith (1999) added an 8th element of the marketing mix, personalization. The rationale behind Goldsmith's 8P was that alongside making strategic marketing decisions about product, price promotion, and place, managers should incorporate considerations of service delivery personnel, the physical assets surrounding the product, and the processes by which customers purchase the product. Consumers wanted the shopping experience personalized for them and demanded great products and even more exceptional customer service. Goldsmith argued that the marketing manager must determine whether the personalization of the product occurred in a manner which, offered the customer a fair deal in exchange for payment.

Productivity or quality the customers experienced from the personalization of products or services was the focus of the eighth P. Goldsmith (1999) posited that increasing levels of customer service result in customer satisfaction and may yield more profits. Goldsmith also reiterated the importance of the concept of personalization, as a way that business owners could seek input from consumers before, during, and after the consumption of a product. This assertion is congruent to that of Mohamud et al. (2017) that traditional coffee shops could boost their services by understanding customers' satisfaction needs and preferences. In seeking input from consumers, the business owner could determine the possible degree of consumer personalization. Goldsmith acknowledged that consumer personalization might not be feasible in every product category or to every customer. Thus, if the business owner is unable to personalize the product, the business owner may not be able to personalize the pricing and advertising to

a targeted consumer base which is willing to pay for the personalized products and services. The concept of personalization underscores the importance of understanding, creating, communicating, and providing value and satisfaction to customers (Fernandes, 2018).

In providing value and satisfaction to customers, Stock, de Jong, and Zacharias (2016) suggested that the frontline employees may help the customer by making product recommendations, product add-ons, and uncover customers' latent needs. The investigators in the Stock et al. study support the findings in the Dhar (2015) regarding the correlation between employer training-related activities and employee-customer relationship outcomes. Hidayanti et al. (2018) found that customer interactions via social media can increase customer engagement. In turn, customer engagement facilitates co-creation which may help businesses improve and develop products based on customers' needs and preferences and may increase customer loyalty. An understanding of what the customer needs and prefers is crucial in the development of successful marketing strategies in a product-service business such as the coffee shop. The modern marketer must have a repositioning strategy to capture the changing trends of the technologically-savvy, budget-conscious online consumer (Pavel & Vlad, 2016). Social media interaction is an effective way to engage customers in the development of budget-friendly but customer-based products and services (Hidayanti et al.).

Transition

In Section 1, I discussed the problem statement, purpose statement, and the central research question. I supported the problem statement and the purpose statement

with peer-reviewed sources. The method and design I selected were the qualitative research method and multiple case study, respectively. I used the central research question to frame the interview questions. After the discussion of the conceptual framework, I reviewed the academic and professional literature about various marketing strategies for small businesses, highlighted past research and contributions to the study.

The literature review comprised significant writings in the marketing field. In Section 2, I discussed all required aspects of the research, namely, (a) purpose statement, (b) role of the researcher, (c) study participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments, (h) data organization, (i) data analysis technique, (j) reliability and validity, and (k) transition and summary. In Section 3, I introduced the study, (a) presentation of the findings, (b) the application to professional practice, (c) implications for social change, (d) recommendation for action. I concluded Section 3 with my recommendations for future research about coffee shop marketing strategies, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I outlined the purpose statement. Then, I discussed my role as the researcher and defined my study participants. After discussing the qualitative research method and multiple case study research design, I discussed the population and sampling and ethical research. Section 2 also included a discussion of data collection instruments, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. I concluded this section by discussing my stratagem for improving the credibility of my study research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what marketing strategies some coffee shop owners used to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. The targeted population consisted of five coffee shop owners in the state of Arkansas who successfully implemented marketing strategies to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Positive social change may result in a reduction in the number of coffee shop failures, thus improving employees' worth and dignity, and reducing the unemployment rates, which can result in building stronger communities through gainful employment.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, it is my responsibility to adopt the most suitable research methodology and design and then seek out and engage the appropriate participants in the study. Additionally, I am responsible for the construction of the interview questions in a manner, which elicits informative answers. I am also responsible for interviewing,

member checking, and transcript validation and reviewing, determining and assuring the data saturation. Following the suggestion of Fusch and Ness (2015) I will achieve data saturation when there is enough data to reproduce the study and when gathering additional data or thematic coding will not result in new information about the subject matter. The researcher's use of multiple data collection sources offers internal and external validity of the study, I am also responsible for the triangulation of data sources by collecting data including (a) marketing strategies, (b) competitive advantage strategies, and (c) social media strategy, of coffee shop owners who have succeeded in business during the first 5 years.

Given my exposure to small businesses as a marketing strategist, I have individual perspectives and opinions on running a small business, which may influence my interpretation of collected data. However, my plan for avoiding potential bias in this research was to present the experiences of the participants and to ensure the accurate representations of the participants through data analysis and thematic interpretation. Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, and Bujisic (2015) suggested the use of open-ended, semistructured questions in the interview process as the primary source of data for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and to avoid potential bias in interviews. Moreover, the open-ended interview is the most effective tool to gain visibility into the interviewee's experience (Silverman, 2017). Fusch and Ness (2015) stated it was pertinent that the researcher does not influence the participants' responses thus impacting the validity of the data collected.

Bias occurs in all phases of research. Therefore, I took steps to mitigate potential instances of bias and establish my positionality within the research. Hopkins, Regehr, and Pratt (2017) asserted that positionality denotes a space in which the researcher's objectivism and subjectivism meet. As the researcher, I ensured my insider positionality, my assumptions, and beliefs did not pose challenges in this study, including the potential to influence the answers.

Conversely, my insider positionality facilitated rapport and understanding to ask relevant follow-up questions to elicit rich data during the interviewing process. I avoided bias with member checking after the interview is over, and I transcribed the actual interview and ensured that I did not interject bias during the interview with member checking. Bracketing is the process of writing down personal experiences, biases, and previous knowledge and notions about the research topic (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015). I followed up with my subjects and ensured data accuracy by using member checking. With member checking, I asked subjects to review the actual transcripts to verify the truthfulness and to assure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research study.

Participants

Participants for this qualitative multiple case study were business owners of coffee shops who had successfully implemented marketing strategies to remain in business beyond the first 5 years in Northwest Arkansas. Regarding sample size for this study, Boddy (2016) advised the sample size depends on what the researcher wants to find out, what will enhance research credibility, and what is achievable within the

constraints of time and resources. Some scholars recommend the researcher interviews more than one person for a case study design (Boddy, 2016). In this research study, I selected the owner of 5 coffee shops targeted in the study who implemented successful marketing strategies. To find the potential participants, I conducted an online search of Northwest Arkansas travel guide (https://nwatravelguide.com/cat/coffee/) and found 62 coffee shops. Most of the 62 coffee shop owners had not been in business for up to 5 years. Therefore, I expanded my online search to the entire state of Arkansas. My further research was on the coffee shops' online presence, and other publicly available data via the Internet to determine the participants who met the study criteria.

Regarding the plan for selecting the participants for a study, Dasgupta (2015) advised the plan aligns with the overarching study research question, and the participants should be able to provide rich data from their experiences. After I achieved approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (approval number 02-13-19-0606269), I selected the potential participants that meet the participant inclusion criteria. I then sent an email invitation to the owners of these coffee shops requesting them to participate in my study research voluntarily. From the pool of voluntary participants, I made a final decision on the participants for the study.

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what marketing strategies coffee shop owners used to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. I discussed the research method and research design below.

Research Method

The research problem and research question determine the suitability of the research method (Singh, 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2016). Research study methodologies are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Venkatesh et al.). A qualitative research method is a tool for discovery, considering the experiences of individuals based on research questions, and collecting in-depth data from multiple sources in natural conditions (Park & Park, 2016). Comparatively, quantitative researchers use structured or raw data and statistics for hypothesis testing to predict and control social phenomena (Park & Park). Mixed method researchers combine qualitative and quantitative methods within the same project for addressing a research question (Carins, Rundle-Thiele, & Fidock, 2016). I chose the qualitative methodology as there were no variables to compare or examine as within a quantitative or mixed method approach.

