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Strategizing for Sustaining Small Business Enterprises in Nigeria

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Abstract:*Small business enterprises are important to the economic growth of Nigeria because small businesses makeup 97% of the economy and contribute 70% of the country's job opportunity. Notwithstanding the importance of small businesses in the Nigerian economy, 80% fail within the first five years. Based on system theory developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the purpose of this multi-unit qualitative case study was to investigate the strategies owners and managers used to sustain operations longer than first five years. Twelve senior managers of small businesses in Dutse Nigeria participated in an interview. Methodological triangulation of interview questions was used to collect the data. Review of transcribed data and member checking were used to affirm the validity, credibility, and reliability of the study. Ten dominant themes emerged as findings: managers with educational and professional qualifications, skills, and experience; written business and strategic planning; additional financing; commitment of owners; and improved working conditions and good employees manager rapport. Other findings include the use of word of mouth and maintaining a close relationship with top 20% and high spending customers; use of local FM radio stations, social media, and face-to-face contacts marketing; and the use of e-commerce and e-payment platforms. The findings also include the use of support services; and knowledge of seasonality, cutting cost, and financial discipline.Findings might be utilized by small business owners and managers to develop success strategies to sustain operations longer than first five years which might mitigate small business failure. Mitigating small business failure might contribute to the growth of Nigerian economy.*

Keywords*: Small Business management, Small Business Failure. Small Business Success, SMEs in Nigeria, Small Business Development in Nigeria.*

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I. Introduction

Globally, political, management and business researchers have their focus on small business enterprises (Halabi & Lussier, 2014) and they benefitted from business literature where small business researches are embedded. Small business literature is integral to the economic and social regeneration (Franco & Haase, 2010), helps in establishing industrial base (Smallbone Welter Voytovich & Egorov, 2010), drive innovation and R & D (European Union, 2015), and most importantly contribute to the provision of employment to citizens of a country (Halabi & Lussier, 2014; McLarty Pichanic & Sarapova, 2012; Shehu et al., 2013).Despite the importance of small businesses to researchers, there were variations in the definition of small businesses by countries. A 2012 study by Lucky and Olusegun stated researchers define small businesses by size, the number of employees, sectors, returns generated by the firm, management structure, workforce, or the level of capital committed. Also, there is no universally accepted definition of either small business success or failure. SMEDAN (2013) defines small business success as sustaining operations for five or more years. On the other hand, failed small businesses are firms which are involved in court proceedings or in involuntary action which involves losses to their creditors (Lussier & Corman, 2015; Marom & Lussier, 2014). Lussier and Corman indicated businesses which are closing without a loss to creditors are businesses which are discontinued. Bearing in mind the definition of small businesses, SMEDAN declared 80% of small businesses failed within the first five years.

Like every other economy, small businesses contribute to the economic growth of Nigeria (Ademola & Michael, 2012). Small businesses makeup 97% of the Nigerian economy and contribute 70% of the country's job opportunities (Shehu et al., 2013). Small and medium enterprises employed 82.02% of the total workforce in Nigeria (Adebisi & Gbegi, 2013; Buowari, 2015; SMEDAN, 2013). The rate of failure of small businesses in Nigeria is alarming and is influencing the level of unemployment which is negatively impacting both the local and national economy (Ademola & Michael, 2012: Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, & Nwankwere, 2011). The failure of small businesses in Nigeria have made the segment as the last resort of employment to the citizens because people engage in small businesses only if there is no other employment opportunity available to them (Adisa, Abdulraheem, & Mordi, 2014). However, 80% of small businesses in Nigeria failed within the first five years

(Adebisi & Gbegi, 2013; Buowari, 2015). Despite the failure of small businesses in Nigeria, this business sectoris neglected by researchers (Samujh, 2011).

II. Objective of the Paper

The problem of the study identified was failure of small businesses in Nigeria which is increasing rate of unemployment resulting in theincreased poverty rate in the economy. The specific problem identified in the study was lack of information which small business owners and managers should use to develop success strategies to sustain operations longer than first five years. The paper presented the report of a qualitative multi-unit case study which investigated the strategies employed by successful small businesses in Nigeria to sustain operations longer than five years. Senior managers of small businesses in Dutse, Nigeria were interviewed to collect information that will be utilized by owners of small businesses to develop strategies that will sustain operations longer than five years. Sustaining small businesses might mitigate small business failure in Nigeria which might reduce unemployment and contribute to the economic growth of Nigeria. This paper was deduced from my Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) research project.

III. Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review was to provide insight into information from previous researches related to this study and the research questions which facilitated the research process (Rowley, 2012). The literature review covered thedefinition of small businesses, formal and informal small businesses, theimpact of small businesson theNigerian economy, challenges of small business, small business financing, small business owners and management, business and strategic planning of small businesses, and use of information communication technology in small businesses. The aim was to enhance the understanding of the problem which provided a comprehensive view of small businesses. Identified strategies used to mitigate challenges might lead to small business start-ups success and help successful small businesses to continue to have positive results. Identified the strategies might give government agencies positive results to formulate policies which will advance the sustenance of small businesses beyond the first five years and to improve the economic growth in the Nigerian economy.

3.1 Definition of Small Businesses

There is no universally accepted definition of small business. According to Gbandi and Amissah (2014), developed countries such as the United States and Britain define small businesses based on profit and the number of employees. Seventy-five different countries developed over 50 different definitions of small firms (Chaudhry, Ali, Fareed, & Fakher, 2014). According to the United States Small Business Administration SBA (2017), small businesses are firms employing 500 or fewer persons. The European Commission's definition of small business enterprises includes micro with 10 or fewer employees, small with 50 or fewer employees, and medium with 250 or fewer employees (Holt & Powell, 2015). This study adopted the small business definition of SMEDAN (2013), that small businessis firms with total assets (excluding land and building) of 5 million Naira (USD 10,000 Forex based on parallel market exchange rate) not exceeding 50 million Naira (USD 100,000) and employing 10-49 employees.

3.2 Impact of Small Businesses in Nigerian Economy

The international community continues to attach more importance to small and medium enterprises when pursuing social and economic development (Dauda & Akingbade, 2010; Shehu et al., 2013). Dauda and Akingbade stated SMEs are a major source of job creation and innovation in both developed and developing economies. According to Shehu et al., small businesses enacted a significant role in the sustainability of economic development, wealth generation, capacity building, reduction of poverty, and uplifting people's welfare by providing goods and services. The studies of Shehu et al. and of Dauda and Akingbade discovered small businesses provide 70% of the employment opportunities in Nigeria, while SMEDAN (2013), found small businesses employ 82.02% of the Nigerian labor force. Malchow-Moller, Schjerning, and Sorensen (2011) found small businesses are the largest contributor of employment in rural areas where large firms are difficult to find. Malchow-Moller et al. concluded failure of the small businesses results in a loss of employment and reduces revenue generated by local, state, and federal governments which could lead to failure of the government. SMEs play a role in mobilizing loans from the informal sector where idle money can be channeled into useful economic activity (Juliana, 2013). Women's participation in small business entrepreneurship reduces the level of poverty in the Nigerian economy (Iyiola & Azuh, 2014).

