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# Strategies for Sustainability of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Ghana

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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John Kwaku Amaglo

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2019

Abstract

Strategies for Sustainability of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Ghana

by

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MS, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2015

BS, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 1990

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

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## Abstract

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 92% of all Ghana firms, providing 60% of citizens' employment and contributing about 70% of Ghana's income from gross domestic products. Within the first 5 years of operation, 40% of new businesses fail. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies used by Ghanaian SME manufacturing leaders in the fruit industry to sustain business for longer than 5 years of operation. The conceptual framework for this study was open systems theory and complexity theory. The population for this study was 5 Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry who maintained their businesses longer than 5 years of operation. The data sources were semistructured face-to-face interviews, interview notes, and the organizations' manuals for standard operations. Data collected were transcribed, member checked, analytically coded, and analyzed using Yin's 5-stage method of qualitative data analysis. Four themes emerged: training and capacity building, the need for good equipment and good packaging, the availability of working capital, and the need for target marketing. The implications of this study for positive social change include lowering high unemployment, alleviating poverty, supporting community development, and enhancing economic growth in the country.

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## Dedication

The dedication of this study is to God Almighty. He saw me through this Doctoral Study by teaching me to persevere and endure the challenges on this academic journey. To my wife Gifty, my children Worlawoe and Selasi, and my twin brother Joseph for their love, encouragement, sacrifice, and patience throughout this doctoral study, I am grateful. I dedicate this study to the memories of my mother Philomina Apetsiemu. She was always encouraging me and my siblings to take higher education seriously to the extent of selling her ornaments at one time to pay my tuition fees. I know she is happy in heaven knowing that her efforts were not in vain. Thank you Venaa for giving me education.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) contribute significantly to the economic growth of Ghana (Ntiamoah, Li, & Kwamega, 2016). SMEs have approximately 90% of the market share and provide about 85% of employment in the manufacturing industry (Coleman & Okyere, 2016). The SMEs contribute to approximately 70% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Ghana, and therefore, have a significant impact on income and the economic growth of the country (Peprah, Mensah, & Akosah, 2016). Yeboah (2015) posited challenges are confronting SMEs in Ghana that inhibit survival and growth. Yeboah mentioned some of the challenges as lack of managerial skills, access to credit, access to new technology, lack of consistent government policies, lack of adequate infrastructure facilities, and incompetence of business leaders. The challenges identified might be the causes of the failures of SMEs in Ghana. Improvement can only come when business leaders adopt new innovative and technological systems. SMEs continued to be the backbone of the economy of many countries all over the world (Coleman & Okyere, 2016). As such, the need for research to explore what strategies manufacturing business leaders in Accra, Ghana use to succeed in their businesses beyond 5 years of operation.

### **Background of the Problem**

SMEs generate 50% of the national output and provide 60% of employment to Ghanaians (Ntiamoah et al., 2016). According to available data from the registrar general department, 92% of businesses registered in Ghana are SMEs (Asare, 2014). SMEs also assist in strengthening industrial integration by producing intermediate products for large-scale companies to use as raw materials and selling the final products of large-scale

manufacturing companies (Danso-Abbeam, Ansah, & Ehiakpor, 2014). In developed and developing countries, SMEs contribute to substantial economic growth (Asare, 2014). However, this is only true for as long as the enterprise remains in business. Despite the considerable amount of business launches by SMEs in Accra, Ghana, 60% do not survive beyond 5 years (Peprah et al., 2016), and this high rate of failure of SMEs had a severe negative impact on employment rates in Ghana (Yeboah, 2015). SMEs in Ghana encounter other obstacles such as low research capacity and technology development, globalization, and a lack of managerial knowledge and skills (Asare, 2014). Identifying and exploring the insights of Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders who have successfully sustained their business beyond 5 years may help in preparing a guide for future manufacturing business leaders to remain profitable.

### **Problem Statement**

In Ghana, SMEs contribute significantly to the national gross domestic product (GDP) as well as employment in the manufacturing sector, which leads to employment opportunities, the manufacturing of local products and services that can be exported, and assisting in national socio-economic development (Asare, 2014). As such, SMEs are essential to the development and growth of the national economy (Asare, 2014). However, SMEs in Ghana fail at alarming rates (Yeboah, 2015). Small and medium enterprises in Ghana's survival rate are only 60% beyond 5 years of operation (Peprah et al., 2016). The general business problem is manufacturing business leaders who do not identify strategies to remain operable within business environment experience business failures. The specific business problem is some Ghanaian SME manufacturing business

leaders in the fruit industry lack strategies to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that some Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain businesses beyond 5 years of operation. The population comprised five Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry from five facilities in the fruit processing industries in Accra, Ghana, who have sustained their business beyond 5 years of operation. The implications for positive social change might include the potential for reduction in the unemployment rate, poverty alleviation, the development of the local communities, and the growth of the Ghanaian economy.

### **Nature of the Study**

The nature of the study was qualitative research to explore the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation. Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because using the qualitative research method will help researchers to explore the research problem to gain a deeper understanding of how SMEs sustained business beyond 5 years. Researchers use the qualitative research method to explore life experiences, behaviors, and different perspectives to determine the complexities of the phenomenon under study (Rahman, 2016). Qualitative researchers explore the meanings, interpretations, and the individual's experiences (Kelly, 2016). Testing of theories, investigation of cause and effects, and making deductive conclusions requires the use of a quantitative research

method (Rahman, 2016). A mixed method research design is used when the objective of research requires the implementation of both qualitative and quantitative research methods for data collection and analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015). Therefore, a mixed method was not appropriate as the quantitative component is not suited to explore the experiences and strategies manufacturing business leaders use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation. A qualitative methodology was most appropriate for this study because manufacturing business leaders may share their personal experiences of works on sustaining business beyond 5 years of operation, which may benefit other SME business leaders.

The research design of this study was a multiple case study. The case study was appropriate for researchers seeking to explore life phenomenon in situations in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2017). Berglund (2015) noted that phenomenological design is useful for uncovering and comprehending the meaning of peoples' lived experiences hence, I did not select phenomenological design because the purpose for my research was not to identify issues and develop common themes on individuals' world-views or lived experiences. An ethnographic study is an inquiry of social or cultural groups in natural settings that a researcher completes by observing to understand how life and the cultural phenomena under investigation evolve over a prolonged period (Brown, 2014). The narrative design was inappropriate for this proposed study as these designs are not adequate for addressing applied business research problems. The focus of the study made multiple case study an appropriate framework for conducting applied business research and for exploring the

strategies that five Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to succeed in business.

### **Research Question**

The research question that guided this study was: What strategies do some Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What strategies have you used to sustain your Ghanaian SME manufacturing business beyond 5 years of operation?
2. What strategy did you find worked best for you to sustain your Ghanaian SME manufacturing business beyond 5 years of operation?
3. What strategies have you discarded (if any)?
4. How did you assess the effectiveness of your strategies for competitive advantage?
5. What barriers, if any did you encounter in implementing your strategies for sustainability?
6. How did you address the barriers you encountered in implementing your strategies for sustainability?
7. What else would you like to share about your strategies as a successful Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leader?



## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study was open systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1956) Ludwig von Bertalanffy developed the systems theory in 1956 (Montgomery & Oladapo, 2014). Von Bertalanffy (1956) asserted that all parts of an entity contribute to a functioning system and that the external environment influences a system or an organization. Logan (2015) posited the system theory that emerged from Von Bertalanffy's (1956) work concluded the interactions between system components are often more than just the mere sum of the collection of individual components. Open systems theory served as an analytical lens for gathering insight into how systems function.

Open systems theory provides a potential lens for exploring the unpredictable challenges a manufacturing business owner endures in remaining proactive, innovative, and open to risk-taking (Reijonen, Hirvonen, Nagy, Laukkanen, & Gabrielsson, 2015) to sustain the business beyond 5 years of operation. SMEs must be sustainable in an ever-changing and unpredictable external environment. The open systems theory could help to understand the study's findings because manufacturing business owners must understand how the environment interacts with the multiple processes and skill needed to create a sustainable and profitable business.

## Operational Definitions

I used the following operational definitions for this study:

*Entrepreneur*: An entrepreneur is a person who is engaged in connecting risk without surety of profit (Amesi & Okwelle, 2017).

*Innovativeness*: Innovativeness is the tendency of a firm to develop, introduce and implement products or services successfully (Arpaci, 2017).

*Risk-taking*: Risk-taking is making decisions and taking action in the context of uncertainty as well as making substantial resource commitments without understanding what the consequences of their decisions and behaviors will be (Olaniran, Namusonge, & Muturi, 2016).

*Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)*: SMEs are businesses employing between 20 and 50 full-time workers (Obeng & Blundel, 2015).

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

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are facts not verified but relevant to the study that can prejudice the researchers' interpretation of data (Wortham, 2015). This study included assumptions. The first assumption was the choice of qualitative methodology as the appropriate method for exploring the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry used to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation. The second assumption was the use of a case study as the appropriate design of the study. The third assumption was that five Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry would accept the opportunity to be part of the research and are knowledgeable enough of the factors to contribute to data saturation. The fourth assumption was the participants would respond to the interview questions honestly and candidly without any bias. Some of the participants may be uncomfortable in disclosing relevant information

about the failure of their business or their inability to remember the exact causes of the failure.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are a potential weakness of the study that are beyond the control of the researcher and can affect the trustworthiness of the findings (Morgado, Meireles, Neves, Amaral, & Ferreira, 2018). In research, limitations are inevitable because of unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. A geographically limited sample is also a limitation for this qualitative multiple case study. Using interviews to collect data in a qualitative study may introduce researchers' and participants' biases. The unwillingness of participants to disclose information about the success or failure of their business is a limitation. The participants may forget the details about their experiences resulting in the success or failure of the firm. In the collection of data and the reporting of findings of the research work, the researcher may not avoid some form of bias entirely. The avoidance of bias in research may be the honest disclosure of information. Limiting the bias may involve the creation of a conducive environment for the interview and the encouragement of the participant to respond to the interview questions honestly.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are boundaries imposed by a researcher so that it will not lead the focus away from the scope of the study (Lewis, 2015). The delimitation of the study was the geographical location, which included only Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry in Accra, Ghana. The study included only Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry who have been in operation for 5 or

more years. The study participants were Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry but not in the mineral, wood, fish or meat processing industries of the economy.

### **Significance of the Study**

In Ghana, SMEs contribute significantly to the economy through the creation of jobs. Manufacturing jobs make up 85% of Ghana's economy (Asomaning & Abdulai, 2015). Indeed, SMEs generate about 70% of Ghana's GDP demonstrating that SME's contributions to development, economic growth, employment, and income are significant (Asare & Fei, 2015). This study was of potential value to the practice of business because I explored the strategies that some Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to achieve sustainability beyond 5 years of operation. The potential contributions to professional or practitioner application were to understand strategies for achieving profitability and innovation in the Ghanaian SMEs manufacturing business.

New entrepreneurs create new businesses every year; however, not all survive beyond 5 years (Marom & Lussier, 2014). The failure of Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to sustain their businesses may result in economic instability of the country for which the consequences are poverty, high unemployment rate, and family instability in the communities (Marom & Lussier, 2014). Sharing the findings of the study amongst the Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry might improve the success rate of businesses. Therefore, the social change contribution by the successful Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit

industry might be the reduction in the unemployment rate, poverty alleviation, the development of the local communities, and the growth of the Ghanaian economy.

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

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain businesses beyond 5 years of operation. Ntiamoah et al., (2016) asserted that SMEs generate approximately 50% of the national output and provide 60% of employment to Ghanaians. The central research question guiding the study was: What strategies do Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain small businesses beyond 5 years of operation?

To obtain the needed information for the literature review, I searched the business and management databases within the Walden University Online Library. The database I primarily used to gather peer-reviewed full-text articles for my study was the ABI/INFORM Complete database. The other databases for this research included Emerald Management Journals, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, ScienceDirect, and ProQuest. The key search words I used in these databases included combinations of *open systems theory, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), entrepreneurship, small business success, small business failure, entrepreneurship contribution to economic development, strategic management, innovation of SMEs, organizational performance, and global strategy.*

The peer-reviewed articles used for the professional and academic literature review constitute 113 references. I used 99 peer-reviewed articles published between

2014-2018 which constitute 88% of the sources used. The references that were more than 5 years old constitute 12% of the sources used. The first chapter explained the conceptual framework and why it was appropriate. The rest of the chapters were in sections regarding Small and Medium Enterprises, SME's failure and success, entrepreneurship and economic growth, the global strategy and organizational performance of SMEs, and strategies for managing innovations in SMEs.