Researchers use the qualitative research method to gain a holistic view of the topic via documents, observations, and interviews (Park & Park, 2016). Yin (2017) stated that utilizing an interview method with open-ended questions is valuable for gathering data from the participants. Also, with the qualitative method, I gained an understanding of the perspective of the participants through observation and interpretation. I saw an advantage of using a qualitative approach as the opportunity to gain valuable insights into the reasoning behind an occurrence or problem. I used the qualitative methodology to explore the research question: What marketing strategies do some successful coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation?

Using the unstructured or semistructured techniques including open-ended questions, the researcher uncovers common tendencies in thought and opinion (Park & Park, 2016; Yin, 2017). Yin stated that it takes the researcher time to explore, gather and analyze the data. It also takes time to study the culture and interaction between a group of people through participant observation, interviews, and historical documents (Park & Park). Park and Park; Yin, stated that in a qualitative study, the researcher could not generalize the findings of the study to the population of interest.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers have access to several research study designs, which include (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenology, (c) narrative, and (d) case study (Yin, 2017). Researchers use a phenomenological design to explore the participants' perspectives and interpretation of experiencing a phenomenon (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). In an ethnographic approach, the researcher explores groups' cultures through observations and interviews (Letourneau, 2015). Investigators may use a narrative design when they want to focus on the study on the life stories and experiences of individuals presented through their own stories (Yin, 2017). Considering I was not researching the participants' perspectives of a phenomenon, groups' cultures or the life stories of individuals, I decided not to use a phenomenological, ethnographic, or narrative design.

I used semistructured interviews to explore successful marketing strategies that some coffee shop owners have used to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. Researchers use a case study design to understand complex phenomena (Dresch, Lacerda, & Cauchick Miguel, 2015). Yin (2017) noted that a case study design

is an approach for in-depth exploration of a study's problem and lends itself to the

opportunity for future research. Yin (2017) further noted the 5 components of case study

research design were (a) the study questions, (b) the propositions, (c) the data analysis,

(d) linking the data to the propositions, and (e) the criteria for interpreting the findings of

the study. Using a case study design may help the researcher explore strategic

management areas via face-to-face semistructured in-depth interviews and research

questions (Gaya & Smith, 2016). Gaya and Smith further outlined the importance of

ensuring rigor in a qualitative study. The researcher using a case study design must

understand the importance of choosing key informants, following the case study protocol,

rigorous data collection, and analysis methods (including the ability to ask pertinent

questions), facilitating triangulation of sources, and reporting of findings to increase the

study's validity and the reliability of the data collected. The importance of achieving

rigor in qualitative research mirror those of Noble and Smith (2015) covering credibility,

transferability, data dependability, and confirmability.

Yin (2017) noted that the case study could be a single case or multiple cases

bounded by time and location. Case studies may also involve one organization and

location or multiple organizations and locations. Gaya and Smith (2016) explained that a

researcher could use the single case study design if the single case possessed unique

attributes needed to meet the research purposes. Conversely, the researcher of multiple

case study makes comparisons which clarify whether a developing finding is unique to a

single case or steadily replicated by several cases (Fletcher, Massis, & Nordqvist, 2016).

Since I plan to interview independent owners in various locations, I used a multiple case study model. Case study design researchers collect data from various sources to ensure credibility (Yin, 2017). Researchers use the data collected from two or more sources or data triangulation, including interviews, peer debriefing, and member checking to enhance the dependability and transparency of the research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fletcher et al. (2016) explicated that each data source contributes to the researcher's understanding of the whole phenomenon. To ensure data saturation in my study, collected data until there is no added information or themes emanated from the data collection process.

Population and Sampling

Once I settled on the methodology and research design, I selected the appropriate sample for the study. Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, and McKibbon (2015) defined sampling in qualitative research as the selection of precise data sources from which the researcher collects data to address the research objectives. In a research study, the research question determines the sample size. Therefore, the selection of the participants is a qualitative case study is an important decision. Fletcher et al. (2016) noted that case study sampling inextricably links to the understanding of the investigated phenomenon.

Fusch and Ness (2015) opined that a researcher's selection of participants for this case study must align with the suitability of the participant to answer the research question and the conceptual framework. The population for this multiple case study was 5 coffee shop owners who have successfully used marketing strategies to sustain business operations. I used the purposive sampling method, to select the participants. The rationale

for using a purposive strategy was that I assumed that the participant had an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of study.

Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2015) noted that researchers use purposive sampling to effectively target participants to gain a more in-depth insight into the phenomenon of study. Fusch and Ness (2015) further posited the researcher should choose the sample size which has the best prospect for the researcher to reach data saturation. I selected the owner from each of 5 coffee shops located in Arkansas who used marketing strategies to sustain their business operation in the first 5 years of operation.

Ethical Research

I followed the procedures and processes to ensure the ethical implementation of the study. Greenwood (2016) asserted that the researcher has a reasonable duty to protect the research participants. My study conformed to the requirements for minimal ethical risk to satisfy the terms of IRB. Cugini (2015) opined that the IRB of any institution handles the determination, review, approval, modifications, or disapproval of all research activities involving study participants. Upon the receipt of my approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board to conduct research, I sent the participants meeting the study criteria an email to explain the details and intent of the study. The letter of intent will also include a copy of the Informed Consent Form for review and approval by the participants. I ensured that the informed consent form complied with IRB requirements and included the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, the interview structure, and consent to audio record the interview, and how I planned to use the data collected during the interview. Finally, I included my contact information.

Informed consent is a manner of obtaining approval from an individual participating in a research study (Grady et al., 2017). The informed consent form includes information about the research, the details of the study questions and data collection methods, and the participant's voluntary choice whether to take part in the research. Therefore, informed consent is a means of protecting the rights and welfare of participants while they contribute to the advancement of knowledge. Grady et al., further recommended the consent form include information that the potential study participants can pull out from the study for any reason. The participants can withdraw either by email, through telephone or other technology. There were no incentives in exchange for study participation.

Upon receiving IRB approval, I contacted the participants by telephone and e-mail to confirm and schedule dates to conduct participant interviews. Integrity is central to ethical research and maintaining participant confidentiality is vital in research studies (Gudkova, 2017). Researchers must strive to protect participant privacy and confidentiality (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). To assure the ethical protection and confidentiality of the participants, I did not identify the participants involved by name or any other descriptive information of the individuals or the organizations in which the participants work. However, I informed the participants of risks associated with sharing company proprietary information and individual opinions needed by my research questions. I also informed the participants that there was no monetary exchange for their participation in the study. I will, however, share a summary of the findings with the study participants. The interview data will remain confidential but available to the participants.

Furthermore, I used alphanumeric codes to protect the participants' identity throughout the study. I coded each participant names as small business owner (SB) (SB1 to SB5). I will retain the summary of the findings for 5 years to protect the confidentiality of the participants. I collected publicly available documents and marketing strategies relating to coffee shop owners. I also obtained the information from the public information available via company websites and other readily available media.

Data Collection Instruments

The objective of my study was to explore marketing strategies for sustainable business operations. The researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research (Clark & Vealé, 2018). For this qualitative case study, I am the primary data collection instrument and cannot separate myself from the research. As the researcher, I am operating in the world of the study participants as well as in the world of my perspective about the study. Therefore, I am an active participant in the research process. I collected data through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and non-participant observation as recommended by Gudkova (2017). The interview is the most effective method of data collection for qualitative studies (Yin, 2017)., Yin stated that a good interviewer should know the areas of technical and interaction competence. In qualitative research, the researcher uses interview questions structured, but open-ended questions as the primary source of data for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Parsa et al., 2015).