Gale and Brown (2013) found small businesses are the engine stimulating innovation in an economy, creating jobs, and propelling economic growth. Gale and Brown discovered innovation spurred employment through new job creation and resulted in business growth and the country's economic growth. Despite the challenges facing small businesses owners in Nigeria, they make a positive impact on the development of the economy.

3.3 Major Challenges of Small Businesses

The charisma, intellectual ability, and the motivational ability of leaders could propel small businesses to mitigate challenges which were aspects of both transformational and transactional leadership style (Obiwuru et al., 2011). The biggest challenges facing small business growth in Nigeria are related to socio-economic conditions of the country where poverty and crime are on the rise (Remi, Adegoke, & Oppola, 2010). Remi et al. stated the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies observed the economic condition of Nigeria is deteriorating leading to a high rate of unemployment and poverty most of which is due to the failure of small businesses. The challenges facing small businesses in Nigeria include poor strategic planning, poor understanding, the use of technology in business, a lack of management skills and competencies in record keeping, poor infrastructure in the economy, poor and exorbitant power supply, and the prominence of corruption in all facets of life in the economy (Shehu et al., 2013).Similarly, Opara (2011) identified six key challenges facing small businesses in Nigeria: low demand for products and services, poor and insufficient infrastructure in the economy, corruption, low profit, incompetence in business management, and lack of support from government and financial institutions. Ademola & Michael (2012) identified ten challenges facing small businesses in Nigeria. The challenges included inadequate planning, lack of knowledge of business procedures, lack of knowledge of the market, insufficient marketing of products or services,inappropriate bookkeeping, the application of inappropriate management practices, lack of experience and training of personnel, poor infrastructure, exorbitant overhead cost, lack of qualified personnel, unnecessary expenditure, and use of poor accounting methods and practice (Ademola & Michael, 2012). Researchers at SMEDAN identified challenges including poor infrastructure, access to finance, inconsistencies in government policies, and poor business development services, improper access to markets, multiple taxation, and obsolete technology. Oyelola, Ajiboshin, Raimi, Raheem, and Igwe (2013) found a lack of the Nigerian government's interest in small business enterprises as a factor negating the growth of the sector and leading to failures. Similarly, Adeyemi and Abiodun (2014) asserted development plans initiated by the Nigerian government on small businesses failed due to the dominance of the government in economic activities, economic and political instability, and delayed democratization. SMEDAN exists with the mandate for initiating programs to develop the sector. A qualitative study by Du and Banwo (2015) suggested the support given to SMEs by the government of Nigeria was nothing compared to the size of the sector in the economy.

Cater and Young (2016) identified six factors influencing the growth of family businesses: the dynamics of the family, the vision of the leaders and how they plan the business, successorship preparation and development, conflict in management, the risk-taking attitude of the leaders, and involvement of the family in the community. Cater and Young asserted failure of the family business managers to effectively manage the six factors due to lack of knowledge resulted in failure. Conversely, a qualitative study by Agwu and Emetic (2014) found small businesses whether family owned or not had four factors negating their growth in Nigeria including inadequate financing, poor infrastructure, application of multiple taxations by authorities, and lack of the required skills to manage the enterprise. Agwu and Emeti (2014) concluded small businesses owners' incapacity to design a program which could retain employees for a long time to remain competitive was a major challenge to their success.

Hess and Cottrell (2016) stressed financial strain, lack of expertise, rapid growth rate, and lack of necessary resources were the factors which opened a small business to an attack by fraudsters. Hess and Cottrell asserted small business owners must focus on ways to protect themselves from the risk of fraudsters. Moorthy, Seetharaman, Jaffar, & Foong, (2014) found organizational and individual factors contributed to employee theft behavior and studying such factors could mitigate the effect of intentional stealing by employees. Kennedy and Benson (2016) stressed the impact of employee theft to owners was enormous and even more challenging if the owner had a strong relationship with the offender such as a family member. Controlling emotions would enable a manager or owner to find solutions for preventing future occurrences of theft in the business (Kennedy & Benson, 2016). Similarly, Kennedy (2015) found organizations could mitigate theft in the workplace by giving employees the responsibility for theft prevention and control, to handle offenders, and to guide co-employees to understand the impact of employee theft to the survival of the small businesses.

Agwu and Emeti (2014) used z-test and found lack of infrastructure as a key constraint on small business success in Nigeria and the inadequate power supply continued to be the major impediment to the success of small businesses. Similarly, a quantitative research by Ekpo and Bassey (2016) found the inefficient, grossly inadequate, and unreliable power supply could not meet the requirements of the Nigerian economy. Ekpo and Bassey (2016), concluded the major crisis facing the power supply in Nigeria was alow generation of electricity and substantial loss of generated electricity which gives rise to the use of small generators to power most of the economy. Alarape (2014) highlighted frequent power outages as one of the greatest challenges facing the sustainability of SMEs in Nigeria. Similarly, Faloye (2014) stressed frequent power outages were the greatest challenge to adopting of e-commerce by SMEs in Nigeria. Scott, Darko, Lemma & Rud (2014) found electricity insecurity in Nigeria, Nepal, Bangladesh, Uganda, Tanzania, and Pakistan negatively affected the productivity of SMEs. This study investigated how successful small businesses sustain power supply despite the power outages.

3.4 Small Business Financing

The capital to invest in small businesses is critical to their growth, sustenance, and survival. Researchers identified failure to access long-term capital as the primary source of SMEs' business failure (Gbandi & Amissah, 2014). Akinola and Iordoo (2013) stressed a lack of funding as the barrier between SMEs and capital markets. Ozioma-Eleodinmuo (2015) found a lack of funding hindered small business growth and the opportunity to become public limited companies and emphasized SMEs inability to source financing in Nigeria negated their growth. Bah and Fang (2015) conducted a quantitative study on business environment impacts on the productivity and output of firms in Africa. Bah and Fang (2015) found crime, corruption, infrastructure, regulations, and access to finance were the major external factors affecting businesses with a 48% negative impact on small businesses output and a 39% negative impact on access to finance. Bah and Fang (2015) further stressed small businesses are affected by external factors more than larger businesses, and most of the impact hinders small businesses access to financing.