### **Conceptual Framework**

**Open systems theory.** The conceptual framework for the study was open systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1956). In the 1930s, Von Bertalanffy (1956) proposed systems theory based on the principle of interaction of the components of systems where the whole is more than the sum of the parts. Systems theory is still used and clarified by scholars today. Merhi (2015) asserted a system is an integration of two or more components held together through some common and cohesive bond where the behavior of each element affects the behavior of the system. The equilibrium of the larger system depends on the interdependencies and interrelationships of subsystems (Chemiat & Kiptum, 2017). Systems theory first started in the disciplines of biology, economics, and engineering science (Yoon & Kuchinke, 2005) before experiencing a variety of applicability in other disciplines (Von Bertalanffy, 1956). The use of systems theory in business applications might help in exploring experiences of business leaders to understand their strategies for business sustainability.

A significant aspect of systems theory is the distinction between open and closed systems. In open systems, the components of the system allow interaction between the

internal elements of the system and the external elements of the environment in which it resides (Merhi, 2015; Sayin, 2016). Closed systems consider the external environment and the organization's interactions with the external environment to be inconsequential and thus prohibit elements of the system from interacting with the environment (Chemiat & Kiptum, 2017). However, an open systems approach views the interaction of the organization with the external environment as vital for organizational survival and success (Crespo, Grimaldi, Maione, & Vesci, 2017). Open systems theory might help to explore strategies manufacturing business leaders used to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation.

I used the open systems approach for my conceptual framework because manufacturing business leaders who understand the interrelationships between sustainability challenges and the organizations have a chance of staying in business. Rajala, Westerlund, and Lampikoski (2016) observed industrial manufacturing businesses associate with multifaceted global challenges involving economic, social, and environmental concerns and noted the understanding of the interrelationships between sustainability challenges and organizations could assist in the implementation of change by manufacturing businesses. Schaltegger and Burritt (2018) noted sustainability management of a business involves attention to the external environment to design and improve economic, social, and environmental activities that lead to sustainable development. Systems theory allows the understanding of complex interdependent relationship of business processes for sustainability (Sun, Wu, & Yang, 2018). SMEs must remain sustainable while being influenced by external issues such as a lack of

finance, international competition, and government regulations (Ameyaw & Modzi, 2016). Consequently, the use of open systems theory served as my framework to understand the complexities involved in the Ghanaian SME manufacturing industry, and business leaders might help reveal how to interconnect the systems to achieve profitability.

Researchers rely on both systems theory and systems thinking to identify business operational problems in their research. Von Kutzschenbach, Schmid, and Schoenenberger (2018) argued business leaders and organizations are reluctant in using system thinking for solving problems because the decision-makers have conflicting and different performance indicators with separate functions, departments, and teams. The fragmentation of the organization into silos contributes to adversarial effects on the internal and external environment of the organization (von Kutzschenbach et al., 2018). In contrast, Williams, Kennedy, Philipp, and Whiteman (2017) noted systems thinking presents the lens to obtain an understanding of the complex social, economic, and environmental activities of business organizations for sustainability management. Hence, system thinking provides an antidote to such silos because it presents a more holistic lens to examine the role of business organizations with complex social, economic, and environmental issues.

**Complexity theory.** In modern competitive business, it is continuously becoming significant for SMEs to gain competitive advantage through having the capacity of managing and surviving in any change process. SMEs are one group of businesses mainly affected as a result of the complexity in the internal and external



environmental factors such as government agencies, customers, suppliers, sociopolitics, and technology ( Okręglicka, Gorzeń-Mitka, & Ogrecan, 2015). Throughout the mid-21st century, there was a continuous attempt to apply the various theories of organizational change with the aim of analyzing the human organizations (Dike, Odiwe, & Ehujor, 2015). With an ever-improving business environment because of technological advancement, systems theory is not sufficient on its own to addressing multiple complex phenomena; hence complexity theory provides a complementary lens for business leaders to gain an understanding of the systems in business.

### **Supporting Theory of Conceptual Framework**

Complexity theory provides an understanding of how social, economic, and environmental systems grow, adapt, and evolve. Proches and Bodhanya, (2015) observed that complexity theory explains how the relationship between the components of a system results in collective behavior to demonstrate how a system interacts with its environment. Lewin (1999), a key theorist in complexity theory, posited that a collection of events will self-organize into systems. For Lewin, all systems develop patterns in a reiteration of a few simple rules. However, small differences at the beginning of the process of this patterning could eventually lead to significant changes in the system's performance. Also, Lewin theorized that several interactions within a system could produce unexpected patterns and behaviors because stimulating one section of the system could have an unexpected influence on other parts of the system. Because of the potential of unexpected influences, systems are interconnected and interdependent, and this complex behavior can be orderly but also surprising at times. Despite a system's uncontrollability,

however, the system is not entirely chaotic. Using Lewin's formulation of complexity theory, SMEs must attempt sustainability in an ever-changing and unpredictable environment, which was why complexity theory would assist in analyzing the data of the study.

Complexity theory is applicable in many areas, including social sciences. Research in complexity theory originated in the physical and biological sciences, but in the last two decades, interest has emerged from the various disciplines of the social sciences (Chettiparamb, 2014). Proches and Bodhanya (2015) observed business systems are complex and non-linear; hence, they are influenced by their environment. The critical element of complexity theory is the recognition that change within systems is unpredictable, unstable, and erratic (Condorelli, 2016). Consequently, business leaders cannot predict behaviors in complex systems because of the non-linear dynamics existing in the system. Because of this complexity, manufacturing business leaders may need to adopt innovative management practices to maintain sustainability.

Manufacturing business leaders must adapt to complex systems and have integrated approaches to complex decision-making (Gorzeń-Mitka & Okręglicka, 2014). For example, using complexity theory, Proches and Bodhanya (2015) conducted a multiple case study to analyze the collaboration and interactions among upstream supply chain stakeholders involving sugarcane farmers, haulers, and millers. The level of interdependency between stakeholders is high requiring each stakeholder group's contribution to final product success (Proches & Bodhanya, 2015). Thus, complexity theory might help in understanding stakeholder relationships, as well as attitudes,

perceptions, actions, and willingness that might impact the success of projects. Proches and Bodhanya found that vertical collaboration is the key driver that influences sustainability performance for business leaders.

Systems and complexity theories were two valuable perspectives that could equip manufacturing business leaders with the requisite knowledge and understanding of how to respond and adapt to the uncertainties and demands of the external environment. The open systems theory and complexity theory could help to understand the study's findings because manufacturing business owners must understand how the environment interacts with the multiple processes and skills needed to create a sustainable and profitable business. Applying open systems theory in conjunction with complexity theory in this research would allow the researcher to understand and categorize the answers of the participants and to understand which processes, internally and externally, positively influenced the sustainability of SMEs beyond 5 years.

### **Schumpeterian and Kirznerian Theory**

The Schumpeterian theory of entrepreneurship is one of the innovative theories and most famous that is applied in many parts of the world (Wadhvani & Jones, 2014). According to the theory, creativity or innovation is a primary consideration for any entrepreneur regardless of their specialization speed (Rahdari, Sepasi & Moradi, 2016). According to this theory, acquisition of knowledge can only be of great help for an entrepreneur's success (Rahdari et al., 2016). For one to develop, the theory posits that one must be reformed on different equipment of productions, outputs, marketing as well as industrial organizations. According to Schumpeter, innovation together with

knowledge remains to be the essential facilitators of the successful entrepreneurship (Rahdari et al., 2016). Creativity continues to be a necessary aspect for any entrepreneur that seeks to get so many profits in a very competitive market.

The theory maintains that the concept of innovation and its corollary development are divided into five primary functions which include; introduction of a new product, coming up with new production method, the opening of the new market, getting a source of raw material supply and execution of new organization of industry. The theory represents different concepts of entrepreneurship that have three critical elements including risk-taking, coordination, and superintendence (Rahdari et al., 2016).

The Kirznerian theory of entrepreneurship applies the techniques of Austrian Economics in expounding the role of the man who perceives and pursues economic chances when faced with worries (Hanlon, 2014). The theory states that the entrepreneur is after profit and thus finds it important to correct the mistakes that are inherent in the price structures and make appropriate changes to the sheer ignorance as well as error shown by certain economic actors (de Jong & Marsili, 2015). The theory notes that an entrepreneur gets the profits from the services that he performs in detection and elimination of arbitrage opportunities hence allowing the supply and demand for certain goods (de Jong & Marsili, 2015). One of the crucial aspects and fundamental quality for an entrepreneur as Kirzner describes is the ability to be alert all times.

By being alert, an entrepreneur is in a position of seizing new economic opportunities that no prior economic actor had noticed (McCaffrey, 2014). The theory states that the entrepreneur can tell of a new product that has not been manufactured yet

and within the right resources in place, may proceed and manufacture the product. Additionally, alertness may also imply that the entrepreneur can identify arbitrage chances that exist in any market. The entrepreneur can recognize an opportunity to sell a similar factor of production for a higher price than was first foreseen (Acs, Audretsch, Lehmann, & Licht, 2016). Through alertness, the entrepreneur can notice the elements that are underpriced and then proceeds to act on the information collected to earn a profit (McCaffrey, 2014). According to the theory, one can easily explore the entrepreneurial function owing to the sheer ignorance of some of the economic actors. Pure ignorance does not just consider lack of knowing a given piece of information but also not in a position to tell about the persons who do not see the information. When one exudes sheer ignorance, they end up being uncertain.

An entrepreneur can continually correct the sheer ignorance and sheer error that may arise. Through alertness, the entrepreneur can foretell of economic developments which other actors have not considered and recognizes the lack of information shown by different actors (McCaffrey, 2014). While correcting the mistake, an entrepreneur ends up earning a profit for himself if he or she is alert and offers appropriate remedies. According to Kirzner, entrepreneurship is not any factor of production, but it is a costless one. Entrepreneurship according to the theory does not entail the resource spending essential to get the factors of production. The theory asserts that an entrepreneur does not go out seeking to be one, but an action that happens over time. Samo and Norashidah (2016), asserted that it is not possible to teach one entrepreneurial alertness or awareness in the same way that one can be lectured on the different management techniques or

factual knowledge or skill in a line of work. Being aware of the market conditions and having proper insights on the happenings of such a market and effectively taking appropriate actions by one's alertness defines an entrepreneur (McCaffrey, 2014). Kirzner's theory underscores the significance of entrepreneurship to any prosperous market economy. According to Kirzner, it is not possible to teach entrepreneurship, and at the same time, one cannot plan or strategically manage it at a central point.

Different types of entrepreneurs affect the economy of a country in different ways. Interestingly, Ferreira et al. (2017) had alternative findings regarding entrepreneurship and economic growth. According to Ferreira et al., the literature recognized Schumpeterian entrepreneurship, which involves the innovation of existing resources and Kirznerian entrepreneurship which pertains to being alert of profit opportunities that satisfy consumer desires as mechanisms that could influence economic growth. The researchers explored the influence of these entrepreneurial types on economic growth in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) economic ecosystems, which is the factor-driven, efficiency-driven, and innovation-driven economy (Ferreira et al., 2017). After collecting panel data from 43 countries between 2009 and 2013 using many databases, Ferreira et al. estimated the econometric models and calculated the influence of these two entrepreneurial types on economic growth in the different GEM economic ecosystems. The researchers revealed that, according to the overall model of GEM economies, neither of the entrepreneurial types had a statistically significant influence on GDP growth or the Global Competitiveness Index (Ferreira et al., 2017). However, the variable of Total Early-Stage Entrepreneurial Activity generated a positive

influence on the Global Competitiveness Index (Ferreira et al., 2017). The results of the study provided insights into entrepreneurship and its influence on the GEM economic ecosystems (Ferreira et al., 2017). Ferreira et al. discovered alternative results that revealed the need for further research.

### **Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

SMEs are firms privately owned and operated by a small number of employees as well as have relatively low sales volumes. In the United States, researchers of the Small Business Administration (SBA) defined a firm with less than 500 employees as a small business (SBA, 2014). Peprah et al., (2016) asserted there is no universally acceptable legal definition for SMEs and that descriptions always depend on the country. In Ghana, the widely utilized definition of SMEs entails the number of staff of the enterprise (Erastus, Stephen, & Abdullai, 2014). The definition of small-scale enterprises in Ghana suggested the use of an employment cut-off point of 30 employees and categorized small-scale enterprises into three categories namely micro business, small business, and medium business (Peprah et al., 2016). The definition of SMEs varies among researchers as some define SMEs according to their legal status and method of production, whereas others attempt to use the capital assets, labor, and turnover level (Oppong, Owiredo, & Churchill, 2014).

