

SUSTAINING MICROBREWERIES BEYOND 5 YEARS

BY

MARCO U. YANEZ


A dissertation submitted to City University of Seattle  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION


2022

© Copyright by Marco U. Yanez 2022  
All Rights Reserved

## SIGNATURE PAGE

This dissertation has been examined and approved.

 2-1-22  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan D. Cathcart, PhD, Committee Chair Date

 2-3-22  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gregory Price, EdD, Committee Member Date

Deanne Larson 2-3-22  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Deanne Larson, PhD, Committee Member Date

 2-7-22  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Sumantra Sengupta, PhD, Dean Date

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to praise and thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has led and guided me throughout this journey and who has granted countless blessings, knowledge, and opportunity so I was finally able to accomplish the dissertation. In memory of Raymundo Yañez Gonzalez, Eufrosina Yañez, Maria del Refugio Velez Mora, Beatriz Yañez Gonzalez, Juan Yañez Gonzalez, Armando Yañez Velez, and Jose Fonseca Cardenas: I am forever grateful for the path you paved for me. I would also like to acknowledge the microbrewery business owners who allowed me to conduct research. Without their help and cooperation, none of this would have been possible. Thank you for seeing the value in this research.

I owe special acknowledgment to my doctoral chair, Dr. Susan Cathcart. Thank you for keeping me enthused, sharing your knowledge, and encouraging me to continue this educational process, pushing me to go to the next level, and joining me on this doctoral journey. Your insightful analysis, clear and detailed feedback, and quick returns were a godsend. I cannot thank you enough for your kindness and outstanding support throughout this journey. I also would like to thank committee members, Dr. Gregory Price, and Dr. Deanne Larson, and the Dean of the School of Business and Management, Dr. Sumantra Sengupta. A special acknowledgment to my mother, Luz Maria Velez Mora; my wife, Elizabeth Gallardo Lopez; my son, Ulises Cleto Yanez Gallardo, and daughter, Isabel Maria Yanez; and my siblings, Raymundo Yañez Velez, David Yañez Velez, and Jose Saul Yañez Velez. Thank you for helping me find the balance between work and school to all my family and friends. Your support helped me get through some difficult times. I am forever grateful to all of you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
ABSTRACT.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .....	1
Study Background/Foundation .....	2
Small Business Failure .....	4
Entrepreneurs.....	5
Strategic Management and Planning .....	7
Current State of the Field in which the Problem Exists .....	8
Historical Background.....	10
Deficiencies in the Evidence .....	11
Problem Statement.....	11
Audience.....	13
Specific Leadership Problem.....	13
Purpose of the Study .....	14
Research Questions .....	15
Methodology and Research Design Overview .....	15
Phenomenological Research.....	16
Study Limitations.....	17
Study Delimitations .....	18
Definitions of Key Terms .....	18
Significance of the Study .....	20

Summary .....	21
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	22
Small Businesses in the United States .....	23
Growth of Small Business .....	24
Economic Development .....	25
Source of Employment .....	27
Entrepreneurship .....	29
Definition of Entrepreneurship.....	29
Risk of Business Failure.....	30
Causation and Effectuation Principles .....	31
Entrepreneurial Orientation Capabilities .....	32
Entrepreneurship in Small Business.....	32
Small Business Success .....	33
Definitions of Success .....	35
Operating a Small Business.....	35
Small Business Failure.....	36
Characteristics of Failure.....	37
Craft Beer Industry .....	39
Growth of Craft Beer.....	41
Craft Breweries in the United States .....	43
Popularity and Growth of Microbreweries.....	44
Strategic Planning .....	45
Strategic Mindset.....	46
Effective Planning .....	48
Strategies to Outperform Competition.....	49

Differentiation Strategy .....	51
Cost-Leadership Strategy .....	52
Focus Strategy .....	53
Definition of Entrepreneurship Theoretical Underpinnings .....	55
Stakeholder Theory .....	55
Strategic Entrepreneurship Theory .....	57
Social Exchange Theory .....	59
Summary .....	60
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....	62
Research Method .....	63
Quantitative Research.....	64
Mixed-Method Research .....	64
Qualitative Research.....	65
Research Design.....	66
Grounded Theory .....	67
Ethnography .....	67
Case Study .....	68
Narrative.....	68
Phenomenology .....	69
Participants.....	70
Population.....	71
Sample .....	73
Data Collection .....	74
Instruments.....	76
Pilot Study.....	77