Undercapitalization of small businesses in Nigeria is attributed to tendencies of owners to depend on personal and family savings to create the businesses (Opara, 2011). Most small business financingswere from informal sources rather than formal financial institutions (Terungwa, 2012). Similarly, research on West Africa by Boateng & Abdulrahman (2013) discovered personal savings and credit supplies as the most visible sources of financing for SMEs. Cole and Sokolyk (2016) found small businesses are usually discouraged by loan application procedures, and most of the discouraged businesses do not bother to apply for a loan. Cole and Sokolyk asserted one in three of the discouraged firms would have secured a loan if they had applied. SMEs avoid loans from microfinance institutions due to high-interest rates which make it difficult for the SMEs to make a profit (Kanayo, Jumare, & Nancy, 2013). Therefore, owners and managers of SMEs must look beyond their personal and family savings to realize their dreams of a new start-up by securing adequate capital to be successful.

The challenge facing Nigerian SMEs' ability to access financing from financial institutions is a key factor affecting their performances and accounts for the reason small businesses do not adequately contribute to the economic growth and development of the country (Oliyide, 2012). Similarly, Obokoh and Asaolu (2012) discovered the lack of funding for SMEs by financial institutions is a key factor in the high failure rate of small businesses in emerging economies. There was a significant positive relationship between SMEs growth and microcredit institution loans to SMEs (Franca, 2013). This study collected information on initial and additional financing for small businesses owners and understood the strategies employed by small businesses owners who were successful in obtaining institutional financing.

3.5 Small Business Owners and Management

The owners of small businesses assume risk to engage in economic activity by conceiving and launching a business venture (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2014). The owner of the small business seeks an opportunity in business by risking financial loss (Surdez, Aguilar, Sandoval, & Lamoyi, 2012). Bygrave and Zacharakis (2014) found motivation, independence, pride, personal success, and rewards in the form of profits as the benefits of small businesses to the owners. Many small business owners are dissatisfied with being self-employed which leads to low commitment and eventual business failure (Farrington, 2012). For the small business owners to be successful, Farrington found they must be satisfied with self-employment, have a passion for the job, show a commitment to the business, and have a personal involvement in steering the enterprises to success. Hurst and Pugsley (2011) determined most of the small business owners work for their wellbeing while entrepreneurs desired innovation and growth of their businesses. Small business owners usually strategize to provide an existing product or service to an existing market where competition is eminent while entrepreneurs work toward providing new goods and services with new ideas into an existing market or create a new market (Hurst & Pugsley, 2011). Most small business start-ups have no monetary benefits motive and are usually for the owner to be the boss, have a flexible schedule, or have controlled working hours (Hurst & Pugsley, 2011).

Ogbo and Nwachukwu (2012) discovered most small business owners do not separate personal finances from the business finances. In situations where owners of small businesses consider personal transactions within the funds of the firm, the owners eventually end up managing the business in their personal favor rather than in the development of the businesses (Ogbo & Nwachukwu, 2012). Ogbo and Nwachukwu stressed for small businesses to grow the owners who are managers should accept payment of compensation for their work in the business.

Oliveira, Filho, Nagano, and Ferraudo (2015) found a positive relationship between the roles of the owners and the functions of the managers in small businesses. Small business researchers have argued a small business is not a large business on a smaller scale; there are differences in the way large and small businesses should be managed (Oliveira, Filho, Nagano, & Ferraudo, 2015). Oliveira, Filho, Nagano, and Ferraudo found planning, organizing, leading and controlling as the process approach to small business. The roles approach of managing small businesses is as described in the owner manager's role for the business (Lussier & Achua, 2015). The process approach to small business management and the owner-manager roles are complementary and are a step towards describing the managerial work requirements of small businesses (Oliveira, Filho, Nagano, &Ferraudo, 2015). As the management approach to small businesses is developing, more small businesses fail due to the challenges facing the sector, and more research is needed in the area of small business management to mitigate their challenges and failures (Oliveira, Filho, Nagano, & Ferraudo, 2015).

Leadership is one aspect which shapes the survival of businesses. Karanja et al. (2013) found the success of managing small businesses is more on policies and internal factors than on market buoyancy and external influences. It was discovered the behavior of leaders of small businesses influenced the overall performance and entrepreneurship orientation of the businesses (Muchiri & McMurray, 2015). Staniewski (2016) discovered entrepreneurs with management skills and experience who employ managers with unique knowledge are more successful in business. Similarly, O'Neill, Sohal, and Teng (2016) revealed small firms with quality management capabilities have the significant advantage of good financial performance over firms which do not have experienced management. Accordingly, SMEDAN (2013) suggested most of the small business failures are due to lack of information to develop strategies which will be utilized to manage the various challenges facing small businesses. The focus of this study was to discover the strategies utilized by small businesses to sustain operations longer than five years. The information from the study might serve small business owners in developing strategies for promoting best business management practices to reduce small business failure. Information from respondents of this study might reveal the role of owners in developing successful strategies for small businesses.

3.6 Business and Strategic Planning for Small Business

Challenges are facing small businesses which are focused on planning. A business plan is a written document of research proposing business activities before a business owner begins developing a product (Blank, 2013). Planning should begin with the development of a forecast for profits, income, and cash flow for five years (Blank, 2013). According to Gupta and Muita (2013), strategies guide organizations to attain goals. Strategic planning is an important tool which influences the performance of small businesses including improvement of the financial performance by reducing the level of uncertainty in a firm (Chaudhryet al., 2014). Chaudhry et al. defined strategic planning as the process of awareness on business environment, documentation about the future course of action, and awareness of short and long-term implications of strategies. Similarly, van Gelderen, Thurik, and Patel (2011) stressed a business strategy is an approach which is planned to ensure a firm’s position in the marketplace is favorable. Improper business planning causes 95% of the failures of small businesses (van Gelderenet al., 2011). Formal strategic planning by small businesses improves the decision-making process and helps in forecasting the future courses of action (van Gelderen et al., 2011). Similarly, Dugguh (2015) found strategies add value in many ways to the growth and sustainability of organizations. Therefore, SMEs need to face the challenge of developing strategies which will add value for sustenance. Thus, strategic planning is a process aimed at documenting strategies which may result in a positive performance of the business.