The definition of SMEs may vary from country to country. Siddik (2017) posited that the definition of SMEs in Bangladesh relies on fixed assets but not landed property and an employed workforce. According to Augustine and Asiedu (2017), a single factor is not adequate to define SMEs. In Pakistan, the definition of SMEs is inconclusive

because what constitutes the differentiation in production, service, and manufacturing sectors are not distinct (Zafar & Mustafa, 2017). The categorization of SMEs in Nigeria is an asset-based criterion (Etuk, Etuk, & Michael, 2014). In Ghana, micro businesses employ fewer than six people, small businesses employ six to nine people, and medium businesses employ between 10 and 29 employees (Baah-Mintah, Owusu-Adjei, & Koomson, 2018; Peprah et al., 2016). Regardless of the definition, SMEs contribute to the economic growth of a country (Asare, 2014). Thus, developed countries accept businesses with a more substantial number of employees as an SME still.

SMEs play an essential role in the promotion of sustainable and economic growth by providing employment opportunities. Augustine and Asiedu (2017) stated that SMEs contribute to the development of the economy as they act as the means of economic growth through tax revenues and the provision of products and services for organizations and individuals. The major contributors to the economy and employment of a country are SMEs (Augustine & Asiedu, 2017; Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017; Ikupolati, Medubi, Obafunmi, & Adeyeye, 2017). The SMEs constitute 92% of businesses in Ghana, of which 85% belong to the manufacturing industry contributing 70% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country (Amoah & Amoah, 2018; Asare, 2014; Augustine & Asiedu, 2017). The significant role of SMEs needs relevant government policies to support growth and sustainability.

Governments support SMEs through the provision of policies and regulations. Ghana established a National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) under Act 434 in 1985 to promote the development of SMEs (Owusu-Ansah, Cudjoe, & Poku, 2017). In



2011-2015, the Nigerian government-initiated policies to strengthen the Small and Medium Enterprises Associations of Nigeria (SMEDAN) to provide technical support for SMEs (Ikupolati et al., 2017). Thus, sound government policies and regulations may help in the creation of a conducive environment for businesses to thrive. Ikupolati et al. (2017) asserted that access to technology, innovativeness, and human capital building enable SME operatives to contribute to employment generation. Exploring the strategies of manufacturing business leaders who have sustained a business beyond 5 years is likely to reveal insights for new business leaders (Akaeze, 2016). However, SMEs in Ghana fail at alarming rates, and their survival rate is only 60% beyond 5 years of operation (Peprah et al., 2016; Yeboah, 2015). Sound policies may not be the only factor that SMEs need to succeed.

Innovativeness and proactiveness create a competitive advantage for SMEs. However, in developing countries, SMEs continue to encounter difficult challenges that hamper their innovation activities (Barasa, Knobens, Vermeulen, Kimuyu, & Kinyanjui, 2017). Essentially, innovation is an element of SMEs that creates new business activity and ensures the survival of the business. Innovation involves the process of creating value through the development and implementation of new procedures and techniques (Caiazza, Volpe, & Stanton, 2016). Conversely, Semuel, Siagian, and Octavia (2017) noted that innovation is the process of discovering alternative business opportunities using a differentiation strategy. SMEs may gain a sustainable competitive advantage and enhanced performance through innovation.

In summary, SMEs contribute significantly to the gross domestic product of developing countries (Okon & Edet, 2016), specifically in Ghana, where SMEs constitute 92% of businesses (Asare, 2014; Augustine & Asiedu, 2017). The government in Ghana is aware of the economic importance of SMEs and have implemented legislation and regulations to assist the growth of SMEs. As such, the need arises to understand how business leaders of SMEs in Ghana have circumvented failure and have managed to sustain their business beyond 5 years.

### **SMEs Failure and Success**

SMEs in any industry are essential to building the economy of a country. Any government policy to support the development of SMEs must provide a conducive business environment for success (Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin, & Taherdoost, 2015). Like any other business within the economy, SMEs are liable to the uncertainties of the business industry. Gure and Karugu (2018) stated that even after receiving ample support from the relevant institutions of the government, SMEs are still prone to experiencing failure. However, there are also some notable occasions where SMEs have experienced success and productivity in the industry.

According to Sutton and Kpentey (2012), a contributing factor to the success or failure of an SME is the entrepreneur, whose personal characteristics, exposure to business, access to credit, and connectedness in the political realm contributes toward failure or success. Bagheri (2017) observed that personal competencies of entrepreneurs enable the development of an innovative vision leading to a successful business. Some SMEs can fail; however, while most business challenges resulting in business failure are

foreseeable, some are entirely unpredictable because of the different sectors of operational processes (Arasti, Zandi, & Bahmani, 2014). The exposure of entrepreneurs to a well-functioning business environment helps in the management of businesses without failing (Sutton & Kpentey, 2012)

McCann and Ortega-Argilés (2016) examined the element of competition in businesses and the adverse effect of large organizations on the performance of SMEs. McCann and Ortega-Argilés concluded that one factor hindering SMEs from fully developing and competing against the established large businesses is the failure to specialize in the various lines of goods and services they offer. While large businesses in developed countries have specialized in the various goods and services they offer, SMEs in developing countries have not made attempts to specialize in different lines of goods and services (Hitchen, Nylund, Ferràs, & Mussons, 2017). Aside from the entrepreneur's experience, financial constraints are often a hindrance to the flourishing of SMEs.

Access to external finance is a factor that determines the lifespan of SMEs. According to Dosumu, Hussain, and El-Gohary (2017), the high failure rate of SMEs is because of their limited access to external finance. Ibrahim and Shariff (2016) and Wang (2016) were also in agreement that one of the most significant challenges for sustainability for SMEs were financial constraints. In Ghana, the firm size influences SME's access to external financing (Quartey, Turkson, Abor, & Iddrisu, 2017). Government policies create easy access to SME's credit facilities allowing for business leaders to have information on accessibility to credit (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2017). Access

to external funding, when appropriately handled through government policies, may provide a thriving business environment for SMEs.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a study conducted by Petković, Jäger and Sašić, (2016) examined the factors that contribute to SMEs shutting down during their first years of operation, specifically in transitional economies, like Bosnia and Herzegovina. The researchers provided insights into the factors that lead to SMEs shutting down in their first years of operation from a managerial point of view, as well as measures that may secure survival, development, and growth (Petković et al., 2016). The researchers used a sample of 110 SMEs from the Republic of Srpska (Petković et al., 2016). The participants reported the following challenging factors in the development of their respective SMEs: difficulties in collecting debts, legal procedures that are complicated but required to regulate business operations, high taxes and wages, the negative influence of the global economic crisis, as well as complicated and expensive procedures for loans from banks (Petković et al., 2016). However, data were not collected on the participants' traits, level of business management knowledge, entrepreneurial spirit, how proactive they were, innovation, or risk acceptance (Petković et al., 2016). The limitation of the study was the lack of provision of insight into SME's business challenges in the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Petković et al., 2016). This study contributed to understanding which factors negatively influence SMEs.

Some SMEs do not survive even with the right government policy strategies and interventions. Efforts of successive governments to create opportunities for SMEs in developing countries sometimes do not help but rather cause newly established SMEs to

fail within 2 years while the existing ones operate at suboptimal levels (Petković et al., 2016). According to Petković et al. (2016), 50% of SMEs in developing countries fail within their first 5 years. South Africa's 75% failure rate of SMEs is the world's highest (Muriithi, 2017). The unfavorable business environment in some African countries because of high taxes, hostile legal frameworks, unreliable and fluctuating exchange rates, and inflation deprive most SMEs of making profits to survive (Muriithi, 2017). Government policies alone are not adequate to protect SMEs from failure. To ensure success, business leaders must acquire the necessary managerial and operational skills to remain profitable to survive.

A significant challenge for the survival of SMEs is poor management skills and competencies. Most SME managers lack managerial experience and the appropriate training on how to run their businesses (Muriithi, 2017). Yeboah (2015) observed that the failure of SMEs in Ghana to achieve their full potential is a result of poor entrepreneurial management. The application of entrepreneurship in the management of SMEs enhances the performance and survival rate of businesses, leading to the overall economic development of a country (Nyarku & Oduro, 2017). The survival and growth of SMEs depend on both internal and external factors (Shin, Park, Choi, & Choy, 2017). Arasti et al. (2014) concluded that irrespective of the country, common obstacles confront SMEs, affecting both their survival rate and performance.

Poor managerial expertise caused 92% of companies to fail in the United States, and 96% of businesses failed in Canada (Muriithi, 2017). SME's management process includes competent and qualified staff to operate the business for proper functioning,

growth, survival, and sustainability (Muriithi, 2017; Shafique et al., 2013). Muriithi (2017) observed that skilled and motivated employees are essential for long-term existence and viability of SMEs. Managerial competence is a significant constraint for the success of SMEs. However, the role of government in creating an enabling environment for business growth remains vital worldwide (Meyer & Meyer, 2017).

Studies have also been conducted to understand SMEs and their environment in Ghana. Like Petković et al. (2016), Asare (2014) stated that SMEs contribute significantly to the economy, yet they encountered several challenges that hinder their development in Ghana (Asare, 2014). Through an in-depth review of the literature regarding SMEs in Ghana and the many challenges they encounter, Asare discovered that the most significant challenges included a lack of credit facility, a low capacity for research and further development, technology, globalization, and inadequate managerial skill and knowledge. To improve the survival odds for SMEs, Asare suggested more collaboration between stakeholders like the government and financial institutions to provide more flexible and more comfortable access of credit facilities to the SMEs. The findings of this study may provide great insight and possible solutions to the challenges encountered by SME owners and managers.

Ameyaw and Modzi (2016) aimed to identify the factors that assist in the growth of SMEs as well as the challenges confronted by SME owners. The researchers observed global competition as one of the several challenges confronting SMEs (Ameyaw & Modzi, 2016). Ameyaw and Modzi researched SMEs operating from 2005-2015 in the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly of Ghana and the analysis of the data indicated policy

adoption, as well as the use of information and communication technology (ICT), has a significant influence on the growth of SMEs. However, most of the SME owners perceived internationalization as a significant influencing factor on their growth but not a necessity (Ameyaw & Modzi, 2016). Similarly, Sitharam and Hoque (2017) identified internal factors such as access to finance, managerial competence, skills, and technological capabilities as challenges affecting the growth of SMEs in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. Sitharan and Hoque noted international competition as one of the external factors affecting SME performance. The researchers made recommendations for policy to assist SMEs to gain the needed stimulation for growth and development.

A government that pays attention to the SME sector experiences positive economic growth. Choi and Lim (2017) asserted that government support is essential for increasing SMEs' performance to foster business sustainability, which drives economic growth and the development of a country. When a government creates the environment for (a) licensing, (b) framework for wages, (c) taxation, (d) technological support, and (e) infrastructure, it creates an avenue for the success or failure of SMEs (Muriithi, 2017). The regulatory frameworks of government, for example, unfavorable tax systems, complicated rules, and regulations, negatively obstruct SME's growth (Bouazza & Ardjouman, 2015). Ayandibu and Houghton (2017) argued the internal and external environmental problems of SMEs are because of insufficient government support. Governments must not ignore SMEs because of their importance to the national economies. Apart from the lack of government support, some SMEs do fail as they lack

product or service innovation (Binnui & Cowling, 2016). Even though researchers have investigated and explored the aspects that contribute to the failure of SMEs, no consensus exists on the solutions to these challenges to sustain an SME beyond 5 years. The researchers' understanding of the success of some SMEs may assist other SME business leaders.

### **Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth**

Entrepreneurship is one of the best approaches developing nations must adopt in their quest to fight poverty. SMEs have contributed immensely to the nurturing of entrepreneurship in developing countries (Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017). An appropriate application of entrepreneurial knowledge in SMEs is a perfect remedy to the economic issues challenging some developing countries (Bartos, Rahman, Horak, & Jacova, 2015). Ghana is among the developing countries with a high number of micro, medium, and small enterprises (Quartey et al., 2017). In Ghana, SMEs comprise 90% of businesses and offer a wide range of goods and service to the people (Atogenzoya, Nyeadi, & Atiga, 2014). According to Adjei and Nsiah (2018), despite the significant presence of SMEs in Ghana, management is weak and inefficient; as such, they fail to remain profitable.