Fusch and Ness (2015) found that researchers must structure the interview questions in a manner, which gives multiple participants the opportunity to answer the

same questions. Likewise, Lee, Lee, Chua, and Han (2016) advocated using the semistructured interview format, which gives the researcher the flexibility to clarify the participants' responses. Hawkins, Stuhlm, Degen, and Goodman (2015) argued that the interview question itself is crucial in promoting a consistent answer. Behind every question lies a goal or intention. Open questions invite open-ended answers, which open discussion and invite the respondent to dig deeper for answers. Therefore, I used the face-to-face interview method to collect data from the SBs. During the face-to-face interviews, I asked open-ended structured questions to explore the marketing strategies that coffee shop owners used to achieve longevity in business beyond the first 5 years. Furthermore, I collected data from social media platforms of the coffee shops and publicly available data.

Reflexivity is a situation in which the researcher influences participants using bias (Yin, 2017). One goal of reflexivity in qualitative research is to assess whether the researcher is part of the researched, shares the participants' experience, and enhances the credibility of the research (Berger, 2015). Furthermore, researcher bias is a possibility because of my personal bias and perceptions. Researchers reasoned that bracketing is a method for improving the researcher's objectivity during the study (Sorsa et al., 2015). Therefore, I recorded my personal biases by writing memos during the data collection and analyses and maintain journal entries to reflect on, as ways to improve the objectivity of my data interpretations.

Furthermore, I used member checking as suggested by Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) to aid in enhancing the reliability and validity of the data

collection instruments and ensuring an accurate representation of participants' views. Member checking is the method of returning a written summary of the interview to the SB to check (validate) its accuracy (Birt et al., 2016). Upon completion of the study, I added the interview protocol and interview questions to the appendices.

Data Collection Technique

In this study, I explored the marketing strategies some successful coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation. I collected the data for my study by contacting selected coffee shop owners to determine their suitability. Upon IRB approval, I contacted the pool of potential participants using e-mail to introduce myself and the objective of the study. Next, I scheduled a phone meeting to explicate the study. After selecting potential participants, I provided the participants with the informed consent form for their review and signing. Once I obtained the signed consent form, I scheduled a time and location for each interview. Before each interview, I sent the participant a copy of the questions to ensure they are familiar with the questions and asked them to address their concerns. The participants did not receive any incentive to participate in the study.

I used open-ended semistructured questions in the interview process as the primary source of data for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as suggested by Parsa et al. (2015). The interview comprised 11 open-ended questions aligned with the research question. I conducted one-on-one interviews at times and locations convenient to each participant, recorded each participant's interview using Audacity, and downloaded the audio file. After completing the interview, I followed the recommendations of

Silverman (2017) and transcribed each audio recording to ensure I captured each participant's complete interview. I presented the transcript summary to the participants to member-check the content and provide additional information or clarification necessary.

Researchers code and develop themes to prioritize critical concepts for analysis (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). To enhance the reliability and validity of my research data, I used NVivo12™ to organize, validate, and code the data to identify the subthemes and themes. Zamawe (2015) stated that NVivo™ has features such as character-based, and thematic coding and rich text capabilities that are crucial for qualitative data management and is compatible with multiple research designs.

Data Organization Techniques

Proper data organization techniques increase the credibility of the study (Sutton & Austin, 2015). After I compared the transcribed data with my interview notes, I commenced the data cleanup and data organization process. I organized the data in the following ways: (a) member checking the transcribed interview, (b) maintained a reflective journal to note my thoughts, assumptions, and experiences during the research process, (c) entered the raw data into NVivo12™, and (d) reviewed my notes against the interview questions. Bengtsson (2016) stated that data organization is a vital component of a credible qualitative research study. Therefore, I used the following organizational tools: Mendeley, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel for this study. I compiled the participants' responses from the interview questions, audio recording, and interview notes, and saved the audio files by the participant number to maintain confidentiality. SB1 for the owner from the first coffee shop, SB2 for the owner from the second coffee

shop and so on. After the approval by Walden's Chief Academic Officer (CAO), I will transfer all digital data about my doctoral study to an external hard drive and delete all the data from my computer. I will store the external drive and the physical copies of the interview transcript and member checking documents in a storage location that is only accessible to me. I will store all the digital data and documents and keep it for 5 years from the date of CAO approval before deletion.

Data Analysis

I used the 8Ps of marketing mix in exploring the marketing strategies of successful coffee shop owners in Arkansas. The 8Ps of marketing mix is appropriate as coffee shop owners may leverage these strategies to remain in operation. My use of interview questions may answer the central question of the study. Additionally, case study researchers use methodological triangulation for the merging of multiple methods to reach a single conclusion which better supports that conclusion than using one of those methods (Heesen, Bright, & Zucker, 2016). The researcher's use of triangulation of data sources strengthens the research study because it serves as an indication to the reader that the research is credible (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Triangulation is a strategy which is useful in the validation and reconciliation of data obtained after the application of different methods of information collection on the same subject of study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). An advantage of using a triangulation approach is that using multiple sources of data enhances the validity of the research (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In this qualitative multiple case study, following the guidance of Hussein (2015), I used methodological triangulation by comparing the information I gathered from sources

of data including the interviews, documents, and public records from Internet sources. Graue (2015) stated that the researcher needs to be able to interpret and explain or analyze the data. Data analysis is one of the crucial steps in the qualitative research process (Mayer, 2015). The process of data analysis involves the categorizing, coding, analysis of the collected data, and the identification of significant themes (Yin, 2017).

When the interviews were complete, the responses were coded to protect privacy (coffee shop owners names were coded as SB1, SB2, SB3, SB4, and SB5), and NVivo™ (QSR International) software was used to assist in identifying recurring words, phrases, subthemes, and universal themes. I used NVivo12™ because the software was more user-friendly than Atlas Ti data analysis software. Furthermore, I correlated the recurring themes with elements from the 8Ps conceptual framework. I imported the interview transcripts into NVivo12™ software for data coding and identified, nodes, the critical subthemes, and themes aligned to my conceptual framework for data analysis. NVivo™ is a data analysis computer software that qualitative researchers use for the organization, storage, and analysis of research data. Çayir and Saritas (2017) stated that the use of computer software in data analysis allowed researchers to disseminate research result in a more explicable manner. Furthermore, Yin (2017) proposed that researchers use data analysis to organize and categorize data into thematic codes.

Coding the data is the method the researcher utilizes to organize and prepare the data for the analysis (Graue, 2015). Furthermore, coding the data enables the researcher to draw conclusions and present the findings of a phenomenon (Graue). The coding,

organizing, and categorizing data, and the researcher's awareness and participant observation are essential to the data analysis of the research topic (Chowdhury, 2015).

Reliability and Validity

The qualitative researcher must strive to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. To ensure reliability and validity in a case study research, the researcher must be aware of and reduce subjectivity in the interpretation of the results (Yin, 2017). Noble and Smith (2015) opined that two of the steps to achieving reliability in qualitative research includes the researcher taking steps to ensure the appropriateness of the research methods and the credibility of the findings. Below, I discussed reliability and validity as critical components of qualitative research.

Reliability

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, the researcher needs to guard against personal bias (Noble & Smith, 2015). In qualitative research, a researcher can use credible methods to increase the likelihood of consistent findings in future studies. Furthermore, Noble and Smith posited that an independent researcher should arrive at similar or comparable research findings as the researcher. Leung (2015) posited that reliability refers to the researcher's ability to replicate the research process and the research outcomes. One of the steps in ensuring the reliability of the interview as a research instrument is to obtain feedback on the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The researcher's goal is the ability to obtain the same results in a repeat of the study (Morse, 2015). I ensured that I followed the steps suggested by Castillo-Montoya (2016) in explicating the steps for ensuring the reliability of the interview protocol I used

in the study. The interview protocol is included in Appendix C. These steps included

creating an audit trail, explicating (a) the purpose of the study, (b) participant selection,

(c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) research findings, and (f) study conclusion.