Mueller and Naffziger (2015) found planning activity in small businesses has nothing to do with the demography of the owners. However, educational background and experience of the managers help the use of financial plans to make an impact on the performance of small business start-ups (Mengel & Wouters, 2015). Therefore, managers with educational background and experiences can develop and implement simple financial planning for small businesses to spur organizational performance (Mengel & Wouters, 2015).Bothstrategic and operational planning are positively related to the performance of firms (Watts, Ormsby, & Austin, 2015). Watts et al. concluded firms which develop and implement strategic and operational plans enhance their performance and reduce the level of risk associated with failure. Similarly, Mohamed et al. (2014) found operational planning is critical to the success of organizations rendering services. Honig and Hopp (2016) conducted a longitudinal empirical study on start-up planning which compared the impact of experience-based strategies and prediction based strategies. Honig and Hopp identified the commonly used components of developing a strategic plan to include consideration for customer needs research, competitive landscape research, putting the business plan in writing, and adapting the business plan. Honig and Hopp concluded the owners of the majority of start-ups develop a business plan, but one-third of them abandoned the plan at a later stage. Honig and Hopp also discovered most small business start-up owners conducted research on customers and the competitive landscape when developing a plan. Those small business owners who start a business with a plan are more likely to establish a new venture (Honig & Hopp, 2016). A business plan is essential to the sustainability of small businesses. Start-up characteristics, the experiences of founders, and the environment of the firm are more important than the recommended activities in a business plan (Honig & Hopp, 2016). Similarly, Blank (2013) argued developing an initial plan may suffer a setback due to customers' requirements. Blank asserted the owners of business start-ups might change the initial plan because most customers may not like the initial product features. Similarly, Gunasekaran, Ria, and Griffin (2011) found small businesses could adapt to changes more easily than big firms because their size is an advantage for flexibility. Gunasekaran et al**.** concluded small businesses could use flexibility to improve their marketing, management, and organizational strategies to adopt new trends which will retain their competitive edge.

Agyapong, Ellis, and Domeher argued small businesses owners can build competitive strategies and found the survival and growth of the business depend on the implementation of adopted strategies. The study of Agyapong et al. further found small businesses owners pursuing low-cost strategies should focus on managing the internal capabilities of the firm while those pursuing highly innovative strategies should consider differentiation strategy. A similar quantitative study revealed small businesses owners could improve their enterprise's performance by adopting several strategies and policies (Okeke, Onuorah, & Jakpa, 2016). Another quantitative survey on orientations of small businesses competitive strategies involving 92 small businesses owners in Nigeria found firms which mix low-cost and differentiation strategies outperformed firms which adopt either of the two as astandalonestrategy (Oyedijo, 2012).

Osiyeyskyy, Hayes, Krueger, & Madill (2013) found marketing plans have a significant impact on customers who consume the final product, SMEs engaging in developing a business vision have improved their growth rate significantly, and there is no significant effect on growth when metrics are used to measure performances. Osiyeyskyy et al. found the owners of SMEs should develop and communicate a vision for their businesses and executable marketing plans to sustain and grow the businesses. While new firms should pay attention to rivals when adopting a marketing strategy, Laukkanen, Touminen, Reijonen, & Hirvonen (2015) found branding of products benefits older small businesses more than new ones to improve performance. A qualitative study on the challenges small family business owners face regarding a successor plan stressed the importance of the family business to develop a succession plan as part of their business plan (Khoury & Khoury, 2014).

3.7 Small Businesses and Use of Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Information communication technology (ICT) changes the way firms operate in the 21st-century business environment. ICT enables various functions of the 21st-century business environment including marketing, customer relationship management, supply chain management, logistics, communication, human resource management, and enterprise resource management (Baltzan, 2012). Similarly, ICT helps small businesses encourage customer relationship, reduce costs, and enhance overall efficiencies (Irefin, Abdulazeez, & Tijjani, 2012).Therefore, ICT remains one of the fundamental tools of small business success. Despite the importance of adopting ICT in small businesses, Irefin et al. found high cost and power outages as challenges facing the adoption of ICT by small businesses in Nigeria.

Five factors are critical to the implementation of information technology (IT) in small businesses including consultants for the work, the structure of the organization, IT resources for internal utilization, relationship with suppliers, and relationship with customers (Nguyen, Newby, & Macaulay, 2015). Cragg, Mills, and Suraweera (2013) found planning, controlling, organizing, and leading as the factors to consider by small businesses when implementing an IT system. Nguyenet al. (2015) stressed customers of small businesses are what encourage IT adoption. A theoretical study aimed at defining the framework of small business growth asserted small firms with greater capability and resources in technological advances grow more than those companies which do not have advanced technology (Fadahunsi, 2012). A powerful tool for small businesses to use in competing with larger businesses is the Internet which provides an environment for them to effectively offer products and services to customers (Levenburg, Schwarz, & Motwani, 2015). The survey by Levenburg et al. involving 395 SMEs found small businesses use the internet less for communication purposes, but the increased use of the internet by SMEs for e-commerce spurs the growth of small businesses and enhances the level of competition with bigger firms. Despite the importance of the internet to small business growth, the adoption of the internet by SMEs in Nigeria is slow due to the poor skills of the managers (Hashim, 2015). Hashim's study recommends the Nigerian government support SMEs in information communication technology (ICT) which would increase the number of small businesses owners adopting the use of the internet for small business growth.

Eid and El gohary (2013) found the use of electronic marketing (EM) tools by small business owners results in a positive impact on after-sales, pre-sales, and increases the effectiveness of marketing and performances. Nobre & Silva (2014) found social media enhances the communication between small businesses and customers. Also, social media enhances brand recognition among small business customers (Nobre & Silva, 2014). Nobre and Silva (2014) concluded Facebook social media is key to the facilitation of brand recognition among customers of small businesses and helps to make people aware of their firm and product. Similarly, a study by Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, and Fabeil (2014) indicates social media marketing provides a good flat form for marketing small business products globally and offers adequate cost opportunities to compete with larger firms.

Although most large businesses adopt e-commerce, SMEs are still struggling to utilize e-commerce (Rahayua & Day, 2015). Rahayua and Day suggested small businesses should develop the competencies and resources required for e-commerce adoption to ensure their survival in the 21st-century business environment. Accordingly, Chitura, Mupemhi, Dube, and Bolongkikit, (2015) found inadequate logistics to handle transportation of deliveries, limited availability of banking services, a limited online payment system, and uncertain taxation rules as factors mitigating implementation of e-commerce by SMEs.Chitura et al. concluded the rapid deployment of e-services in developing economies improves the rate of deployment of e-commerce by small businesses. Larger companies recognize the benefits of using the supply chain management (SCM) system, but small businesses do not appreciate its importance to better their services and reduce cost (Chin, Hamid, Raslia, & Baharun, 2012). The study by Chin et al. asserted implementation of the supply chain management system by SMEs has the potential to improve their performance. Similarly, a study on adoption of technology by SMEs in Nigeria found the adoption of supply chain management (SCM) systems by SMEs reduces expenses, increases the flexibility of operations, reduces errors, and increases the response rate to customer demands (White, Afolayan, & Plant, 2014). Similarly, the innovativeness of managers affects the adoption of customer relationship management (CRM) technologies in their businesses (Nguyen & Waring, 2013).