Entrepreneurial ventures may have different influence in different countries. Murphy, Abdulai, Anwar, Abdullah, and Thomas (2018) explored the entrepreneurs of SMEs from three countries and provided insight into enterprise financing in the economies of Ghana, Yemen, and Pakistan regarding global dynamics. Murphy et al.'s findings indicated that financial bodies had a significant influence on businesses, especially on how SMEs were funded. Additionally, Sibanda, Hovi-Sibanda, and Sheva



(2018) explored the impact of access to finance on firm performance and exporting behavior of SMEs in Harare, Zimbabwe. Sibanda et al.'s findings revealed a significant positive relationship exists between access to finance and SMEs' exporting behaviors. However, the study's findings revealed a negative impact of access to finance on SMEs' performances (Sibanda et al., 2018). From these findings, the researchers provided insight regarding entrepreneurs, their circumstances in different countries, and what factors possibly have major influences on SMEs.

Entrepreneurship is the foundation of the growth of organizations. Entrepreneurship facilitates creativity and innovativeness, and as a result, contributes significantly to the development of the right approaches to guide the activities of the business (Haviernikovah, Lemanska-Majdzik, & Mura, 2017). According to Ismail, Husin, Rahim, Kamal, and Mat (2016), businesses grow out of the passion and the desire of individuals to multiply their profits. Entrepreneurship enables the individuals to have a different perception of the business (Aslam & Hasnu, 2016). While some businesses leaders use established mechanisms, approaches, and principles in their business activities, entrepreneurship allows the business leaders to be flexible and adopt the best strategies for the unique needs of the business (Qureshi, Aziz, & Mian, 2017). According to Amankwah-Amoah, Boso, & Antwi-Agyei (2018), some SMEs in Ghana have stalled in their development because of their failure to align their activities with the unique circumstances of the business environment.

Businesses leaders must align their entrepreneurial activities with the dictates of the environment to achieve success. The measure of the impact of entrepreneurship on

the economic growth of a country focuses not only on the entrepreneurial activities but also on the attitudes and aspirations of entrepreneurs (Doran, McCarthy, & O'Connor, 2018). According to Doran et al. (2018), the impact of entrepreneurship on economic growth depends on the level of economic development of the country. Ferreira, Fayolle, Fernandes, and Raposo (2017) confirmed the significance of entrepreneurship depends on the stage of economic development of the country. However, the effect of entrepreneurship on economic growth is not consistent in developed and developing countries (Doran et al., 2018). Entrepreneurship has a direct effect on the economic growth of developing countries (Ndikubwimana, 2016). Thus, a relationship exists between entrepreneurship activities and economic growth.

Entrepreneurship is vital for economic growth at the national level. In developing countries, entrepreneurship activities enhance economic growth and improve social conditions (Dhahri & Omri, 2018). The contribution of entrepreneurship to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable developments is significant (Dhahri & Omri, 2018). Entrepreneurs contribute significantly to society through job creation, product innovation, and business opportunities (İyigün, 2015). An individual's perception to start their own business relates to entrepreneurial attitudes that support economic growth.

Entrepreneurial attitudes are a necessity for the existence of business organizations. Business leaders start businesses of their own with the perception of their capabilities and alertness to opportunities (Doran et al., 2018). Entrepreneurship is much more than the ability to start a new business (Kirkley, 2016). Business leaders take time to establish their operations, and these activities usually consume many resources. The

belief in one's capabilities and the ability to identify opportunities despite the possibility of entrepreneurial failure are an institutional and culture issue (Doran et al., 2018). The business must stand the test of time and be adaptable to the changing economic environment. SME's entrepreneurship activities contribute to the promotion of economic development in the Ghanaian economy (Oppong et al., 2014).

The ever-changing global economy creates challenges for most entrepreneurs in developing countries to adapt to the business environment (Ocloo, Akaba, & Worwui-Brown, 2014). Entrepreneurship provides an opportunity for the business owners to execute strategies that will allow them to evolve and conform to the changing economic environment. Leyden (2016) ascertained that most of the SMEs offer generalized services and as a result are ineffective in the fulfillment of their mandate. In Ghana, most SMEs are generalized such that customers may not know what to expect in the various stores (Ocloo et al., 2014). Compared to the large institutions that have appreciated the benefits of specialization, SMEs do not stage any meaningful competitive threat to the large and established firms (Leyden, 2016). Specialization is a necessary entrepreneurial approach to business that allows firms to invest in their areas of strength and minimize their weaknesses (Muñoz, Sánchez de Pablo, Peña, & Salinero, 2016). SMEs in Ghana have failed to specialize, as such, they are ineffective and less profitable.

Across the world, businesses organizations endeavor to maximize their areas of strength and reduce the impacts of the dominance of the large firms. However, when SMEs fail to specialize, it becomes incredibly difficult for them to operate in the highly competitive market (Necula, 2016). In Ghana, although SMEs control 90% of the

businesses in the economy, they are still unable to have a strong presence in the economy (Abor & Quartey, 2010). SMEs find it difficult to attain their objectives.

Entrepreneurial skills may have a positive influence on the sustainability of SMEs. Hughes and Mustafa (2017) discussed some of the barriers to the success of SMEs and how entrepreneurship can help. According to Hughes and Mustafa (2017), when an organization fails to follow certain corporate principles, they have difficulties operating in the business environment. The adoption of favorable corporate governance practices are necessities for the alignment of SME's activities in the business environment. Hughes and Mustafa highlighted the need for SMEs to address their internal structures and policies. Entrepreneurship has useful principles in the management of businesses (Kirkley, 2016). According to Wang (2016), business organizations must institute the necessary strategies to grow in a contemporary economic environment.

The presence of an efficient internal organization enables business organizations to carry out activities in a manner consistent with the standards of the industry. Inefficiencies in the approach developed by SMEs contribute to the poor financial performance and the eventual decline of the business (Hughes & Mustafa, 2017). The adoption of entrepreneurship principles enables organizations to have the powerful competitive advantage to become more productive (Muñoz et al., 2016). SMEs in Ghana have resources large companies cannot match; however, the presence of a system that alienates these organizations from each other is a contributing factor to the many challenges they encounter (Yeboah, 2015). Entrepreneurship provides a platform through

which the businesses can harmonize their efforts to collaborate and contribute to the overall growth of the country. The application of entrepreneurship is necessary to bring the resources together for the establishment of a pool for investment in profitable ventures.

### **The Global Strategy and Organizational Performance of SMEs**

SMEs are becoming increasingly important in global business. The globalization process has increased the concept of innovation for SMEs for which industrialized countries are now responsible for the majority of exports (Romagnoli & Romagnoli, 2016). According to Ndiaye, Abdul Razak, Nagayev, and Ng (2018), the economic development of countries essentially depends on the role of SMEs. SMEs contribute enormously to the economic growth of a country (Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015). Ocloo et al., (2014) stipulated that SMEs contribute to the gross domestic product of a country through the generation of potential entrepreneurs, the creation of employment, and the reduction in poverty levels. Developing countries identified the role of SMEs as promoters of economic efficiency, a healthy business environment, and power for economic development (Bouazza & Ardjouman, 2015).

In most of the developing countries, SMEs play a critical role in the development process. Majama and Magang (2017) observed that the effectiveness of SMEs depends on their strategic management; as such, many countries continuously realize the value of SMEs in the economic development of a country. According to Ndiaye et al. (2018), most SMEs have a characteristic of witty innovations, dynamism, and efficiency. Additionally, SMEs have accelerated the decision-making process because of their small

size and the absence of vertical management levels (Werner, Schroder, & Chlosta, 2018). However, SMEs do not have a universal definition. As such in Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya, the definition of the SMEs is still not conclusive.

In general, SMEs are a key to the economic progress of a country. Klewitz and Hansen (2014) described SMEs as the backbone of the Nigerian economy. SMEs contributed to the employment of over 80% of the total workforce in Nigeria (Eniola & Ektebang, 2014). The trend is not exclusive to Nigeria but also exists in countries like Ghana and Kenya, where more than 75% and 80% respectively of the population thrive economically from SMEs (Muriithi, 2017). The governments of developing countries have recognized SMEs as the driving force of economic growth of nations and have necessitated the introduction of innovative strategies to support SMEs. For example, Nigeria established the Small-Scale Industries Credit Scheme as a revolving loan scheme for SMEs (Adebiyi, Banjo, & Regin, 2017). In the Ghanaian context, the establishment of the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) is to facilitate access to credit for SMEs (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2017). However, despite the endless support for SMEs from governments, there is still an observed failure of the attempt to start and sustain business beyond 5 years of operation.

Favorable external environmental factors contribute to the sustainability of SMEs. Ocloo et al., (2014) deliberated on the primary challenge for businesses and concluded that an unstable macroeconomic environment significantly affects the profitability of SMEs. In the same context, Orogbu, Onyeizugbe, and Chukwuma (2017) claimed that SMEs are not successful because the unstable macro-economic environment results in

high operational costs forcing businesses to depend entirely on imports. The businesses become import dependent holdings, which are highly vulnerable to high inflation. Similarly, a considerable sustainability factor for SMEs in developing countries is the slow rate of technological advancement (Ardjouman, 2014). Thus, some countries without proper exposure to economic strategies may still exert strict bureaucratic control on SMEs leaving them to operate at high operating costs.

The organizational performance of SMEs depends on the managerial abilities of the business leaders. According to Ndiaye et al. (2018), the organizational performance of SMEs has considerably been low in the developing countries. The SMEs' business leaders lack managerial facilities and enterprise support services at their disposal for the decision-making process (Agwu, 2014). However, determination of firm performance is significant and essential to understanding how businesses grow. Ocloo et al., (2014) discovered a linkage between SME performance in developing countries and their level of innovativeness. Innovative SMEs are more likely to overcome the challenges.

Additionally, Tarutė and Gatautis (2014) deliberated SMEs are the unique vehicle in the modern market responsible for the diffusibility of innovative ideas in the modern economic environment. Asah, Fatoki, and Rungani (2015) stated the low role of innovation contribution to the performance of SMEs is because of the slow rate of technological advancement in the developing countries. Innovation is a significant factor in the performance of SMEs in developing countries (Ueasangkomsate & Jangkot, 2017). Thus, innovative tendencies of SMEs tend to act as a bridge for their success.

In Mindanao, Philippines, a study conducted by Carter and Tamayo (2017) examined the organizational performance of SMEs, specifically the growing need to examine entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in business administration. The findings from a survey of 400 SME managers indicated evidence of intrapreneurial and entrepreneurial skill of managers but organizational performance needed attention of the managers (Carter & Tamayo, 2017). Carter and Tamayo revealed a significant link between the entrepreneurial skills of the managers and the organizational performance of SMEs. Intrapreneurial skills of managers influence organizational performance (Carter & Tamayo, 2017). Cultivating entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial skills may positively influence SMEs in Ghana.

Management is an important factor needed for optimal organizational performance. Organizations around the world have implemented total quality management (TQM) programs to remain competitive in the business environment because of internationalization and globalization (Kwamega, Li, & Ntiamoah, 2015). Kwamega et al. (2015) focused on the influence of TQM as a management tool for SMEs in Ghana to improve efficiency. Kwamega et al. use purposive sampling techniques to recruit 450 participants, and the findings indicated a positive correlation between TQM and organizational performance. Similarly, Shafiq, Lasrado, and Hafeez (2017) examined the effect of TQM on organizational performance of 210 textile companies in Pakistan. The findings of the study revealed that TQM has a positive effect on organizational performance (Shafiq et al., 2017). Thus, the positive effect of TQM on organizational performance SMEs is not limited to only SMEs located in developed



countries but applies equally to other parts of the world. According to Madar (2015), TQM strategy focuses on improvement of process within an organization and increasing the level of customer satisfaction. Improvement of organizational performance of SMEs through TQM strategy should include addressing the concerns of customers to increase customer satisfaction and implement national quality criteria for firms. Managers of SMEs may need to improve their skills and broaden their knowledge to manage SMEs successfully.

This section provided a thorough discussion of global strategy and organizational performance. Ocloo et al. (2014) stipulated SMEs contribute to the gross domestic product of countries through the generation of potential entrepreneurs, the creation of employment, and the reduction in poverty levels. However, the organizational performance of the SMEs has considerably been low in developing countries (Ndiaye et al., 2018). Carter and Tamayo (2017) discovered the significant link between the entrepreneurial skills of the managers and the organizational performance of the SME. Further research of the influencing factors on organizational performance and the current study may provide insight on the strategy and organizational performance of the SMEs that sustain beyond 5 years involved in this study.