To further ensure reliability in this study, I checked (verified) the accuracy of the

interview responses using member checking. I ensure the alignment between the purpose

of the proposed study and the central research question. I ensured that I secured the

elicited data in secure, electronic password-protected files on a USB drive which was

stored in a locked file cabinet at my home. I stored the signed consent forms and other

electronic files on my password-protected computer and backed up on a password-

protected external hard drive. I will store the external hard drive for 5 years from the

CAO approval. At the end of the 5 years, I will shred the paper documents and will erase

the data from the external hard drive. I applied standard methodical approaches to

achieve reliability in qualitative research consistent with a case study research method

(Yin, 2017).

Validity

In qualitative research, researchers seek to ensure results are credible,

transferable, and achieve confirmability in the research design and implementation

(Morse, 2015). Credibility is the assurance in the conclusion of the research findings

which address the findings from the viewpoint of the participants, transferability refers to

the applicability of the findings in other settings by adhering to data collection, data

saturation, and analysis techniques for the case study design, and confirmability is the

extent to which the participants shape the findings of the study (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Confirmability in qualitative study confirms that the research data is the participant's narrative and is free from the researcher's personal bias (Hussein, 2015). Validity in qualitative research as a critical component refers to the researcher's appropriateness of the data, the application of research methods, and the precise nature of the research findings (Abbaszadeh & Abbaszadeh, 2016; Noble & Smith, 2015). Furthermore, to enhance a study's credibility, the researcher must ensure the research question, the research method, and research design all align with the desired outcome (Leung, 2015).

Cypress (2017) opined that in qualitative research, the validity of the findings of the study predicates on the researcher's due diligence with data collection during the research process. Researchers also opined that additional strategies to achieve validity in the research study include peer review or debriefing, clarifying the researcher's bias, member checking, external audits, and triangulation (Morse, 2015). Therefore, I applied methodological triangulation in the proposed study by incorporating interviews, data from publicly available information on the website and social media networks of the coffee shop to ensure validity as recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2016).

To achieve data saturation, the researcher must interview multiple study participants using the same set of questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, I asked the same set of questions to all the five coffee shop owners. I also collected data from SB websites and SB social media platforms. I collected data from five SBs using semistructured interviews until I reached the point of saturation. Fusch and Ness stated that a researcher reaches data saturation when there are no new data or new codes, and no

new themes. Furthermore, I documented the data collection instructions to ensure appropriate audit trail and asked the study participants to confirm their responses during the interview and the member-checking phase.

Transition and Summary

I chose the participants for my study using a purposeful sampling technique. I obtained obtain IRB approval before starting data collection. I collected data from study participants through semistructured interviews using the face-to-face method and through publicly available information about the company and social media platforms. I used the analytical framework suggested by Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, and Casey (2015) for data analysis. I used techniques like methodological triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity to improve the reliability and validity of my research study. In Section 3, I provided the presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for future research and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what marketing strategies coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years of operation. I collected data from the owners of five coffee shops located in Arkansas. I developed the interview questions to explore the marketing strategies five successful coffee shops used to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The collection tools comprised face-to-face, semistructured interviews, social media platforms, and publicly available coffee shop information. The findings showed marketing strategies including premium product, word-of-mouth promotion, and community engagement that the owners used to sustain their business operations to provide better customer service and increase their customer base.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question of my study was: What marketing strategies do some coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation? Based on the methodological triangulation of the data sources collected, eight emergent themes were identified from the analysis of data collected through face-to-face interviews. The interview questions are included in Appendix A. A response was considered a theme if it was part of the response of at least 3 SBs. In the following subsections, I describe the study participants, the eight themes, how the participants answered the eleven interview questions, how the data collected assisted in answering the

research question, and how I supported the selection of the 8Ps of marketing mix as the conceptual framework for this study research.

Eight themes emerged from the analysis of data collected through face-to-face interviews. The themes were (a) business operations (b) community engagement, (c) premium products, (d) use of social media for marketing, promotion, and branding, (e) competitive pricing, (f) location, (g) customer service and personalization, and (h) points of marketing differentiation. One significant finding was the lack of threat to coffee shop business by national brands. Coffee shop owners can successfully sustain business operations despite the threat of new entrants. The findings showed marketing strategies that the coffee shop owners used to sustain their operation to provide preferred customer service, increase sales, and differentiate the coffee shop from competitors.

Descriptive Data of Participants

Study subjects consisted of owners of coffee shops who had survived beyond the first 5 years of operation. The owners interviewed were from the state of Arkansas. Three of the owners interviewed were from Northwest Arkansas, and two were from Little Rock metropolitan area of Arkansas. The study participants' characteristics are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

Personal Demographics

Small Business Owner (SB)	Location	Years in Business

SB1	Fayetteville, Arkansas	More than 20 years in operation
SB2	Siloam Springs, Arkansas	More than 5 years in operation
SB3	Fayetteville, Arkansas	More than 20 years in operation
SB4	Little Rock, Arkansas	More than 20 years in operation
SB5	Little Rock, Arkansas	More than 10 years in operation

Themes

Through semistructured interviews, social media platforms, and other publicly available data, I gained an in-depth understanding of the marketing strategies of coffee shop owners. The following is an analysis of the themes.

Theme 1: Business operations

One hundred percent of participants identified the need for longevity in the ownership of the business and active participation in the day-to-day operations of the business. Lude and Prügl (2018) opined that consumers perceived brands that show their family association as more authentic than brands that do not. The subthemes that emerged during data analysis were the following: (a) longevity in the ownership of the coffee shop and (b) owners' family business structure and active participation in the day-to-day

operations of the coffee shop. Theme 1- Business Operations Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Business Operations

SB	Comment
SB1	I have been in business for more than 20 years. A lot of the customers are our neighbors and friends. Actively engaged in day-to-day operations.
SB2	Actively engage – we are actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the coffee shop, including the hiring, baking, and brand promotion.
SB3	We worked to improve an existing business, in terms of the product, marketing and pricing of the coffee to ensure the best price available anywhere in the region.
SB4	Robust interaction - we are focused on our four walls, but I, I know every business owner on this street, every single one, I know them personally, I meet with them monthly, we have meetings here or the meetings at their place. We talk about strategies. We share ideas, and we share distributors. The success in our business operation is networking with other coffee shop owners, interacting with the community, customers, and frontline employees.
SB5	I own this business with one of my adult children. You know a coffee house is no different from any other business out there. I am responsible for hiring, and he is responsible for managing the frontline employees.

In this business operations theme, specifically, the longevity in the ownership of the business, three out of five SBs (60%) had engaged in business for more than 20 years. One had been in business for longer than 5 years, but less than 10 years and one had been in business for more than 10 years. In my research, an SB stated: "We are a family business and do not have an excess of employees who are not vested in the business" (personal communication, February 25, 2019).

Data collected from the SBs in my research indicated that in all cases, the SBs were active participants in the operations of the coffee shop. The owners engaged in the decision making regarding the brand alongside their adult children or spouse. SB2 and SB3 run the coffee shop with their spouses (personal communication, February 24, 2019; personal communication, February 25, 2019). SB1 and SB5 run the coffee shop location with the owner's adult children (personal communication, February 23, 2019; personal communication, February 27, 2019). One of the SBs conveyed that his job as the owner of the coffee shop was to oversee the direction of the staff in the initiatives that they are doing (personal communication, February 27, 2019). The responses of the SBs affirmed the assertions of Kelly, Athanassiou, and Crittenden (2018) that a founder could be expected to shape the family's interaction with the external environment of the business and influence the strategic management of the business.