Business intelligence (BI) including the technologies, processes, and applications needed to provide complete data to enable productive decisions by managers is one area explored by small businesses (Kfouri & Skyrius, 2016). Related to BI, Cloud computing sources IT services remotely through the internet (Adam & Musa, 2015). A study by Adams and Musa (2015) asserted the adoption of cloud computing by SMEs requires a commitment of resources but offers enormous benefits. A study suggests there is a positive relationship between the level of use of ICT in small businesses and performance (Kossai & Piget, 2014). Similarly, a study by Ashrafi, Sharma, Al-Badi, and Al-Gharbi (2014) indicates small businesses need to effectively manage the ICT to improve their performance and productivity to grow and compete in the 21st-century business environment.

IV. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study was based on systems theory and systems thinking. The origin of systems theory can be traced to the work of Lud Wig von Bertalanffy in his 1950 paper titled *An Outline of General System Theory* (Von Bertalanffy, 1950). Von Bertalanffy's (1950) work was to find a way of resolving the phenomena of research by separating it into independent parts and studying each in isolation without respect to the problem of the whole (Smith & Weistroffer, 2016). The discovery made by Von Bertalanffy (1950) was research of isolated elementary parts could be in any area including branches of science, living organisms, or social phenomena (Von Bertalanffy, 1950). Von Bertalanffy (1950) suggested general system laws can be applied to any system regardless of its particular properties or the elements involved. Our concerns in this study were the principles or rules applicable to the system in general and the nature of the components and their relationships (Smith & Weistroffer, 2016). The idea for applying systems theory was to capture many different types of systems and provided a general guideline as a solution to attempting to explaining problems (Smith &Weistroffer, 2016). Von Bertalanffy (1950) indicated isolating components would enable studying each separately and understanding their relationships will set up a modeling platform for the whole system which was important for this study. System thinking helped the researcher understood the casual relationships and feedback between components of a system and includes system analysis and system dynamics (Nordby, Øygardslia, Sverdrup, & Sverdrup, 2016). Systems analysis focuses on connections and causalities within the system while systems dynamics involves simulation of the system (Nordby et al., 2016). The essence of systems thinking in this study was focused on the relationships between components which indicated a clear picture of business phenomena that enabled small business owners where they will work with the results in the form of theory and achieved the desired objective (Dawidowicz, 2012).

According to Senge's systems thinking, any internal or external component of a system has the potential to cause a reaction or create new actions to the other parts of the system (Dawidowicz, 2012). The information collected on success strategies on functional components of small businesses might cause a reaction or create new actions by small business managers and owners as best business practice. Therefore, systems thinking and systems theory are good platforms for determining and forecasting conflicts and problems within an organization and can also show how the various components of an organization affect other factors to decide on the outcome of the businesses (Checkland, 2012). Since business owners can create decision-making guidelines which need managers to intervene with important input, systems theory was applied as an effective tool (Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur, & Schley, 2010). Newman (2013) indicated business intelligence couldbe facilitated using the systems thinking where complex business problems can be managed effectively.

Systems theory with systems thinking can be an excellent tool for managers to understand those important factors which can sustain their businesses beyond five years. Systems ideology was used to determine those factors which are new to business failure (Lussier & Ralabi, 2010).The behavior of different components was explained through systems thinking which enabled an understanding of the relationship which is casual (Jonassen, 2011). Business success is possible with collaboration between people with diverse expertise who understand the various components of the system by formulating better procedures. Collaboration can also provide flexibility using systems thinking as a tool to manage complexity and uncertainty. Systems thinking enabled organizations to have a broader view of the organization which helped managers to act in the interest of the system as a whole. Therefore, systems theory and systems thinking created a good framework for the study.

V. Methodology of The Study

I used the qualitative multiunit case study as the methodology of the study. The qualitative research focuses on finding answers regarding the thoughts of the participants (Barnham, 2010; Creswell, 2014). Twelve senior managers were selected from six successful small businesses in Dutse Nigeria, a remote city located over 1000 kilometers away from major cities such as Lagos and Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Previous researchers on small business success strategies in Nigeria focus their attention on larger cities such as Lagos and Port Harcourt. I investigated small business in Dutse, Nigeria which revealed some strategies that do not apply to major cities. Researching in a wider geographical area will require more time and resources that are beyond the scope of this study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The study might not be representative of the whole of Nigeria, but representative of Cities with similar economic characteristics of Dutse Nigeria. Therefore, limiting the research to Dutse was to operate within the scope of the study as envisioned by the researcher.

The twelve senior managers were selected through a purposeful sampling technique from six small businesses to ensure that adequate information is obtained to represent the population (Otuka, Preston, & Pimenidis, 2014; Suri, 2011). The participants voluntarily responded to an interview to collect data. The data provided by the senior managers for this study was useful for creating positive strategies that will enable owners of small businesses to sustain operations beyond five years. The perceived positive strategy changes might be achieved using best practices in business. This might result in more revenue to the government, increased employment, and the improvement of citizens' economic condition. Researchers who use the qualitative approach concentrate on the search for answers to questions that underscore social experience (Denzil & Lincoln, 2010). Qualitative research revealed the underlying procedures including the experiences of the participants and methods deployed to undertake an activity (Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2011).

Case study approach was used to explore information from multiple sources and put it in natural context (Trkman, 2010). Open-ended questions guided me and collected the necessary data for the study. Data was collected through a face-to-face audio recorded interview from participants. The case study allowed me to answer questions on how and why (Yin, 2014). I collected data on strategies small businesses used to sustain operations longer than five years. The use of descriptive analysisanswered research questions and addressed the issue of efficiency, adequacy, and effectiveness of small business success strategies (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Multi-unit descriptive qualitative case study design helped in generating information to develop leads that will improve business and managerial practice (Mohlameane & Ruxwana, 2014).

5.1 Research Questions

The general research question was: what are the strategies that small business owners and managers have implemented to sustain their businesses beyond five years in Nigeria?

Exploring the answer to the central research question requires developing interview questions to collect data for presentation and analysis to determine the strategies employed by small businesses to sustain operations beyond five years. The interview questions were as follows:

A. Can you share the educational and professional qualification of the management team of your business and how their educational and professional qualification help to sustainoperations longer than five years?
B. What are the Business and Strategic Planning employed at the initial and later stages of thebusiness that sustain operations longer than first five years?
C. What are the sources of capital at initial and later stages of the business?
D. What role does initial capital and financing from financial institutions play to sustain the business longer than five years?
E. What is the role of owner?
F. What are the strategies employed by yourbusiness to promote employee confidence and job satisfaction to improve job performance to sustain your operations longer than five years?
G. What are the strategies your business employs to attract, retain and satisfy the customers of the business?