### **Strategies for Managing Innovations in SMEs**

The management of technology with a focus on innovation has been a center of attention in SMEs. The competition and global pressures on SMEs account for much emphasis on innovation, which entails the creation, development, and the introduction of new services and products or new operational procedures to benefit one or more

stakeholders (Ghani, Bhuiyan, Said, & Alam, 2016). Seo and Chae (2016) observed that the innovation management in SMEs requires adaption to specific strategies for performance. The incorporation of employees in the process of policy formulation increasingly challenged them to submit new and innovative ideas (Urbancova, 2013). Significantly, to develop strategies for managing innovation in business, organizations such as SMEs required some degree of pro-innovative culture.

Primarily, innovation management has a linkage with knowledge management. According to Alegre, Sengupta, and Lapiedra, (2013), innovation management involves the incorporation of different observable routines in the development and the application of innovation strategy. Alegre et al. proposed a holistic model that entails the six following specific components in the management of innovation: (a) new product development, (b) research and development, (c) operations and production, (d) commercialization of innovation, (e) technological collaboration, and (f) technology strategy. Additionally, Alegre et al. noted the context of managing innovation is complicated owing to the systematic and risky nature of the business environment. Roper and Tapinos (2016) confirmed there exist issues of uncertainty, the unpredictability of costs, and knowledge appropriateness because of environmental uncertainty in business. Knowledge management and organizational skills may provide firms with a higher tendency of organizational competitiveness in innovation.

Business organizations require certain vital traits to ensure the realization of innovation. The management of innovations in SMEs depends on the leadership qualities, attitudes, and skills existing in the organization (Urbancova, 2013). The

leadership of a business organization may include first-line managers, middle managers, executive directors, and leaders of enterprises who encourage innovation in SMEs (Brunswicker & Vanhaverbeke, 2015). The top leadership teams show commitment to fulfilling and meeting different strategies of innovations (Ruiz-Jiménez & Fuentes-Fuentes, 2016). According to Ruiz-Jiménez and Fuentes-Fuentes (2016), an organization's leadership must have considerable weight and influence in order to overcome the barriers and resistance to the realization of useful changes that most innovators often encounter. Having a culture that allows for flexibility in the organization enables individuals, teams, or persons to change and adapt to new situations (Shahzad, Xiu, & Shahbaz, 2017). An innovative organization remains a long-term goal, hence the need to be flexible.

The existence of a positive environment in SMEs encourages the adoption of the entrepreneurial type of management structure. Innovation in SMEs thrives with some element of risk-taking (Verbano & Venturini, 2013). Shahzad et al. (2017) argued that business leaders' commitment to long-term perspectives, responsiveness to change, and risk-taking contribute immensely to the creation of an appropriate climate and culture for the formulation and implementation of new ideas and significant changes. Aryanto, Fontana, and Afiff (2015) observed that innovative organizations encourage participatory decision-making, thus offering solutions to different problems and boosting creative thinking. The business leaders of innovative SMEs implement policies or guidelines as opposed to rules (Aryanto et al., 2015). A business environment that has proper

communication channels achieves so much through conversation as opposed to letters and memos.

Teamwork innovations are complicated to organize and manage without specific organizational structures implemented to encourage them. The management of a change in a business environment depends on the ethos of the SMEs (Lesakova, 2014).

Additionally, having the right climate is likely to provide employees an opportunity to express their ideas (Shahzad et al., 2017). The flexible climate culture that exists within business organizations motivates the employees to express their innovative concepts in decision-making confidently through realistic and technically constructive ways (Shahzad et al., 2017). However, criticism is also part of the business as it helps boost useful thinking, resulting in innovation in an organization.

The lack of proper system controls for assessing innovation performance results in business failure. According to Azis, Darun, Kartini, Bernik and Harsanto (2017), management of innovation requires assessment of innovation capability. Innovation management requires the right leadership and management to achieve productivity (Azis et al., 2017). The productivity achieved must not sacrifice freedom and creativity. To assess the performance of creativity and the successful management of innovation, some of the issues considered include understanding that creative employees are open and flexible in comparison to their less creative neighbors (Shahzad et al., 2017). Additionally, the creative thinking employees bring the freshness of mind to the problems, thereby showing courage to be different and thinking for themselves.

Besides managing the innovation, the business leaders of SMEs need to accept and acknowledge the individuals behind innovations to encourage and appreciate them. The recognition of the value or worth of the persons contributing to innovation remains essential for the well-respected individuals in the firm (Havlíček, Thalassinou, & Berezkinova, 2013). As a way of managing innovation, SMEs must allow people to choose the area in which they can work optimally. Deptula (2017) pointed to risk calculation as another way of assessing performance in innovation. The flexibility of business leaders to allow individuals to take well-calculated risks enhances the management strategies of innovation (Verbano & Venturini, 2013). The quality of an innovative organization relies so much on the quality of the people employed. Creative leadership stimulates, encourages, and guides the process of innovation from the start to the end (Lesakova, 2014). According to Havlíček et al. (2013), the challenge of innovation is the challenge of leading creative persons. The introduction of training programs focused on churning out innovation activities in SMEs is helpful in managing innovation.

Another strategy of managing innovation in SMEs is through offering appropriate training programs. Lesakova (2014) observed that training programs focus on developing people's innovative potentials. Lesakova argued the operation of an innovative organization with a culture of team creativity needs a well-trained and adequately educated workforce (Lesakova, 2014). Innovative activities necessitate the availability of a highly professional pool of workforce (Abouzeedan, Klofsten, & Hedner, 2013). Apart from offering the technical training, each person must meet the training needs as well as

the skills and techniques necessary for productive thinking. Innovative business organizations encourage the broader educational needs of employees to support the organizational learning culture of SMEs.

The implementation of a reward system is a strategy for managing innovations in SMEs. Having a reward system as a technique is a significant way to encourage employees to contribute more of their energy of innovation towards the development of the organization (Lesakova, 2014). The reward system focuses on the uniqueness of an individuals' work alone in comparison to group membership (Hughes & Mustafa, 2017). With the provision of an appropriately managed reward system, the employees have the incentive to work on bringing about innovations to the SMEs (Azis et al., 2017). The business leaders of SMEs do not have all the answers to the significant challenges of managing innovation in today's volatile business environment.

### **Transition**

Section 1 contained the problem statement and the purpose statement, including the nature of study that explained the use of a qualitative research method and multiple case study design. Section 1 included (a) interview questions, (b) conceptual framework, (c) assumptions, (d) limitations, and (e) delimitations of the study. The significance of the study and a review of the professional and academic literature conclude Section 1. A review of literature provided insights from various scholars concerning (a) open systems and complexity theory, (b) small business enterprises, (c) entrepreneurship, (d) strategic management of innovation by SMEs, and (e) global strategy and organizational performance of SMEs.

Section 2 contained information concerning (a) the role of the researcher, (b) the selected participants, (c) description of research method and design, (d) the population and sampling, (e) ethical research, (f) data collection instrument and technique, (g) data organization and analysis, and (h) reliability and validity. Section 3 comprised applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for further study, and reflections from the researcher.

## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain businesses beyond 5 years of operation. The population comprised five Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry from five facilities in the fruit processing industries in Accra, Ghana, who have sustained their business beyond 5 years of operation. The implications for positive social change might include the potential for reduction in the unemployment rate, poverty alleviation, the development of the local communities, and the growth of the Ghanaian economy.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In a qualitative study, the primary role of a researcher is to select the right research design and methodology, recruit participants, collect data, and analyze the results. In qualitative study design, the researcher assumes the function of the data collection instrument (Khoshsima, Hosseini, & Toroujeni, 2017). The researcher using interviews, observations, and documentary reviews must collect valid and reliable data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Researchers use the exploratory multiple case study design to solicit information from participants through face-to-face semistructured interviews and data review from company documents in the form of standard operations procedure manuals.

I explored business sustainability beyond 5 years as experienced by the manufacturing business leaders in the agro-processing industry in Accra, Ghana. As a



business practitioner for the past 18 years, I was familiar with the issues associated with sustainability of business beyond 5 years. My experience benefited the research study because my work experience helped to enrich the content of the study. The use of social networks enabled me to find the appropriate participants, seek permission from each participant, and remained in constant communication with them throughout the study.

The intentions and purpose of the study were to maintain ethical standards. A researcher must exhibit ethical considerations and attitudes in participatory research studies (Fouché & Chubb, 2017). The participants signed a consent form as evidence of their willingness to participate in the study. The protocol of the Belmont Report (1979) serves as guidelines for maintaining ethical standards during the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires the researcher to obtain permission before conducting the study and to comply with such other directives such as keeping the data secured in cabinet and destroying the data permanently after 5 years.

Bias in research occurs mainly in the data analysis as a result of the researcher's perceptions, personal experiences, and personal values (Bernard, 2013). The use of field notes to record views and opinions helps in mitigating biases and validates the correct interpretation of the findings of the research. During the data collection process, field notes capture comments and thoughts (Yin, 2017). Member checking ensures the participant's observations and experiences become the basis for the analysis and interpretation of the research findings (Harvey, 2015). Involving the participants in the checking and confirmation of the research results helps to reduce the potential for

researcher bias (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). The involvement of participants' feedback enhances the credibility of the study.

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher must build trust with the participants by communicating honestly and openly with them to help the researcher make an informed decision about their participation. I applied the interview protocol (See Appendix) to all the research participants equally during the interview sessions. The interview protocol assisted me to ensure every participant responds to the same question in the same order.

### **Participants**

The use of purposive criteria enabled the selection of five manufacturing business leaders in the agro-processing industry who have successfully sustained their business beyond 5 years of operation in Accra, Ghana. In qualitative research, sampling depends on a small number of interviewees to obtain in-depth and detailed responses pertinent to the lived experiences of the participants (Yin, 2017). Only chief executive officers of companies registered as members of the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) who have been in business for the past 5 years were eligible to participate in the study.

The screening of potential participants according to the selection criteria was possible after obtaining IRB approval. The use of purposive sampling was appropriate for selecting manufacturing business leaders who have been in successful business beyond 5 years in the agro-processing industry. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants most likely to provide information relevant to the purpose of the study (Moore, Blom, Whitehouse, & Gooberman-Hill, 2017). The selection of five

participants came from a list of manufacturing business leaders in agri-business from the Business Ghana directory. The Business Ghana directory has a list of agribusinesses open to the public with company names, phone number contacts, and location information. The recruitment of the five participants was through invitation letters to their emails or hand delivered letters. The contents of the letter stated the details and purpose of the study as well as indicated the voluntary nature of participation and the freedom to withdraw from participating at any given time. Additionally, the contents of the letter stated explicitly that participants will receive no payments or any form of incentives for voluntary participation.

In qualitative research, having a working relationship with the participants is essential to the success of the study (Råheim et al., 2016). The use of emails, telephone calls, and social media enables the establishment of a working relationship with the participant upon agreement to participate in the study. My experience as a chief executive of a small business assisted in relating to the participants so that they felt comfortable and shared their experiences in utmost honesty.

### **Research Method and Design**

The purpose of the study was to explore the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation through in-depth interviews rather than using statistics to explain causal relationships. Qualitative methodology was suitable for this study because using the qualitative research method helped in addressing the research problem. Thus, I used a qualitative research method with a multiple case study design.

## **Research Method**

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method are some of the options available for research methods. The choice of research method and design depends on the research problem. I chose a qualitative research method to explore the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation in Accra, Ghana. A qualitative research method involves the exploration of life experiences, behaviors, and different perspectives on issues to determine their complexities (Rahman, 2016). Researchers explore the experiences of individuals to understand their meanings and interpretations in a qualitative study (Kelly, 2016). Using in-depth interviews and open-ended interview questions, the researcher receives a thorough understanding of the issues to assist in answering the research question adequately. The qualitative research approach was appropriate for this study because it helps the researcher to describe the complexity of issues to bring about understanding and explanation of matters. Additionally, qualitative research enables the researcher to explore strategies and experiences through in-depth interview data and business documents supplied by the manufacturing business leaders taking part in the study.

Quantitative research involves the investigation of the causality and effects of the findings of the study and deducing conclusions (Rahman, 2016). This study's objective involved the exploration of strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation in Accra, Ghana, but not the analysis and quantification of factors that contribute to their success. In situations

where the focus of the research demands the use of both quantitative and qualitative research method, the researcher resorts to the use of the mixed method research design for data collection and analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015). A mixed method is useful when a complete understanding of a study is not possible with only one method. I did not choose a mixed method or quantitative research approach for this study because the purpose of this study was to understand the experience and the strategies of manufacturing business leaders who successfully sustained their business beyond 5 years of operation.

Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because using the qualitative research method might help the researcher to explore the research problem to gain a deeper understanding of how SMEs sustain business beyond 5 years. Understanding how some SMEs sustain business beyond 5 years could help other business leaders of SMEs to adapt their processes, and a qualitative methodology might help to collect the needed rich data.

### **Research Design**

A multiple case study was the research design suitable for this study. The case study is appropriate for researchers seeking to explore life phenomenon in situations where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clear (Yin, 2017). I did not select the phenomenological design, although it can be useful for uncovering and comprehending the meaning of peoples' lived experiences (Berglund, 2015), because the purpose of my research was not to identify issues and develop common themes on individuals' world-views or lived experiences. An inquiry into social or cultural groups in their natural settings compels researchers to use an ethnographic study design to

investigate and understand how life and cultures evolve by observing the participants over a prolonged period (Brown, 2014). A narrative design was inappropriate for this study as this design was not adequate for addressing applied business research problems. The focus of my study made a multiple case study an appropriate method for conducting applied business research and for exploring the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to succeed in business beyond 5 years of operation.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for the study consisted of Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry who have successfully sustained their business operation beyond 5 years. The purpose of the study was to explore the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry used to sustain their agro-processing business beyond 5 years of operation. The eligible participants were manufacturing business leaders who have continued their agro-processing business beyond 5 years of operation in Accra, Ghana. Persons who do not fall into the category were not selected to participate in the study.

The selection of participants for the study involved the use of purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allows for the elimination of the problems caused where the selected participants are non-representative and have no experience or knowledge of the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). A researcher may purposefully choose participants with similar and distinct characteristics that relate to the research topic (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Purposive sampling maximizes the diversity of the

participants interviewed to ensure in-depth interviews that explore the views and experiences of the participants (Jeal, Macleod, Salisbury, & Turner, 2017). Yin (2017) suggested a sample size of five is sufficient for a case study research. The use of purposive sampling assisted in my selection of five SME manufacturing business leaders in the agro-business processing in Accra, Ghana who have relevant experience and expertise to help answer the research question.

The sample size of five was adequate for this study. Yin (2017) posited that three participants are adequate to produce valuable and reliable data for a study. The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) has a database of manufacturing business leaders in Ghana. The AGI database provided a list of names and contact information to select the participants for the study. The AGI database is a public document and accessible. The eligibility criteria included (a) Ghanaian SME manufacturing leaders of 18 years and above, (b) living and working in Ghana, (c) involved in the day-to-day management of the business, and (d) the business was in operation for more than 5 years. The AGI platform helped me to select five manufacturing business leaders of SMEs in the agribusiness who were registered members located in Ghana. I used a purposeful sampling technique in selecting the participants for the interview.

The recruitment of participants for the study involved sending email invitations to the participants. A follow-up with phone calls to each participant assisted in explaining the rationale for the research. The participants who agreed to participate in the study received a consent form in the follow-up emails to them. To indicate a willingness to participate in the study, the participant replied to the email. Additionally, the participants

agreed on a place that was convenient and comfortable for a face-to-face interview where they answered the seven opened-ended questions. I made provision for those who preferred a phone interview. The interview session lasted for 45 minutes to 60 minutes. Audio recording the interview and taking notes in a journal prevent data loss (Ranney et al., 2015).

Data triangulation is a method to help achieve data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A review of responses from the participants and standard operation procedures (SOP) of the company provided enough information for data triangulation. Data collection will end when the researcher acknowledges there are no new themes to collect (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The inability to reach data saturation affects the quality of the research as well as the content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fusch and Ness asserted that data saturation occurs when no new themes are emerging from the data. The aim was to achieve data saturation by exploring the responses from the participants until no new themes emerge from the discussion.

## **Ethical Research**

### **Informed Consent**

The successful completion of a qualitative, explorative case study depends on the stringent compliance of the researcher to ethical standards. Research involving human subjects has three basic ethics namely (a) principles of respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). In qualitative research, the onus is on the researcher to ensure stringent ethical codes before, during, and after the research (Allen, 2015). The allocation of IRB approval number by



Walden University IRB is a requisite before the start of field data collection for the research. With the IRB approval number 10-29-18-0657353 and expiration 28th October, 2019, I had the permission to contact participants. Contacting the prospective participants on the phone assisted in making the informed consent form available to them. The researcher must discuss with the participants the reasons for the study, the benefits to the participating businesses, and the benefits to society. The participants reviewed a copy of the interview questions. Additionally, the participants had an explanation of the contents of the participant consent form.

The participants signed the consent form during the face-to-face interview session. The participation of the participants in the study was voluntary, no coercion, and withdrawal from the participation at any time without any notice or explanation was possible. The participants had the opportunity to discuss any concerns before or during the interview. However, there were no incentives offered to the participants.

### **Agreement Documents**

The participant's consent form contained the description of the research and also an affirmation of the rights of the participants. Apart from the written document, the participants had an oral explanation of their right to inform the researcher or the University liaison at any time that they are no longer interested in participating in the study. The consent form contained information assuring the participants of no incentives or inducements for participation. I guaranteed the confidentiality of the identity of the participants by not linking the participants and their responses to the interview questions. Researchers have the responsibility to protect and preserve the identity and the rights of

the participant during the process of collecting data, storage, and analysis (Yin, 2017).

The names and the geographical locations of the business did not reflect in the findings of the research because the use of pseudonyms concealed the actual names. I would keep the research data secured for 5 years and destroy the data by deleting the digital files on a password protected external hard drive, and the field notes would be shredded as well.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

In a multiple case study, the researcher is the primary data collection instrument. Data collection in this study entailed the use of a semistructured interview guide to seven open-ended questions. Additionally, I reviewed company documents that included policy documents, operation procedures, and innovation implementation guidelines. The documentation from the company complements the interviews to help in the triangulation of data from various sources to ensure the reliability of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Developing an interview protocol to follow during the face-to-face interview with the participants facilitated the ease of asking follow-up questions. The interview protocol and questions were in Appendix. A case study protocol is a useful tool for a multiple case study design. An interview protocol helps the researcher to remain focused on the research question to ensure the reliability of the study (Yin, 2017). A case study protocol consists of (a) an overview of the case study, (b) data collection procedures, (c) the data collection questions, and (d) a guide for the case study report (Yin, 2017). The case study protocol served as a guideline to govern the procedures in the data collection process.

In a qualitative case study, the need for the researcher to complete member checking to guarantee the validity and reliability of the study is essential (Yazan, 2015). Member checking is a participant validation technique for improving the accuracy and credibility of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, recording the interview and transcribing the conversation using the Audacity Software was useful. I asked the participants to review the summary of the interview transcript to correct for any errors or missing information. A qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) is helpful in building the code structures to support the emerging themes (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2016). NVivo QDAS program assisted in coding and the interpretation of the data after cleansing the data by removing all irrelevant and unnecessary comments.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Interviews and company documentation review was the data collection technique for this study. The researcher has the responsibility to determine the effective and efficient method to use in collecting data from the research participants (Elo et al., 2014). Interviews are an efficient and effective data collection technique that play a significant role in the qualitative study. The data collection process involved face-to-face semistructured interviews with the participants to explore their views and experiences. Interviews are the most straightforward means of collecting data in a qualitative study (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Interviews are useful in exploring the opinions of participants to understand their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and motives (Rowley,

2014). The interviews created an avenue to collect rich and thick information that served as quality data for the study.

Using in-depth interviews in data collection helped me capture the non-verbal actions and body languages of the participants that enabled asking appropriate follow-up probing questions. According to Weller et al. (2018), the number of interviews is irrelevant, however, the probing and prompting during interview sessions matter most. The face-to-face interview assisted in keeping the interviewee focused and on track to complete the interview. The interview allowed me to gain an understanding of the strategies manufacturing business leaders used in sustaining business beyond 5 years of operation. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted the direct link between data saturation and data triangulation. Reviewing company documents in the form of policy and standard operations procedure guidelines permitted the acquisition of accurate data to enhance the viability of the study.

Some of the disadvantages of using the in-depth interview in data collection includes (a) the bias of the researcher resulting in poor articulation of interview questions (Yin, 2017), (b) inaccurate response to interview question as a result of poor capability of participants to recall from memory (Yin, 2017). Another disadvantage of an in-depth interview is time needed to transcribe the data before getting back to the participants for the clarification of some of the responses to gain a better understanding of what they meant by their original statement. Some companies will not make readily available to a researcher sensitive business documents. Such a situation may be a disadvantage for reviewing company documentation.

The use of member checking ensures that interpretations assigned to the data collected from the participants during the interview align well with what they meant during the interview session. The likelihood of imposing the qualitative researcher's personal beliefs and interest exists in all stages of a research process (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking helps in the improvement of the accuracy, validity, reliability, and trustworthiness of the study (Elo et al., 2014). The involvement of the research participants in the checking and confirmation of the qualitative study results had the potential for reducing research bias.

### **Data Organization Technique**

In a qualitative study, data organization involves various data storage strategies to safeguard the integrity of the data collected through semistructured interviews (O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, & Sinha, 2016). Assigning codes such as P1, P2, and P3 to the participants would protect their privacy and confidentiality, leaving the researcher as the only person knowing the identification of the participants. A researcher may attain confidentiality by using pseudonyms for the participants (Petrova, Dewing, & Camilleri, 2016). Preferably, the alphanumeric code would be suitable to conceal the identity of the participants for this study. Member checking is one way of organizing data to help the researcher in verifying the trustworthiness and validity of the qualitative study (Birt et al., 2016). The process of returning a summary of the interview to the research participants for review and confirmation of the researcher's interpretation of their answers to the interview questions is member checking (Birt et al., 2016). Member checking helps to

enhance the credibility, validity, transferability, and the involvement of participants in the study.

With the informed consent process, I sought permission to audio record the interview. Researchers need to keep the transcribed recorded interviews of the individual participants in separate folders on a password-protected external hard drive (Traynor, 2017). NVivo Software offered a qualitative researcher flexible solution for data analysis by supporting coding and retrieval of textual data from interviews (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016). The NVivo Software helped in data input, storage, and coding for the generation of themes while preserving the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. The raw data of the interviews, audio recordings, and reflective journals would be kept in a security cabinet for 5 years. In compliance with IRB requirements the hard copy interview data was securely stored in a locked metal file cabinet at home. Electronic interview data files would be stored on a password-protected laptop computer and backed up on a password-protected external hard drive. Data destruction after 5 years would include shredding the hard copies and using Soft Pedia DP Wiper to erase the electronic data.

### **Data Analysis**

Open-ended interview questions enable researchers to collect data from the unconstrained participants' experiences to help explore meanings of the study (Sohn, Thomas, Greenberg, & Pollio, 2017). Each participant responded to the interview questions listed in Appendix. Face-to-face interviews, and review of company documents helped to achieve methodological triangulation. Triangulation involves the

use of various methods of data collection that ensures richness, reliability, and trustworthiness of the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The company documents for review included standard policy documents and standard operations manual.

The study findings provide a framework to understand the strategies manufacturing business leaders use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation. In qualitative research, the themes uncovered in the data analysis process provides answer to the central research question of the study (Yin, 2017). Qualitative data analysis consists of five stages namely (a) compilation, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpretation, and (e) conclusions. The first stage of data compilation included the sorting of the data collected such as interview transcripts and documents to form a database. The second stage was data disassembling which involves disaggregating the compiled data into small pieces or fragments (Yin, 2017). The disassembling procedure might include the assigning of codes or labels to the compiled data. The coding is a slow and cyclic process which involves merging, splitting, or renaming the codes (Theron, 2015). The third stage was the data reassembling procedure and involved the rearrangement and recombination of the disassembled fragmented data in a graphical or tabular form into various groups in some sequences other than the original form. The fourth stage involved the interpretation of the reassembled material by preparing a narrative report using tables or graphics. The initial interpretation might require recompilation of the database or disassembling or reassembling of the data differently. The conclusion was the final stage which involved stating the research outcomes and the findings based on the central research question or objectives. The conclusion must have

a valid link between the data analyzed and the research question. Additionally, the conclusion must state the implications of the findings and areas for future research. The use of NVivo software in the data analysis helped me achieve these goals. The NVivo software simplifies the analysis of large interview textual data (Rogerson, Soltani, & Copeland, 2016). NVivo software was easy to use in collating the themes from the different interview responses and enhanced the process to reduce the time duration for data analysis.