Theme 2: Community Involvement and Engagement

Data collected from all five SBs indicated that four out of five SBs (80%) all but one SB (20%) were actively engaged and involved in the community. With community involvement and engagement initiatives, SBs gain customer loyalty, credibility, and trust

(Utami et al., 2018). SB can participate in the development of the community in which they are located. SB1 (personal communication, February 23, 2019) informed that the coffee shop was actively engaged in the community to the extent that community organizations sought out coffee donations for their events. Theme 2 – Community Involvement and Engagement Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Community Involvement and Engagement

SB	Comment
SB1	I am known in the community as the coffee guy. I created the coffee shop because I was obsessed with the idea of creating a community space. I wanted to create a community space where everybody would be welcomed. Coffee shops or places can become community spaces.
SB2	Community - We care about the community. That is why we opened our coffee shop here in the community where we live. There is a need for communal experience, the place where people can gather. The 3rd place after home and work. It is just never personally made sense to us to open in another town like a second location or wherever in another town because we do not know that community. We want to serve the people we see every day. Then you know what they are going through. We know their kids. We want to be part of the community, not just move people through like a number.

SB3	Not a community meeting place, even though the coffee shop is socially active during the mornings, we are primarily concerned with providing a product that people will appreciate.
SB4	Community immersion – what has been a strategy for us is to immerse ourselves into the community. Those are all things that are part of our mission. I believe that you must invest in your community and be concerned about what happens in your immediate neighborhood that goes beyond the four walls of the coffee shop.
SB5	We are all wrapped around an environment, that is warm and cozy, and community friendly. We are huge into the community and participate in various civic functions, charity organizations, entertainment and poetry nights, and Bible studies. I am not in the coffee shop a lot. I am in the community a lot. Moreover, I think that is what is cool about this shop is that we are an all-inclusive place and welcome the community into our shop.

Most of the owners spent considerable time within the community. One of coffee shop owner sponsors a lot of charitable causes within the community, which align with the mission of the coffee shop owner, helping children, helping families, helping women, helping those who are transitioning, whether it be out of prison or poverty. The SBs conveyed that community involvement is a crucial ingredient to the success of the coffee shops.

Theme 3: Premium Products

Five out of five SBs identified the importance of having a premium product that rivals that of the national brands. Consistent with the findings of De Sá et al. (2017) the most essential coffee product features included taste flavor, roasting point, and brew methods. Zhang et al. (2019) found that the rich taste of coffee was most notable for customer satisfaction. Theme 3 – Premium Products Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Premium Products

SB	Comment
SB1	We roast our own coffee beans and make every product we serve from scratch. We have always had fresh baked cookies and other products that complemented the coffee.
SB2	Quality products – A lot of people for convenience matters over quality, patronize national brand but I can say all our products are better than the national brands. We also have artisan bakery products. We make all the syrups for all the coffees. I have a baking assistant. I bake all our pastries, scones, cookies, and muffins. We make all the bagels by hand. We make all the sandwiches, make everything. Our goal is to be self-sufficient eventually.
SB3	We pride ourselves in producing the best coffee products. We have had several opportunities to put in satellite coffee shop locations, but we

turned them down because we do not want to spread ourselves too thin to the

extent that it damages the quality of our products. Because if you

damage your reputation in a business like this, it is hard to get it back.

SB4	We only use premium coffee beans and roast our beans in-house. We provide made from scratch, artisan products. Using time tested recipes, we have maintained the same quality in the taste of our products for decades. Our products are categorized by category, namely, breakfast, lunch, and cakes.
SB5	We market a high-end premium product. We have a professional roaster in-house and create our single origin coffee and specialty coffee blends. For us, we cannot afford to devalue our product which explains why we give our product a premium price tag.

Although all the SB identified the threat of a new entrant, especially a national

brand, they conveyed that the quality of their coffee products was better than the national

brands coupled with their community immersion and engagement. The responses of the

SBs reaffirm the statement of Hargis and Bradley (2011) on the importance of creating

unique products and services to build a competitive advantage.

Theme 4: Use of Social Media for Marketing, Promotion, and Branding

To grow a business and sustain business operations, a small business owner must

attract foot traffic into the establishment. Popescu (2018) opined that in other to grow

revenue, a company engages with current and potential customers in a transactional

manner. Five out of five SBs conveyed that their primary medium of advertising was

word-of-mouth advertising. Business owners use word-of-mouth as a person-to-person communication tool to communicate information about a brand, product, or service (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Coffee shops rely a lot on word-of-mouth marketing because of their engagement in the community (SB1, personal communication, February 23, 2019; SB4, personal communication, February 27, 2019; SB5, personal communication, February 27, 2019). All the SBs interviewed also have a Facebook page as a medium to engage with customers and to expose their brand.

The ability to utilize information technology in marketing is a key ingredient to the success of a small business. SBs often lack information technology skills and expertise (Nguyen et al., 2015). SB4 conveyed that one of the critical challenges the coffee shop faced was transitioning from sole reliance on word-of-mouth marketing to social media marketing and promotion of the brand (personal communication, February 27, 2019). Theme 4 – Use of Different Media for Marketing, Promotion, and Branding Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Use of Social Media for Marketing, Promotion, and Branding

SB	Comment
SB1	We use word-of-mouth advertising and donations for marketing, promotion and exposing our brand to the community. We have built trust, loyalty, and credibility on this community over the years. We also use social media Instagram and Facebook to reach the younger target market.

SB2	We engage in social media to engage the community. We are deliberate about hiring creative people who can also promote the brand via social media.
SB3	In addition to Facebook, we also engage in listing services such as Yelp to promote the brand and the coffee shop and regularly receive high reviews. People come into our business based on what they see online.
SB4	We use mobile resources like print media and a bit of radio. This may sound old-fashioned but that this how we have grown our brand in the past. We are transitioning now into more of a social media presence through Facebook and Instagram. We have recently enlisted the help of an Instagram expert. Our social media presence has made an impact on our sales.
SB5	We have recently revamped his website and optimized it to achieve search engine optimization (SEO). This SB also hired a dedicated marketing person to handle social media accounts of the coffee shop. We also plan to promote and sell our products through subscription sales.

Popescu (2018) affirmed that improved online reputation leads to a company's higher visibility on search engines. Kujur and Singh (2016) posited that the business owners must develop a plan for their online social media presence and social media platform preference. SB2 and SB4 conveyed that they have received greater engagement from Instagram (personal communication, February 24, 2019; personal communication, February 27, 2019). SB2 and SB4 also connect their Instagram account to their Facebook

page posting simultaneously to both platforms for maximum exposure (personal communication, February 24, 2019; personal communication, February 27, 2019). Popescu (2018) opined that traditional ways of finding local business were becoming obsolete in favor of newer forms of marketing. All the SBs I interviewed have Facebook pages. Cultivating and maintaining online customer relationships helped to maintain ongoing interactions between the coffee shop and the customers even after leaving the coffee shop (Xie et al., 2016). The SB1 conveyed that one of their locations received awards for the best Instagram photos (personal communication, February 23, 2019).