H. What are the marketing techniques, products, and service features in the first five years of operations?
I. What e-commerce services benefited the company or customers in the first five years of operations?
J. What are the strategies your business used to sustain a steady power supply in the first five years?
K. What are the support services available utilized to sustain operations longer than five years?
L. Do you have anything to share as an experience, knowledge, or skill that made your business profitable in the first five years?

I selected participants using the following criteria: participants were adults, participants were active employees of a selected small business, the business chosen were operational longer than five years, the focus of the small business is in wholesale and retail, and participants have the required education, skills, and experience to answer the questions in a way which will reveal the strategies used for success.I identified known small business senior managers which eased contacting them. I also identified participants not known to me which clarified certain useful strategies which helped when analyzingthe data collected. I conducted a preliminary investigation into the success pattern of the businesses and selected those that fall into the category of small businesses which have sustained operations longer than five years.

Because data were collected from professional journals and participants, Tufford and Newman (2012) stressed the researcher is an instrument of the research. Open-ended questions enabled me to develop questions before the interviews. Following multiunit case study protocol aided the researcher in maintaining a focus on the research topic which ensured reliability.Another important instrument which enhanced the reliability of a qualitative study was member checking. Mero-Jaffe (2011) stressed member checking is a tool used by researchers to enable participants to validate the data which improves credibility and accuracy of the research. The audio recordings of the interview were transcribed and were delivered to the respondents by me in person for corrections which reflected the true proceedings of the interview and ensured accuracy and reliability of the data. The data was cleansed after confirming there were no corrections from those interviewed (Terjesen & Sullivan, 2011). After data cleansing, I organized the information into files by coding the data. I identified word frequencies, emerging themes, and interpreted the data. Identified dominant themes which relate to research questions determined the strategies to sustain small businesses beyond five years. Thematic analysis was applied and ascribed the meaning to the responses from the interview.

The seven steps identified by Thorne (2013) were applied to analyze the participants' response. The seven steps include: (a) expressions, statements, and phrases were grouped; (b) using coding which reduced and eliminated unwanted texts; (c) clustered constituents and themes; (d) components and issues which are irrelevant were identified; (e) constituents which are relevant and valid were used, and (f) structural and textual disposition of participants were constructed (Thorne, 2013).I interpreted the findings of the interview and the findings from journal articles as they relate to the research questions. The general research question was: What are the strategies small business employed to be successful beyond five years. Analyzing the participants' responses revealed answers to the general research question. Using the thematic analysis revealed the strategies employed by the small businesses. I developed conclusions based on the interpretations of the data.

5.2 Validity, Reliability, and Credibility of the Study

Securing validity of the data was through triangulation methodology, member checking, and clarifying the bias of the researcher as limitations of the study. Triangulation was by using evidence from participants to build justifiable themes (Mok & Clarke, 2015). Member checking was by sending the transcribed interview, themes, and final report back to the participants for corrections to ensure accuracy (Creswell, 2014). The correction of the transcription by respondents of the interviews ensured the data was dependable. Member checking approach stabilized the quality of the data from the interview. I ensured reliability by checking transcripts to be sure they do not contain mistakes or errors when defining codes, cross-checking of codes to make sure they will serve the purpose of the study, and ensuring consistency of coding (Creswell, 2014). I focused on repetition of answers by participants during the interview which ensured data saturation. Saturation of data collection was when the researcher could not collect any more information during the interviews from the participants (Walker, 2012). Failure to reach data saturation will have a negative impact on content quality of the research (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Walker, 2012). Therefore, I reached data saturation during each interview and ensured the validity of the content of the research. Reaching data saturation is possible when the respondents of an interview are knowledgeable enough on the research questions (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). The use of purposeful sampling enabled the selection of participants who were knowledgeable to respond to the research questions. Seeking ways to generalize qualitative research has inclusiveness (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014; Landu, 2014). Generalization of a case study is possible by repeating the study with new cases (Creswell, 2014). The study was well documented to ensure repeat study in new cases for generalization.

I considered credibility from the perspective of the participants. The factor which made the study credible was the interest of the participants to contribute freely and voluntarily. Participants without an interest in a study will not contribute to knowledge (Sirriyeh, Lawton, Gardner, & Armitage, 2012). Participants with capacity and interest were selected for the study which conveyed the credibility of the study. Probing the interest of the participants in the study during the recruitment process ensured the credibility of the study. The criterion of confirming the selection of participants was the initial manifestation of interest. Early detection of errors helped the success of the study. Dissociating personally from the research enabled me to analyze problems and remedy them before others (Landu, 2014). Therefore, I focused on validity, reliability, and credibility which secured data audit and quality simultaneously.

5.3 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The limitation of the researcher in the study was the ability to collect all the facts relating to the success of small businesses from the participants. I could not force the details of the success strategies which the participants are not ready to share. Part of the approach which I used and mitigated the participants' biases was a quiet and silent interview atmosphere and respected the schedules of the interview which reduced the biases of collecting information. Zenobia, Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) asserted if the researcher's experience is bracketed before collection of data, it will ensure research quality and reduce bias. I bracketed experience before data collection which ensured research quality and reduced the bias.

The study was limited to Dutse, Nigeria which is a remote city in the country. I investigated remote city small business success strategies as against earlier researchers focusing on major cities like Lagos, or Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Another boundary was limiting the study to wholesale and retail industry small businesses which lead to a clear success strategy for the sector. Generalization of the findings of the research may be in remote cities with similar economic characteristics to Dutse, Nigeria. The last delimitation was interviewing only participants who were senior managers in wholesale and retail small businesses from Dutse, Nigeria who participated in the study.

VI. Findings of The Study

After analyzing the data collected from the participants of the study, ten dominant themes emerged as information for small business owners and managers to use and develop success strategies to sustain operations longer than first five years.Based on the findings of this study, it was evident one strategy is not enough for small business managers and owners to sustain small business operations longer than the first five years which agrees with the general system theory which requires various components of a system together working as a whole to sustain operations (David, 2015). The findings presented information on variouscomponents of small businesses to owners and managers to utilize and develop strategies which will sustain operations longer than the first five years. Understanding the common themes in the presented information are leads for a better understanding of the problem as a whole (Mehrjerdi, 2011).

The ten dominant themes were identified in the study as information to develop success strategies by small business owners and managers. They include:

1. Educational and Professional Qualifications, Skills, and Experience of Managers
2. Development of Written Business and Strategic Plan for Small Businesses.
3. Securing Additional Financing through Reinvestment of Profits and Trade Credits.
4. The commitment of Owners to the Success of Small Businesses.
5. Improved Working Conditions and Good Employees and Managers Rapport
6. Word of Mouth of Loyal Customers and Close Relationship with Top 20% and High Spending Customers.
7. Use of Local FM Radio Stations, Social Media, and Face-to-Face Contacts as Marketing Strategies in Small Businesses.
8. Use of e-Commerce and e-Payment Platforms in Small Businesses.
9. Use of Support Services
10. Knowledge of Seasonality, Cutting Cost, and Financial Discipline of Owners

The implementation of the revealed success strategies from the study might result in social change as a result of best business professional practice which will result in mitigating the failures of small businesses in Nigeria.