Data organization into themes requires the interpretation of the meaning of the data (Yin, 2017). The design of the interview questions for the study (Appendix) was the collection of data to focus on the existing literature that shows the factors contributing to the sustainability of small businesses in the manufacturing industry. The conceptual framework that supports the study was open systems theory by von Bertalanffy (1956). The constructs of this theory provided the lens for answering the research question for the study.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Researchers in a qualitative study need to assess the reliability and validity of the findings using appropriate designs and methods (Leung, 2015). Quantitative researchers use statistical methods for establishing the validity and reliability of the findings, whereas qualitative researchers use designs and methodological strategies to achieve the integrity and trustworthiness of the findings (Barnham, 2015). The grading of the quality of qualitative research is by criteria identified as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Watson & Downe, 2017). Member checking and data triangulation



confirm the validity of qualitative research (Bengtsson, 2016). In this research study, a sample size of five participants from Ghanaian manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry was used. Methodological triangulation and member checking helped improved the validity and reliability of the study results.

Qualitative research analysis requires trustworthiness. Trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in the collection of data and the analysis process (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2016). Credibility refers to the accuracy of the interpretation of the data and the findings (Pedersen, Hack, McClement, & Taylor-Brown, 2014), and transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can apply to other contexts (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2016). Dependability refers to the stability of the findings of the research under different prevailing conditions (Gesar, Hommel, Hedin, & Baath, 2017). Finally, confirmability refers to the absence of research errors and the objectivity of the research data (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2016). In qualitative research, these criteria enhanced the reliability and validity of the study.

### **Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency within analytical procedures employed in deriving the findings of the study (Shayestefar & Abedi, 2017). Qualitative researchers use dependability to ensure the trustworthiness of the research instead of focusing on reliability (Hays, Wood, Dahl, & Kirk-Jenkins, 2016). Semistructured interview questions allow for flexibility and consistency to promote dependability (Padgett, Gossett, Mayer, Chien, & Turner, 2017). Researchers for qualitative studies must include in the research design stage mechanisms for ensuring dependability to enhance the

integrity of the data and the research findings (Cope, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Researchers can use an interview protocol to demonstrate dependability in a case study research (Yin, 2017). Using the interview protocol enhanced the consistency of the data collection and data analysis process.

Researchers ensure the dependability of the research findings by developing an interview protocol (Appendix) which they strictly follow during the research process. As the researcher, asking clear and concise questions directly related to the strategies yielded accurate response from the participants. Documentation of the research is necessary to promote dependability (Donges, 2015). Additionally, conducting member checking ensured dependability. Member checking involves the review of the researcher's summary of interpretation of the interview transcripts with the participants to correct discrepancies or errors in the interpretations of the interview (Morse, 2015). Member checking and the review of the summaries enhanced the dependability of the findings of the study. The use of NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software helped in demonstrating the dependability of the data. Triangulation improves the reliability of a case study (Yin, 2017). I achieved methodological triangulation using multiple data sources in the study.

### **Validity**

Validity refers to the integrity of the research data and how accurately the findings reflect the research data (Shayestefar & Abedi, 2017). The accuracy and the truthfulness of the data demonstrate the validity of the research study (Fusch & Ness, 2017). The validity of a qualitative research study concerns the relationship between the data, the findings, and the conclusions (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016).

Member checking is a form of validation by soliciting the views of research participants on the accuracy of the collected data and the interpretations (Simpson & Quigley, 2016). To achieve validity, I took a summary of the findings back to the participants for verification to improve the reliability and integrity of the study. Credibility refers to the study process that establishes how the data and the analysis procedures ensure that no relevant research data is missed from the study (Bengtsson, 2016). I used member checking, researcher bias identification, and data triangulation to enhance the credibility of the study.

Researchers rely on interviews and the review of documents to achieve research credibility and quality of the study (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Additionally, methodological triangulation of results from the data collected from the interview questions and the reviewed documents improves the quality of the study. The use of triangulation enhances research credibility when researchers use multiple data sources to respond to similar research questions (Morse, 2015). The identification and documentation of the data sources allow for an audit trail for future researchers resulting in the promotion of the credibility of the study (Cope, 2014). Using company documents from the Ghanaian business leaders who sustain their business beyond 5 years of operation provided credibility of the data.

Transferability refers to whether the findings of the study are applicable in another context. Researchers provide thick descriptions of the research method and contents to promote transferability (Elo et al., 2014). I addressed transferability through the provision of thick descriptions of the participants' interviews and the contexts. Thick

descriptions enable the reader to determine if the possibility exists for the transfer of the findings of the study to a similar situation (Hadi., 2016). Future researchers might use the themes and the sustainable strategies uncovered in this study for further research.

The confirmation of the integrity of research is essential for researchers. Confirmability refers to accuracy, objectivity, and the neutrality of research findings (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Confirmability shows how accurately a researcher presented the research findings from the perspective of the participants without personal biases (Hays et al., 2016). To achieve confirmability of the study, researchers rely on the findings from the themes and limit the number of direct quotations (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers use methodological triangulation to enhance confirmability.

Researchers ensure the attainment of data saturation to promote the thoroughness of the study. To achieve data saturation, researchers continue to collect all data relevant to the research topic until no new themes emerge (Pedersen et al., 2014). The analysis of data from different sources enhances the validity of the data collected. The convergence of semistructured interviews and the documentation collected from five Ghanaian manufacturing business leaders who sustained business beyond 5 years of operation ensured data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

The study aimed to explore strategies Ghanaian business manufacturing leaders use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation, utilizing a multiple case study design with the research participants providing the interview data and company documents. The

outline of section 2 included a discussion of the research methodology, sampling, data collection, organization, and analysis. The discussion continued with the processes of assuring reliability and validity.

Section 3 contains research findings and application of the results to professional practice. The findings of the study will assist manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry address the strategies necessary for the sustainability of small and medium businesses in the manufacturing industry. Study implications for social change may include poverty alleviation, community development, and economic growth. Also included are recommendations for further studies, researcher reflections, and study conclusion.

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

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies that some Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain businesses beyond 5 years of operation. The overarching research question that guided this study was: What strategies do some Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation? The targeted population comprised five Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry from five facilities in the fruit processing industries in Accra, Ghana, who have sustained their business beyond 5 years of operation. I used seven semistructured, open-ended questions to interview five participants from the fruit processing industries in Accra, Ghana who have experience in sustaining their SMEs beyond five years of operation. Semistructured questionnaires enable participants to share their knowledge and insights (Yin, 2017). I assigned P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 to each participant to ensure anonymity.

The primary data came from seven semistructured interview questions, and the secondary data came from archival documents such as a survey report on the fruit processing industry and a standard operations manual. I used NVivo software to manage and organized the data to facilitate the analysis of the data. The data analysis revealed four main themes that Ghana SME manufacturing business leaders used to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation. The four themes are training and capacity

building, equipment and packaging, working capital, and target marketing. Open systems theory provided the conceptual framework for exploring the overarching research question for the study. The theory aligned well with the literature and the emergent themes. The findings revealed various strategies used by Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The overarching research question that guided this study was: What strategies do some Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation? The data collection method was through semistructured interviews with five fruit processing business leaders in Accra, Ghana. To ensure participant anonymity, I assigned the following letters and numbers to the five participants, P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5. I used codes and phrases to form the data analysis strategy. Data analysis included the identification of themes resulting from the interpretations and archival documents of the interview participants, which provided appropriate and logical answers to the primary research questions (Davidson, Paulus, & Jackson, 2016). I identified the following codes from the interview transcripts: capacity building, training, challenges, working capital, packaging, innovative fruit sourcing, season, motivation, passion, dedication, target market, and government policy. From these coding, the following themes emerged: training and capacity building, equipment and packaging, working capital, and target marketing. The four emergent themes represent the strategies for the sustainability of Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry.

### **Emergent Theme 1: Training and Capacity Building**

All five participants availed themselves for some form of training in the fruit processing business. P1 and P4 started their businesses with someone with a first degree in food science who understood the processes of the fruit processing business. The fruit processing business involves different operational functions that require training. All the participants confirmed that the leadership of Fruit Processors and Manufacturers Association of Ghana (FPMAG) periodically engaged in various training and capacity building activities at both national and international levels for members. The participants stated that the association facilitates business development services (BDS) at a subsidized cost to members of the association (100%). P3 stated, “I cannot afford a consultancy service because it is an expensive venture.” P4 also said, “I preferred the professional advisers from BDS because I cannot afford the fees charged by consultants.” The knowledge and technical skills acquired on new technologies including best practices in the fruit processing industry are likely to bring improvement in their production processes. As such, these knowledge and technical skills will cascade to the other members through training workshops organized locally.

The training and capacity building theme is in accordance with the research result of Ikupolati et al. (2017), stating that entrepreneurs and employees should train in current and new technologies that will enhance the productive capacity of SMEs. P1, P3, and P4 attended several training courses organized by NBSSI and German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) for small-scale fruit processors. Training and capacity building has an impact on productivity and profitability (Wen-Long, Wen Guu, &



Chiang, 2014). According to P1, P2, and P3, capacity building is the sustainability strategy that helped them to improve their production process. The participants acknowledged capacity building as one of the most critical factors that helped carry out different operational functions in interconnected production processes. To achieve sustainability, Aladejebi (2018), indicated capacity building is essential for the development and growth of SMEs and serves to increase firm profitability and capabilities.

All participants interviewed admitted training and capacity building resulted in the efficient operations and effective use of available production resources. Theme 1 links the conceptual framework and the literature published as a sustainable strategy (Ikupolati et al., 2017; Lesakova, 2014). The theme training and capacity building aligned to the literature and open systems theory in that capacity building is a process which involves the organization, individuals, resources, equipment, and tools all interconnected with the internal and external operations of the business. With the adequate training of the employees, the interconnected internal operations of the business will function efficiently. The external factors such as low human resources, lack of management skills and training, and low technological capacity may not present challenges for the sustainability of the business. Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry must ensure sustainability using available resources to leverage training and capacity building.

Table 1

*Training and Capacity Building*

Code	Number of Participants	%
Training	5	100
Capacity building	5	100
Knowledge acquisition	3	60
Learning new things	3	60

**Emergent Theme 2: Equipment and packaging**

The second theme was good processing equipment and good packaging. The participants expressed concern about the high cost of processing equipment and packaging machinery for which the cost implication is huge for Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry. All the participants maintained that the sustainability of their business hinges on the use of efficient processing and packaging machines (100%). P1, P2, P3, and P4 indicated that they acquired locally fabricated processing equipment for their businesses because they could not afford the imported machinery (80%). P1 shared that Cottage Italia at one time allocated processing equipment but needed a bank guarantee to secure the equipment, but no bank was able to help (20%). P4 also lamented that, “You can get a processing machinery from Cottage Italia, but the price is way too high to purchase.” The visual ecology of the product package is a powerful driver of consumer attention regardless of consumer objectives (Orquin, Bagger, Lahm, Grunert, & Scholderer, 2019). The assertion by Orquin et al.

(2019) confirms the claim by P5 that consumers patronized the well-packaged foreign fruit products on the shelves at supermarkets more than the local products.

The findings of the study revealed that one of the consequences of the poor packaging culture in Ghana is the consumer preference for foreign goods. A recent investigation by Imiru (2017) identified how the essential elements of packaging related to consumer decision making in the selection of fruit juice products. Imiru suggested that product packaging is one of the best marketing tools SMEs can use to sell their products. Study participants acknowledged good packaging of products as a key strategy for attracting loyal consumers. P3 said that, “Our poor packaging culture resulted in the consumers preferring well-packaged products from Europe and Asia.” P4 also stated that, “Consumers do not like local products, they prefer nicely packaged foreign products from European countries.” Additionally, P5 admitted that, “We do not have packaging industry, so there is poor packaging which affects product quality and branding.” P1, P3, P4, and P5 decried the high cost of packaging labels which could increase the production cost and reduce the profit margin of their products (80%). The published literature by Orogbu et al. (2017) supported the fact that importation of foreign products involves the use of foreign currency for which the fluctuating exchange rates affects the cost and productive capacity of SMEs. Theme 2 findings indicated that the fruit products imported from the EU or Asian countries are well packaged and are attractive to consumers.

Study participants acknowledged using either glass bottles or plastic bottles for product packaging. P3 realized the cost of glass bottles was high and obtaining the glass

bottles was a challenge, which led to the use of plastic bottles which were readily available in the market from a plastic bottle manufacturing factory. Each participant accepted that the use of plastic bottles is cheaper but decried the high cost of preservation and storage of products using refrigeration because of frequent power outages. All the participants complained about unreliable power supplies which at times affect their production. P3 and P5 bought generators to use when there is a power outage (40%). All the participants lamented about the lack of government's effort to provide a reliable power supply which results in high-cost implications for the participants (100%).