Theme 5: Competitive Pricing Strategy

A business owner may use an assortment of pricing strategies when selling a product or service. Pricing strategy is a business owner's ability to integrate resources to control the best price for maximum profit and maintain competitive advantage (Flatten et al., 2015). One of the questions I asked the SBs was the pricing strategy that they used in the first 5 years in business operation. Theme 5 – Competitive Pricing Strategy Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Competitive Pricing Strategy

SB	Comment
SB1	We conduct marketing research to determine the coffee price. We are not cheap but not overly pricey. We have never been big on pricing but the quality of the

coffee and the customer experience. We have had a good corner in the area

coffee market for years.

| SB2 | Competitive pricing strategy – we have tried not to be too high or too low, but to maintain fair but competitive pricing that our customers are willing to pay. In some instances, we are 50 -70 cents cheaper than the national brands. Our customers appreciate the quality of our product. We also roast our coffee beans onsite. |

| SB3 | Sustaining model - our pricing strategy has been and continues to be to produce the best coffee available at the best price. We have low overhead as we are family-owned and do not have an excess of part-time employees. We focus on pricing the products in a manner that allows us to retain our loyal customer base. |

| SB4 | So, our process is very similar. It is the same as it has been in years, so that part never really changes. What impacts our pricing strategy is food costs. We benchmark with other coffee shop owners to maintain a competitive pricing strategy. In the coffee shop business, you are not going to make much money unless you change your price point or sell more units. |

| SB5 | Premium product pricing – I could sell my coffee for less, but then I have devalued my product. I have a premium product, and we give it a premium price tag. We are a coffee by choice destination. If you are running five, seven, 10% |

on earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA), you
are doing okay.

All the SBs recommended competitive pricing strategy to gain new customers and retain existing ones. The responses of the SBs affirm the statement of Rajasekaran (2015) that a business owner must pay attention to pricing to achieve a competitive advantage in the coffee shop business and to grow the customer base. Additional effective marketing strategies which SBs used to remain in business for more than 5 years included location, customer service, and personalization, and points of marketing differentiation.

Theme 6: Location

The location of each coffee shop indicated a direct connection between the SBs' desire to create a community space and sustain business operations as a coffee shop owner. One hundred percent of the SBs conveyed that the location was an essential factor in building and sustaining a successful coffee shop that can withstand the threats of new entrants into the coffee business. I observed that all the SBs were in business districts or downtown areas. One of the SBs (20%) had the added advantage of being located close to a University. Success or failure was predicated on selecting the right location for any business (Parsa et al. (2015). Coffee shop owners are strategic about the location of coffee shops (Situmorang, Mulyono, & Azmi, 2018). In addition to the physical location, the SBs also conveyed their decision for the interior décor of the coffee shops. Theme 6 – Location Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Location

SB	Comment
SB1	High traffic volume, close to a business district. In addition to the location of the coffee shop, we wanted the internal location of each of our coffee shops to be different. We did not want our location to look like the national chains. We serve the same drinks at each location, but the ambiance is different.
SB2	Downtown location. We love old things and staying in downtown was important to us. Our decision to stay downtown was mainly because downtown is where the heart is. Third place (home, work, and coffee shop).
SB3	Right location. There was not much else this location could be used for. The location was perfect for a small drive-through type of business.
SB4	High traffic volume, off the highway and in a business district.
SB5	We are a destination, but we wanted a community space to have an intimate coffee house.

In this theme, all the SBs indicated that the location of their coffee shop was a key indicator of profits. SB5 conveyed that most of his coffee sales were derived from the surrounding neighborhoods, commuters, and the people in the community (personal communication, February 27, 2019). For coffee shop owners to succeed in business operation beyond the first 5 years, SB4 conveyed that the best location might be

determined by examining the community dynamics and ample parking (personal communication, February 27, 2019). By benchmarking their geographical location to those competitors, coffee shop owners may uncover the strengths and weakness of their coffee shops and use the insight gathered to make operational decisions (Popescu, 2018).

Theme 7: Customer Service and Personalization

Five out of five SBs conveyed that in a coffee shop business, superior customer service and personalization of services were non-negotiables. All the SBs indicated that to increase the customer base or foot traffic in a service-oriented business, the owner must create a customer-friendly environment. SB2 moved the location of their coffee shop to provide a place where they could serve a more diverse clientele. Theme 7 – Customer Service and Personalization Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Customer Service and Personalization

SB	Comment
SB1	A culture of customer service - we are deliberate in the way we provide customer service and personalization. We created a coffee shop where everyone would be welcomed and served by a diverse and eclectic front-line staff.
SB2	Familiar faces – as owners, we are behind the counter talking to people. People like how we serve them. We do not insist that people buy anything when they come into our coffee shop. Paying and non-paying customers can sit in the coffee shop and enjoy free Wi-Fi for an extended period.

SB3	We pride ourselves in providing exceptional customer service.
	We are not a traditional coffee house. We do not have any frills,
	but our customer base is loyal. Enhanced customer retention strategy
SB4	Relational, not transactional – we never want to be transactional. I want it to be
	about the experience someone has and how well they connect with us here.
SB5	We have created a better customer service experience, better bean
	selection, and revamped the menu. I am learning how to communicate
	better with and manage millennial baristas.

Two of the SBs (40%) conveyed that they were taking steps to evolve the service. SB4 indicated that he could have tremendous improvement in how the coffee shop connects with customers (personal communication, February 27, 2019). For example, SB4 does not currently retain customer data for ongoing engagement.

Theme 8: Points of Marketing Differentiation

Porter (1980) recommended that successful business owners need to differentiate themselves from their competitors in an atmosphere of aggressive competition. To sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years, 100% of the SBs agreed that they need to have points of marketing differentiation that transcended a great product, price, or location. The SBs conveyed that they needed points of marketing differentiation which provided a competitive advantage against other coffee shop owners. Lude and Prügl (2018) recommended that managers of family-owned businesses leverage the inherent differentiation potential of being a family-owned business in their marketing and branding strategies. The SBs indicated that they achieved marketing differentiation

from other coffee shop owners and the large chain coffee shops through their connection to the community and exceptional customer service. The SBs stressed the importance of having a close connection to the customers. Theme 8 – Points of Marketing Differentiation Evidentiary Statements are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Points of Marketing Differentiation

SB	Comment
SB1	We market our brand through clothing and apparel and market to our local community in a manner that shows that we are genuine and have a connection to the community that cannot be replicated by national chains.
SB2	We are laidback in our approach to marketing. This approach is innovative, and we are uncorporate in our marketing of niche products and brand apparel
SB3	We have maintained our drive-through and a drive-up window. 80% of our business is at the drive-up window.
SB4	Willing to accept mistakes – when we make mistakes, we own it and make it right for the customer. If it is a significant error, we will not charge the customer.
SB5	Create a quality product – provide the best selection of roasted beans with a single origin and signature blends and marketing them to high-end clientele.

Zeriti, Robson, Spyropoulou, and Leonidou (2014) affirmed that effective marketing strategies contributed to attracting customers to buy the products and services of a business. In support of Zeriti et al., five out of five SBs conveyed that quality, consistency, and value were critical points of marketing differentiation in a service business such as a coffee shop. One of the SBs indicated that creating points of marketing differentiation as an effective marketing strategy, meant that as a coffee shop owner, you need to develop your niche. In addition to selling coffee products, the SB would need to market complementary artisan products. Another SB conveyed that he was in the process of creating a line of grab-and-go products marketed at the busy professionals who just want to eat on the go. Another point of marketing differentiation one SB shared was offering open pour coffee, which looked old fashioned but had become popular with regular customers. SB5 indicated that he tries to affiliate and collaborate as a coffee shop owner with mid-to-upscale restaurants and create private label blends to be exclusively sold to those restaurants and bakery shops (personal communication, February 27, 2019).

Other Relevant Finding: Key challenges

Alford and Page (2015) posited that small business owners lack knowledge of business administration including marketing strategies and technology to survive in small business. SBs have operational challenges during the initial stage of the business (Lotfizadeh & Shamsi, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2015). In response to question number two, all the SBs conveyed that the most significant challenge was trying to learn the ropes of

business operation while implementing the coffee shop owner's marketing strategy. One of the SBs conveyed the following:

One of the challenges that we faced in implementing our marketing strategy was that there was not any downtown culture or coffee culture at all. Downtown was a forgotten part of town. So, our challenge was getting people to come down here when there was not much to come downtown to do.