VII. Discussions of Findings

The study revealed managers with educational and professional qualifications, skills, and experience helped to sustain operations of small businesses. Thisagreed with the assertion of Mengel and Wouters (2015) which stated managers with educational background and experiences could develop and implement simple financial planning for small businesses to spur organizational performance. Similarly, it aligned with the opinion of Lussier and Corman (2015) where they found education, experience, and skills of owners and managers help small businesses to develop the strategies which lead to the success of small businesses. The results agreed with the conclusion of Lee, Jeon, & Na (2016) who suggested age and the educational background of small business managers played a role in influencing success. It also aligned with the work of Wen-Long, Wen Guu, & Chiang (2014) who found courses in small business procedures helped managers to develop skills of problem-solving and recognition of the possibilities to grow. Therefore, it is evident employing managers with educational background, professional qualifications, skills, and prior experience in small business management will help small business owners to sustain operations longer than the first five years.

Findings from the study suggested small business owners need to develop written business and strategic plans to sustain operations longer than the first five years which conforms with the findings of Mohamed et al. (2014) who stated operational planning is critical to the success of organizations. Honig and Hopp (2016) also stated small business owners who start a business with a plan are more likely to establish the new venture successfully. The study also revealed small business owners are likely to change their initial plan to conform with customer requirements. This agreed with the findings of Blank (2013) who asserted the owners of business start-ups might modify the initial plan because most customers may not like the initial product features. Similarly, it aligned with the findings of Gunasekaran et al.(2011) who found small businesses could use flexibility to improve their marketing, management and organizational strategies to adopt new trends to retain their competitive edge.

The study also showed small business owners and managers could either use low-cost, differentiated, or mixed competitive strategy to sustain business operations. The study revealed the choice of competitive strategy depended on the type of products offered by the small business and the income of their customers. Small businesses offering high-quality products with high prices succeeded with a differentiated strategy to offer products to customers with high or medium income. Small businesses with low-income customers were successful with a low-cost strategy. According to the findings of the study, small businesses with multiple types of products adopted both low-cost and differentiated strategies and offered their products to customers based on their income. In a different view, Agyaponget al. (2016) found small business owners pursuing low-cost strategies should focus on managing the internal capabilities of the firm while those pursuing highly innovative strategies should consider differentiation strategy. Also, Oyedijo (2012) found small firms which mixed low cost and differentiation strategies outperformed firms which adopted either of the two as standalone strategies.

The findings of the study showed three sources of initial financing for small businesses including personal savings financing, trade credit financing, and financial institutions financing. The sources of additional financing for small business owners were reinvestment of profits, financial institutions financing, and trade credit. These findings agreed with the conclusions of Boateng & Abdulrahman (2013) who stressed personal savings and credit supplies as the most visible sources of financing for SMEs and the work of Franca (2013) who stated there was a significant positive relationship between SMEs growth and microcredit institution loans to SMEs. The study also revealed small business owners avoided financial institutions loans because of the difficulty in the loan application processes and exorbitant interest rates. The study findings agree with the results of Oliyide (2012) who stressed the challenges facing Nigerian SMEs' ability to access financing from financial institutions is a key factor affecting their performances and accounts for the reason small businesses do not adequately contribute to the economic growth and development of the country. Similarly, Obokoh and Asaolu (2012) discovered the lack of funding for SMEs by financial institutions is a key factor in the high failure rate of small businesses in emerging economies. This is an area requiring further research to discover why small businesses in Nigeria avoided financial institutions loans despite the impact it played in their successes.

Contributing to the success of the small business, the study found owner passion and commitment were important assets which coincided with the findings of Hunter (2011) which stated small business owners who maintained involvement in operations of the business with passion lead the business to success. Similarly, Tasnim, Yahya, and Zainuddin (2014) found an educated owner with the passion for business remained dedicated to the goals of the business. Therefore, commitment for owners is evidently a strategy for sustaining small businesses operations longer than the first five years. Results of the study indicated small business owners maintained a good working relationship with their employees by attending to their needs and providing improved working conditions. This finding aligned with the work of Kreitner and Kinicki (2013) which posited job satisfaction makes employees remain loyal to a business and avoids employee turnover. When employees stayin a firm, they gain the experience to continue the development of the firm (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2013). Similarly, Agwu and Emeti (2014) found small business owners' incapacity to design a program which can retain employees for a long time to remain competitive is a major challenge to their success.

Findings of the study suggested small business owners and managers maintained excellent customer services to retain loyal customers and the word of mouth of loyal customers attracted new customers. The finding conforms with the findings of Armstrong (2012) who found small business owners who provide good customer service created customer loyalty which in turn became their advertisers through word of mouth.Similarly, Cook and Wolverton (2015) found small businesses can only grow and succeed if they engage in attracting new customers. The study further concluded small business owners and managers needed to maintain a close relationship with the top 20% customers and customers with high spending habits to remain competitive and sustain operations. It conforms with the work of Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2013) who stated the top 20% customers of business contributed to their success more than the rest of the customers of the businesses. The findings also stated maintaining an appropriate level of inventory in small businesses helped sustained customer relationship. Thisagreed with the work of Chinet al. (2013) which stated the use of supply chain management system in small businesses helped to maintain appropriate inventory levels and good relationships with suppliers. Therefore, small business owners and managers should strive to adopt and implement a supply chain management system to maintain an appropriate inventory level to satisfy customer needs, so they remain loyal to the business.

Findings of the study showed the use of social media particularly Facebook promoted brand recognition and helped customers to locate the business. Thiswas also noted by Nobre and Silva (2014) who concluded Facebook social media is key to the facilitation of brand recognition among customers of small businesses and helps to make people aware of their firm and product. Similarly, a study by Dahnilet al. (2014) indicated social media marketing provided a good platform for marketing small business products globally and offered adequate cost opportunities to compete with larger firms. Small businesses should utilize social media platforms to reach out to customers to increase brand recognition and provide store locations.

Evidence from the study showed most of the small businesses in Nigeria do not adopt e-commerce to offer products but used e-commerce platforms to order products. The study further suggested some small businesses are preparing to adopt e-commerce to offer products despite the huge capital involved in its implementation. This result agreed with the findings of Rahayua and Day (2015) who suggested small business owners should develop the competencies and resources required for e-commerce adoption to ensure their survival in the 21st-century business environment. The study suggested small businesses utilized e-payment platforms to pay for their orders and receive payments from customers who reduce the overhead expenses associated with travel. It also aligned with the findings of Chituraet al. (2015) who suggested the rapid deployment of e-services in developing economies improved the rate of deployment of e-commerce by small businesses. These findings suggested small businesses should utilize the use of e-payment platforms in their businesses to reduce overhead costs as a prelude to implementation of e-commerce services for their customers.