The results of the study indicated that sustainability of Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry depends on the affordability of processing equipment and packaging machinery. P4 suggested that the government should resource NBSSI to provide financial support for fruit processors to acquire efficient machinery for the business. The strategy of acquiring efficient processing equipment and packaging machines through the government established institutions present a more sustainable arrangement for the fruit processing industry in the country.

P5 lamented that, "some countries have preferential trade agreements with the government where products brought into the country attract no tariffs making their prices lower than similar product in the domestic market." P3 stated that, "government policies do not help the manufacturing sector in general because we have to compete in the open market with our foreign partners." These are some of the external environmental challenges the Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry

encounter whiles doing business. All the participants felt some of these government foreign trade policies do not promote the development and sustainability of SMEs.

Theme 2 aligned well with the published literature and conceptual framework of open system theory. Precisely, equipment and packaging theme aligns with the external environment element on the sustainability of SMEs. Polese, Mele, and Gummesson (2014) observed that open systems theory considers the relationship between SMEs and the environment within which they operate and their capacity to adapt to changing internal and external environmental conditions.

Table 2

*Equipment and Packaging*

Code	Number of Participants	%
Processing and packaging machines	5	100
Fabricated processing equipment	5	100
Imported machinery	4	80
Imported packaging material	5	100
Packaging label	4	80

**Emergent Theme 3: Working Capital**

The third theme was the need for working capital. Each of the participants experienced some form of problems in accessing external funding or grants for their business. Dosumu et al. (2017) observed that limited access to external finance contributes to the high failure rate of SMEs. The participants claimed they started their business using personal resources or support from families and friends. Participants

indicated they used their savings in the early stages of the business because they did not have the documentation to access formal external funds from the banks. The finding confirmed recent published literature by Omondi and Jagongo (2018) which revealed that SMEs owners use personal savings to start a business. The theme working capital indicated that Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry required funding and needed professional advice from the fruit processing industry stakeholders to survive.

All the participants mentioned they participated in financial management seminars organized by NBSSI and GIZ which were geared to assist managers in the short-term to long-term financial management plans (100%). Muriithi (2017) affirmed that most SME managers lack managerial experience and adequate training on how to run a business. All participants mentioned the lack of government policy to support SMEs efforts to obtain external funding and grants (100%). This study finding is contrary to the research result of Owusu-Ansah et al. (2017) stating that government policies facilitate easy access to credit facilities for SMEs, enabling manufacturing business leaders to have access to credit information. According to Asante, Kissi, and Badu, (2018) government creates a conducive business environment for SMEs to develop using fiscal policy tools to help SMEs expand their operations by providing a favorable macroeconomic environment. However, P1, P2, P3, and P4 reported frustrations when they attempted to source external funding from the bank to acquire machinery for the business (80%). P2 and P3 decried the high-interest rate charged by micro financial institutions when applying for a loan for agro-processing business (40%). These findings aligned to recent

literature by Asante et al. (2018) that asserted high-interest rate and high inflation are among other fiscal policies that can create challenges for SMEs in the business operating environment.

All the participants complained about the scarcity of raw materials for processing during the offseason (100%). A significant challenge in Ghana's juice processing industry is the issue of limited fruit supply that serves as the industry's primary raw material. Because of high input prices and unexpected weather conditions, farmers are often unable to provide a constant supply of fruit to the processors' factories. P2, P3, and P5 attributed the shortage of raw materials to the exportation of fruits to the European Union countries by the farmers to earn foreign exchange (60%).

All the participants acknowledged the vital role played by FPMAG to tackle the challenge of fruit shortage. P1 and P3 mentioned that the association has started to explore the possibility of using fruit sheds where all members will source their raw material at a small additional fee to maintain the facility. The unavailability of certain types of fruits (raw materials) throughout the year is a significant challenge. P1 and P5 indicated that the strategy to overcome this challenge was to process the fruits that are available to satisfy their consumers.

The literature and open systems theory align with these findings as open systems share the perspective that the organization's survival depends upon its relationship with the environment. The findings of the study revealed the business needs and activities interrelations for business sustainability. The theme working capital aligned with the literature and the supporting conceptual framework of complexity theory in that access to

working capital involves many complex, unpredictable factors such as government policies, unhealthy competition with large firms for loans and bureaucracy; all of which are external and pose a significant challenge for the survival and the smooth operation of the business. The conceptual frame work of open systems theory and the supporting complexity theory provides the lens to explore and understand the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain their business beyond 5 years of operation.

Table 3

*Working Capital*

Code	Number of Participants	%
Lack of access to funding	5	100
Business Development Services	5	100
Hight interest rate	2	40
Sourcing of external funds	3	60
The scarcity of raw materials	5	100
Artificial shortage of raw material	3	60
Lack of government policy	5	100
Use of personal resources	5	100

**Emergent Theme 4: Target Marketing**

The fourth theme was the need for target marketing. At the early business stage, the participants had a problem marketing product, but their product patronization



increased with the identification of the target market which in turn helped achieve sales volume. According to Gengler and Mulvey (2017), the use of sociodemographic factors including gender, cultural, geographical location, and occupation as an indicators based on consumer behavior should help develop a brand position to support product patronization. All the participants agreed that they have no defined marketing models which accounted for the low market penetration. P1, P2, and P3 suggested personal networking as effective marketing strategies to improve firm sales volume and to ensure profitability. P1 lamented that radio airtime for advertising is expensive and not effective as compared to personal networking (20%). All the participants decried the importation of cheap fruit products from the EU, Asian, and neighboring countries as the reason for non-competitiveness of their fruit products (100%). P4 and P5 blamed a lack of government policy framework on protecting the local small-scale fruit processing industry as the root cause of the proliferation of the imported fruit products into the country (40%). The theme target marketing indicated that the Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry needed an innovative marketing plan, strict pricing regime, and reliable distribution channels to succeed in the marketplace.

P1 reported that the participation in trade missions organized by AGI to neighboring countries such as Togo, Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, and Liberia was profitable because many orders followed at the end of the event (20%). P2, P3, P5 indicated that lack of personal distribution vehicles hinders the marketing of their products because they must rely on public transport (60%). The participants maintained that they have limited resources to embark on aggressive promotion of locally processed

fruit which is why they resort to word of mouth or personal selling of product through direct contact with the potential target. The participants identified the institution/schools, restaurants, hotels, shopping malls, and churches as the preferred target markets. All the participants agreed that FPMAG could play a central role on behalf of the Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry in negotiating with the target market players on the terms of payment.

Open systems theory was appropriate for exploring the strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Targeted marketing provides a sustainable strategy for the manufacturing business leaders in the fruit processing industry to survive in the competitive environment. The literature and Table 4 show the breakdown of the above statistics.

Table 4

*Target Marketing*

Code	Number of Participants	%
Marketing models	5	100
Personal networking	3	60
Importation of fruit juice	5	100
Government policy framework	2	40
Personal distribution vehicles	3	60

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

A multiple case study is relevant for understanding profitability and sustainability strategies for SMEs. The purpose of the study was to explore the strategies used by Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation. The findings section includes participants' evidence, data analysis, and results interpretation. The findings and recommendations may serve as the basis for Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to change the operating modalities of the business leading to the Ghanaian economy's improvement and development. Asare and Fei (2015) found that SMEs in developing countries such as Ghana are contributing significantly to community development, economic growth, employment, and income. Study findings could serve as a guide to Ghanaian manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry struggling to survive as they enhance strategies and practices in the fruit processing industry. Investigation results indicated that training and capacity building, availability of good equipment and packaging, access to working capital, and target marketing are the elements sustaining Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry beyond 5 years of operation.

Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders' in the fruit industry decisions may have significant positive implications for the fruit processing industry's sustainability in Ghana. Using the study findings, new and existing entrepreneurs can improve upon their business performance in the fruit processing business. The information gained from the study could lead Ghanaian SME manufacturing business

leaders in the fruit industry to profitability and sustainability. Study research results can help Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to identify the resources needed to compete in a competitive market environment. The study's findings may contribute to improving business strategies and practices to promote growth and sustainability.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The SME sector in Ghana employs 85% of the manufacturing labor force (Amoah & Amoah, 2018). The implication for positive social change includes the potential for Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to review the findings in this study and implement strategies to help sustain the business beyond 5 years of operation. The new and the struggling Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry that recognize and implement the findings in the study may experience successful operations and profitability.

The findings from this study could help the Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to have a guide to assist them in improving on performance to reduce the unemployment rate, alleviate poverty, develop the local communities, and enhance the growth of Ghana's economy. Additionally, study outcomes might be useful to members of AGI and FPMAG to share with the new manufacturing business leaders in the fruit processing industry to guide each to remain sustainable beyond 5 years of operation.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The recommended action for Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry is (a) to understand the internal and external environment, (b) to understand the need for good packaging, and (c) to identify, diagnose, and prioritize their training needs. I recommend that the current Ghanaian manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry evaluate the information in the study to exploit the opportunities to incorporate the factors into their business. The new potential manufacturing business leaders may review the information in the study and integrate the factors into their start-up business plan.

The opportunities for dissemination would include publishing the study in the following professional journals: (a) Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, (b) Journal of Small Business Management, and (c) Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development. In addition, I will make the findings of the study available to the Fruit Processing and Manufacturing Association of Ghana, Ghana Industries Association and academic conferences. Furthermore, I will provide a summary of the published results and findings to the five participants.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research recommendations include focusing on Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in different industries and geographic areas such as the Central, Western, or the Northern regions. Future researchers should consider using a single case study to explore a specific theme at a time, specifically, (a) training and capacity building, (b) equipment and packaging, (c) working capital, (d) target marketing.

Future research in such an area could help government leaders and business development services to provide continued support and resource to the Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry.

### **Reflections**

During my research, the time I spent with the participants and the entire duration of the Walden DBA program, I learned much about Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry. Initially, I struggled to find Ghanaian SME business leaders in the fruit industry who had time to spend with me, but finally, the five people who accepted my invitation offered tremendous insights into their businesses. I saw their passion and motivation in running and sustaining their business operations. The design and implementation from this study has enlightened me in many ways, such as (a) how to conduct a face - to - face interview, (b) how to use the literature to develop my knowledge, and (c) how these five participants contribute beyond fruit processing to their communities.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry use to sustain business beyond 5 years of operation. Five Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit processing industry comprise the population for the study. The research was conducted in Accra, Ghana and included only firms who sustained their businesses beyond 5 years of operation. Section 3 provided (a) detailed discussion of

findings, (b) professional practice applications, (c) social change implications, (d) action recommendations, and (e) further research recommendations.

My data sources included (a) interview data from participants, (b) interview notes, and (c) standard operations manual. As Fusch and Ness (2015) described, when I did not notice new information emerging after member checking, data saturation was achieved. After coding and analyzing the data, the following four strategic critical themes emerged: (a) training and building capacity, (b) equipment and packaging, (c) working capital, and (d) target marketing. The theory of open systems and the theory of complexity provided the contextual basis for the study. The open systems theory closely aligns with the challenges encountered by Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry in operating and sustaining their business in both the internal and external environments. The study revealed that, as predicted by open system theory, the identification and preparation for internal and external environments can enable Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leaders in the fruit industry to make decisions that help to develop and implement business sustainability strategies. Study findings indicate that successful Ghanaian SME manufacturing leaders in the fruit industry identified and interpreted the environmental events as anticipated by the theory of complexity and adjusted their business strategies and operations accordingly.

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### Appendix: Interview Protocol

I will use the following interview protocol:

1. I will introduce myself to the participant as a Walden University doctoral student and inform him of the time and the purpose of the interview.
2. I will make available to the participant a copy of the consent form to read and sign. I will ask the participant to retain a copy after signing.
3. I will inform the participant of my audio-recording of the interview. I will ask the participant's background information:
  - a. What is your highest education level?
  - b. In which year did you start your business?
  - c. How many workers do you have?

The research questions:

1. What strategies have you used to sustain your Ghanaian SME manufacturing business beyond 5 years of operation?
2. What strategy did you find worked best for you to sustain your Ghanaian SME manufacturing business beyond 5 years of operation?
3. What strategies have you discarded (if any)?
4. How did you assess the effectiveness of your strategies for competitive advantage?
5. What barriers, if any, did you encounter in implementing your strategies for sustainability?

6. How did you address the barriers you encountered in implementing your strategies for sustainability?
7. What else would you like to share about your strategies as a successful Ghanaian SME manufacturing business leader?
4. I will thank the interviewee for participating, stop the audio recording, and conclude the interview.