Another SB conveyed that the biggest challenge in implementing their marketing strategy was having a basic understanding on how to use the social media platforms and combining social media marketing with the traditional word-of-mouth marketing that he was accustomed to. SB5 indicated that the key challenge in implementing the marketing strategy for the coffee shop was creating an awareness of the coffee shop after there was a change in ownership (personal communication, February 27, 2019).

Table 11 is a depiction of how I supported the 8Ps of marketing mix as the conceptual framework for this research.

Table 11

Mapping Interview Questions to the Conceptual Framework

Interview Question Number	SB Question	Conceptual Framework Component	Rationale/Coded theme
1.	What marketing strategies have you used	Processes, people, promotion	Business operations – active engagement in the running

	to sustain business operations during the first 5 years of operation?		of all aspects the business, be all in, be true to self, perseverance, take care of your staff,
2.	What were the key challenges you had in implementing your marketing strategies during the first 5 years of operation?	Processes, physical evidence, promotion	Learning the ropes of the business, using a hybrid of word-of-mouth and social media to implement marketing strategies
3.	How did you address the critical challenges to your marketing strategies during the first 5 years of operations?	People	Hire people who are smarter than you, network with other coffee shop owners, relational first, then transactional, enhanced personal communication skills
4.	What marketing strategies helped you to increase your customer base during the first 5 years of operation?	Promotion	The coffee donation, inviting interior, accepting of all diverse patrons, word-of-mouth, community outreach

5.	How did you establish your pricing strategy compared to the pricing of your competitors during the first 5 years of operation?	Price	Food and coffee bean prices, benchmark with other coffee shop owners, fair but sustainable pricing
6.	How did the physical location of your business contribute to increasing your customer base during the first 5 years of operation?	Place	Location is crucial, community involvement and engagement, coffee shop ambiance is eclectic
7.	What media were most effective at creating more foot traffic into your coffee shop during the first 5 years of operation?	Promotion	Initially, word-of-mouth, transitioned to social media (Facebook and Instagram), online listing services (Yelp) and other form of electronic media (Radio)
8.	What were the main points of differentiation that you emphasized in your promotional	Personalization, product, promotion, people	Premium proud, a brand associated with the community., quality, consistency, and value,

	messages during the first 5 years of operation?		employees make the difference
9.	How did you merchandise your products to be more appealing to customers during the first 5 years of operation?	Promotion, personalization, pricing	Decide who your target market is and do not devalue your brand. Offer multiple channels of trade and customization – retail, online, wholesale
10.	What examples of superior service offered by your coffee shop during the first 5 years of operation do you recall?	Personalization (Quality)	Make everyone feel welcome. Have exceptional and well-trained frontline employees. Own your mistakes.
11.	What additional information can you provide regarding marketing strategies you used to sustain business operations during the first 5 years?	Personalization (Productivity), people, promotion	Take care of customers, have a niche and artisan products, leading by example, uncorporate, get to know people, build an online presence

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings of this study may assist coffee shop owners in Arkansas in determining the best marketing strategies. The findings of the study could contribute significantly to professional business practice by (a) providing a marketing guide for operating a coffee shop and (b) evaluating current and future marketing strategies to enhance their competitive advantage. In the study, the SBs indicated that their involvement and engagement in the community and the adoption of new media were crucial aspects of the sustenance of their coffee shops and an increase in the customer base in a competitive coffee shop environment.

The SBs identified providing premium coffee and artisan products brought in regular and loyal customers into the shop. The findings of this study apply to coffee shops in several ways including community engagement, social media adoption, location, and front-line business operations. Social media is a crucial factor in minimizing marketing challenges (Ogbuji & Papazafeiropoulou, 2016). As more people use third places such as coffee shops as a public gathering place outside of home and work (Van der Merwe & Maree, 2016), the owners' active community engagement contributes to the strength of a community (Yuen & Johnson, 2016).

By conducting this research study, I add to the existing body of knowledge regarding marketing strategies of coffee shops. Emergent themes of the study included community involvement and online social media engagement. The results of this study contribute to business practice by providing information to individuals who are considering opening a service business and specifically to coffee shop owners who want

to improve the marketing strategies of coffee shops. Mukherjee and Shivani (2016) opined that the consideration of the traditional marketing mix elements of product, price, place, and promotion as well as the newer elements of participants, physical evidence, and the process might assist a business owner in achieving the marketing objectives in services. The 8Ps of marketing mix for coffee shop owners is a visual representation of the components of marketing mix that is designed to enhance a coffee shop owners' marketing mix . The model includes 8 themes that emerged from my study (Figure1).

According to Goldsmith (1999), the 8Ps of marketing mix were designed to enhance the survivability of a service-oriented business. In my study, I found that the owners of coffee shops executed marketing strategies that were determined by the community in which they were located. Figure 1 shows the themes which emerged from my study.

Figure 1

8Ps of Marketing Mix for Local Coffee Shops
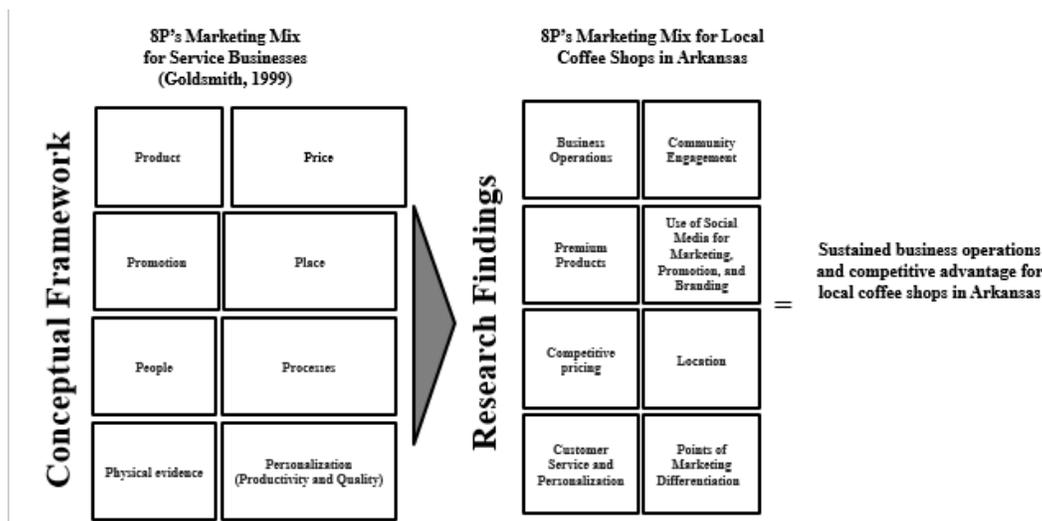
Implications for Social Change

The poor execution of marketing strategies and technology is one of the factors contributing to small business failures (Alford & Page, 2015; Lotfizadeh & Shamsi, 2015). By implementing more effective marketing strategies, coffee shop owners could sustain the business operation. Stephan, Patterson, Kelly, and Mair (2016) posited that social change requires an intentional commitment to societal transformation. Positive social change requires a commitment to contribute to society in a substantial and positive manner.

Positive social change may result in a reduction in the number of coffee shop failures, thus improving employees' worth and dignity, and reducing the unemployment rates, which can result in building stronger communities through gainful employment. The findings of this study identified multiple ways for owners of coffee shops to contribute to social change in their community by (a) sustaining the operation of coffee shops in local communities, (b) contributing to new job creation, and (c) contributing to regional economic growth. By adopting the recommendations for further action, owners of coffee shops may avoid the downside of coffee shop failure by using the recommendations as a blueprint for maximizing marketing strategies, increasing their customer base, and enhancing competitive advantage against competitors.