The findings of the study indicated no significant support of the Government Agency (SMEDAN) to most small business owners in Nigeria. This finding conforms with the conclusions in the work of Oyelolaet al. (2013) who stated government supported initiatives had not contributed meaningfully to reducing the rate of failure of small businesses in Nigeria. Similarly, it aligned with the findings of Du and Banwo (2015) where they suggested the support given to SMEs by the government of Nigeria was small compared to the size of the sector in the economy. Researchers at SMEDAN (2013) suggested small businesses employed the citizens of Nigeria. Despite the economic influence of small businesses to the growth of Nigerian economy, 80% fail within the first five years (Adebisi & Gbegi, 2013). Notwithstanding the lack of government interest in small business development, SMEDAN exists with the mandate for initiating programs to develop the sector. A comparative study of a similar agency in the United States showed how the agency supported small business owners in financial loan advice and support, training, technical support, and advice (SBA, 2017).

The evidence from the study raised ‘s concern as to why SMEDAN failed to reach small businesses in remote cities to address their concerns. This is an area needing afuture investigation to help reduce the mortality rate of small businesses.

Preparing for seasonality was one of the findings of the study as it helped most small businesses to make reasonable profits which aligned with the findings of Schwartz and Chandler’s (2012) who stated the knowledge of seasonality by small business owners and managers helped them to understand the business environment and succeed. Seasonality of businesses is tied to the seasons (spring, summer, fall, and winter) of the year (Schwartz & Chandler’s, 2012). Schwartz and Chandler found products and services which are affected by seasonal demands have seasonality risks. Therefore, small business owners must understand the risk associated with the seasonality of products and services to help a business make a reasonable profit. Proper planning will help small business owners to prepare for seasonality because planning helped businesses to sustain operations (Box, 2011).

The study revealed cutting of unnecessary expenses enabled small business owners to sustain operations and make a profit. This conclusion agreed with Shields and Shelleman (2013) who found small businesses used cost management strategies when sales declined which included cutting inventory purchases and employee hours and the finding of Patten and Patten (2014) who stated small business owners were involved in a variety of tasks to reduce costs. Similarly, the study determined the financial discipline of owners helped sustained operations with profits which aligned with the findings of Ogbo and Nwachukwu (2012) who discovered most small business owners did not separate personal finances from the business finances. In situations where owners of small businesses consider personal transactions within the funds of the firm, the owners eventually end up managing the business in their personal favor rather than in the development of the businesses (Ogbo & Nwachukwu, 2012). When the owners interfere with the funds of business, it may be difficult to secure external funding which makes growth and development problematic and can lead to eventual failure of the business (Ogbo & Nwachukwu, 2012). Ogbo and Nwachukwu stressed for small businesses to grow the owners who are managers should accept payment of compensation for their work in the business. The finding suggested the financial discipline of owners is a strategy to sustain operations beyond five years.

Findings in this chapter presented information which can be used by owners and managers of small businesses to develop successful strategies as a best business practice which can sustain operations longer than the first five years. Thus, the study might spur best business practices which will bring social change in the economy. The social change will be through the reduction of the unemployment rate, uplifting the welfare of citizens, and economic growth of Nigeria. This will enable new small business owners to strategize and avoid failing at start-up within the first five years. The study might benefit small business owners who have sustained operations beyond five years to get an in-depth view of other businesses and replicate best business practice. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations such as SMEDAN might focus on developing policies incorporating the results of this study.

The mortality rate of small business enterprises in Nigeria might be reduced if the business community utilizes the findings of the study. An increased number of small business enterprises in the Nigerian economy might result in the reduction of the unemployment rate, increased wealth creation, and the growth of the Nigerian economy. Local, state, and federal governments will generate more tax revenue from an increased number of small business enterprises in the Nigerian economy which will result in programs and projects which will grow the Nigerian economy.

The questions used when interviewing the participants were straightforward and posed no threat to the secrets of the small businesses. The participants cooperated and released information about the questions without any hesitation. The use of open-ended questions facilitated the belief of participants no interview questions were meant to reveal secrets of the small businesses while member checking confirmed the needs of the researcher were for the study as indicated earlier. The interview schedules included a quiet place for the interview venues and kept to interview time limits which also helped in reducing the biases of the participants. The delimitation of Dutse as a city to select the participants was adhered to during the study. Also, the study was limited to the wholesale and retail sector of small businesses as envisioned for the study.

VIII. Recommendations

a. Current and future small business owners should consider the findings of the study because it will benefit them by knowing the strategies which enabled other small business owners to sustain operations longer than five years.
b. Findings of the study revealed how SMEDAN neglected small business owners in remote cities. SMEDAN and other agencies with the mandate of developing small business sector should consider the results of the study and extend their services to current and future small business owners and managers in remote cities.
c. The study overview and findings of the study will be shared with the participants of the study and provide them with the details of the location where it will be published for them to read if they have an interest in the details of the study.
d. It is recommended small business owners and managers in cities of Nigeria who have similar economic characteristics with Dutse, Nigeria, to consider the results and findings of the study.
e. Further studies can be carried on strategies of sustaining small business success. This study had limited time and financial resources to cover a larger participant sample size and a larger geographical area. Therefore, further research involving a larger participant sample size from a larger geographical area is recommended.
f. Adding more participants was beyond the financial and time scope envisaged by the researcher. A similar study which will cover the thirty-six states of Nigeria is recommended.
g. Replication of the study in cities other than Dutse, Nigeria before making any generalization of the findings of the studyis recommended because Creswell (2014) asserted a generalization of a case study research requires replication of the research in new cases.

IX. Conclusion

The study enabled will understanding of the many challenges facing small business owners in Nigeria which justified why most small businesses failed within the first five years. One important aspect which helped when collecting data from the twelve interview participants was the initial manifestation of interest by them. More so, conducting the interviews in quiet and convenient locations reduced participants' biases and increased the response rate of the participants. The data collected through interviews with the twelve participants who are senior managers of small businesses in Dutse Nigeria and the data from peer-reviewed professional journal articles revealed information which can be used by small businesses owners and managers to develop success strategies to sustain operations longer than the first five years. The information revealed in this study is reliable because data saturation was reached when collecting the data and member checking was used to confirm the accuracy of data from the participants. Data coding and analysis revealed ten themes as success strategies to sustain small business longer than the first five years.

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