Recommendations for Action

Having marketing strategies is vital to the sustenance of coffee shops. Nguyen et al. (2015) opined that adopting effective marketing strategies is pertinent to the sustenance of coffee shops. The findings of this study are not only significant for existing

coffee shop owners but also valuable for potential coffee shop owners. Using the strategies identified in this study may (a) reduce the challenges coffee shop owners face in the business operations; (b) enhance owners' ability to maximize their current marketing strategies, and (c) expand owners' capacity to integrate new marketing strategies to create points of differentiation which may result in a competitive advantage.

Some coffee shop owners lack marketing strategies for sustaining business operations beyond the first 5 years. The study findings indicate that coffee shop owners can use a combination of marketing strategies to sustain their businesses. I recommend coffee shop owners should engage in their communities, adopt social media, offer premium and artisan products, and provide exceptional customer service for sustaining their business. Lude and Prügl (2018) also recommended that the managers of family firms should include statements about their family background in their branding strategy for differentiation purposes. The family background could be depicted in the form of a tagline on the brand logo. For example, the coffee shop owner could include the tagline: *a family tradition since 1972*. I will provide the results of this study to interested stakeholders through community presentations, publications in business and academic journals, and consulting opportunities geared to coffee shop owners. The findings of this research should not be limited to coffee shop owners, but they should also be disseminated to other channels such as academic journals, prominent scholars of the marketing mix theories, the Small Business Administration, and local chambers of commerce.

Recommendations for Further Research

I conducted a qualitative multiple case study to explore what strategies some coffee shop owners use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. I explored and uncovered common themes that emerged from the participant face-to-face interviews and social media networks. I selected the qualitative research method so I could better explore and understand the thought processes of my study subjects. The limitations affecting this multiple case study are the choice of an exploratory multiple case study of five small business owners of coffee shops from Arkansas may not yield enough data to answer the research question and may not be representative of the population of coffee shop owners in the United States or other countries.

The first recommendation for the future study is how to overcome the challenge of coffee shop owner face in continuing to engage and remain relevant in the community as changes occur in the community. Yuen and Johnson (2016) opined that third places (coffee shops) were gathering places that contributed to the strength of a community. Coffee shop owners could help foster a sense of community by incorporating local concepts in the interior design, décor, and having exceptional front-line service.

The second recommendation for further study is how to overcome the challenges of social media adoption. Ogbuji and Papazafeiropoulou (2016) posited that in the dynamic marketplace, the small business owner might face marketing challenges without a proactive social media adoption. The SBs I interviewed conveyed that they needed to leverage the possibilities of social media in promoting their coffee shops. Through social media and social location marketing, customers can share their experiences and check in

with others (Situmorang et al., 2018). Instagram is based on visual content such as posting of pictures, and Facebook has the capability for the customer to check into the coffee shop Check-ins show up in the feeds of that customer's Facebook friends, creating opportunities for people to see the business on Facebook. Furthermore, Chua, Deans, and Parker (2015) posited that blogs are a tool that can be used by business owners for branding, managing reputation, and promoting their online presence. Coffee shop owners can use blogging to drive engagement on social media.

The third recommendation for further study is how to overcome the challenge of improving front-line engagement with customers and consistently providing exceptional customer service. Increasing levels of customer service result in customer satisfaction and may produce more profits (Goldsmith, 1999). Stock et al. (2016) suggested that frontline employees may help the customer by making product recommendations, recognizing customers' preferences. Coffee shop owners must concentrate on efforts to improve consistency and service quality.

Coffee shop owners interviewed care about quality, consistency, and value. Customers usually appreciate the quality of coffee based on their taste and presentation (Zhang et al., 2019). Prayag et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of implementing service quality and service delivery components impacting customer service. A study conducted outside of Arkansas may determine whether the findings of this study are peculiar to Arkansas only or if the findings are transferable to a broader geographical area. Furthermore, researchers should employ a different qualitative research design, such as phenomenology or ethnography or a quantitative research design such as experimental

to explore further marketing strategies for the continued sustenance of coffee shop operations.

Reflections

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the marketing strategies that coffee shop owners in Arkansas use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. In conducting this study on coffee shops, I understood that in the competitive coffee shop environment, the coffee shop owners could use diverse marketing strategies to sustain and expand business operations. From the study findings, I developed an in-depth understanding of the research problem and observed that coffee shop owners use a mix of marketing strategies to sustain their businesses. My reflection of the coffee shop owners includes a deeper appreciation for their resilience and commitment to the business.

My reflection on the DBA journey includes the knowledge of the research process, finding ways to overcome possible personal bias in research, and preparing to become a scholar-practitioner. Through the doctoral research study process, I have improved my understanding of the components of conducting academic research while considering the impact of my research on social change. Because of this study, I look forward to assisting small business owners in the development of marketing strategies.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what strategies coffee shop owners in Arkansas state use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years

Using open-ended questions, I conducted semistructured interviews with 5 coffee shop owners to collect data to answer the research question. Data were derived from an in-depth analysis of 11 semistructured interview questions answered by 5 successful coffee shop owners, social media platforms, other publicly available data, and member checking. The data reached saturation when the coffee shop owners did not provide any new information, and no new themes emerged (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used NVivo12™, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software to organize and analyze data. Eight themes emerged from the thematic analysis of data to explore the marketing strategies coffee shop owners in Arkansas use to sustain business operations beyond the first 5 years. The themes were (a) business operations (b) community engagement, (c) premium products, (d) use of social media for marketing, promotion, and branding, (e) competitive pricing, (f) location, (g) customer service and personalization, and (h) points of marketing differentiation.

The marketing strategies identified in the findings provided solutions that owners of coffee shop owners and their stakeholders can use to grow and sustain their business. One significant finding was the lack of threat to coffee shop business by national brands. Coffee shop owners can successfully sustain business operations despite the threat of new entrants. The findings showed marketing strategies that the coffee shop owners used to sustain their operation to provide preferred customer service, increase sales, and differentiate the coffee shop from competitors. Using the 8Ps of marketing mix as a lens for this study, which involved coffee shop owners, this study may fill a gap in the literature. The study findings included the importance of community involvement and

engagement, location, the adoption of social media, and benefits of using the appropriate

mix of marketing strategies to sustain coffee shop operations beyond the first 5 years.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Introduction to the Interview

My name is Abi Adeleke, a student at Walden University pursuing a doctoral

degree in Business Administration specializing in Marketing. Thank you for accepting to

participate in this study. I am conducting a qualitative multiple case study to explore

marketing strategies of successful coffee shop owners in Northwest Arkansas. The length

of this interview should be about 30-45 minutes. The interview format is open-ended

questions. Please feel free to seek clarity on questions and add more detailed explanations

and personal views as you see appropriate.

Things to remember

- Switch the mobile phone to silent mode

- Collect the signed consent form

- Get approval to record the interview

- Assure participant all responses will be confidential

- Start interview and audio recording simultaneously and take notes

- Observe the participant for non-verbal body language and gestures

- Collect detailed responses to the interview questions

- Not to interrupt the participants and to carefully listen to what they are saying
  (active listening)

- Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth information.

After the Interview

I will paraphrase the participant's responses to each question in my own words. After 5 days, I will then reach out to the participant to ensure I accurately interpreted the participant's intended message for each question. If the participant acknowledges the accuracy of my paraphrased responses, then I will document the responses in my report. Additionally, if the participant says my paraphrased responses are not accurate, I will correct my paraphrased responses and record the previous interpretation of the responses and the newly corrected paraphrased responses in my report. I would also thank the participant(s) for taking their time to participate in the study and then give them contact numbers in case they would have followed up questions and concerns.