Data Analysis Methods .....	78
Limitations .....	81
Delimitations .....	82
Role of the Researcher .....	83
Ethical Research.....	84
Quality of Evidence .....	85
Reliability .....	85
Dependability .....	86
Validity .....	87
Credibility.....	88
Confirmability .....	89
Transferability .....	90
Summary .....	91
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....	93
Pilot Study.....	93
Data Collection .....	95
Demographic Information.....	96
Data Analysis .....	98
Presentation of Findings .....	100
Research Question 1 .....	100
Research Question 2 .....	103
Research Question 3 .....	108
Summary .....	112
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	114
Interpretation of Results.....	114



Research Question 1 .....	115
Research Question 2 .....	117
Research Question 3 .....	122
Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement .....	123
Application to Business .....	124
Implications.....	125
Recommendations for Action .....	127
Recommendations for Further Research.....	130
Summary .....	132
REFERENCES .....	134
APPENDIX A: Interview Script.....	1788
APPENDIX B: Interview Questions.....	1799
APPENDIX C: Participant Informed Consent.....	1833
APPENDIX D: Participant Withdrawal Form.....	1888
APPENDIX E: Recruitment Script.....	1899

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. Participant Demographics Owners Section 1 .....	96
Table 2. Participant Demographics Owners Section 2 .....	97

## LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.</i> 2020 Small Business Administration Profiles for the States and Territories .....	26
<i>Figure 2.</i> Net Employment Change, Gross Employment Gains, and Losses Overall .....	28
<i>Figure 3.</i> Industry Performance 2013–2026 .....	41
<i>Figure 4.</i> Craft Beer Share in the United States, 2012–2019 .....	42
<i>Figure 5.</i> Craft Beer Growth, 2019.....	45
<i>Figure 6.</i> The Breweries .....	71
<i>Figure 7.</i> 123 Microbreweries in Seattle and King County.....	72
<i>Figure 8.</i> Word Frequency.....	99

## **ABSTRACT**

Small Business Administration (SBA, 2020a) reported from 1994–2018, an average of 67.6% of new employer small businesses survived at least 2 years. During the same period, the 5-year survival rate was 48.8%. The general problem is that small business owners embark on small business initiatives with limited knowledge on implementing business strategies, which results in premature business failures. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the application and implementation of business strategies for microbrewery businesses. A qualitative phenomenological design was selected for this study because it explored the lived experiences of microbrewery business owners who shared an event or phenomenon. Washington State Craft Beer (n.d.) reported a population of 431 microbreweries in Washington State in 2020. Business owners who set strategies for their businesses were the most appropriate interview participants. The study included a purposeful sample of 12 microbrewery business owners who have been in operations for 5 or more years. The first two microbrewery business owners were selected for the pilot study. The primary sources of data for this study were telephone or virtual semistructured interviews of microbrewery business owners. The researcher was the primary data collector, used a semistructured interview data-gathering vehicle, and applied a combination of manual and software-based techniques to organize and link responses. Four themes emerged from participants' responses: Theme 1–Customer Experience is Key to Exceeding Customers' Expectations; Theme 2–Passionate Business Owners Love What They Do; Theme 3–Business Strategies Build Foundations to Sustain Business; and Theme 4–Internal and External Factors Influence Business Sustainability. Findings of this study provide insights to microbrewery business owners in understanding

small business implementation of strategies that help sustain business beyond 5 years. Results from this qualitative phenomenological study may enhance microbrewery business owners' abilities to conduct planning strategies to remain competitive, forecast, and study the market to anticipate changes in the beer industry. The researcher recommends further research using a quantitative, correlational study of small business owners to test the significance of relationships among variables, including customer experience, passion as a business owner, business strategies, business planning, and internal and external factors influencing business sustainability.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

People have assembled in breweries and beer pubs throughout history. Before the invention of refrigeration, beer was typically served and consumed locally and within a few miles of the brewery that produced it. Decades ago, homebrewing often was the best way to sample a wide variety of unique beer styles besides being a fun activity similar to cooking. Acitelli (2013) commented people started homebrewing and experimenting with different beer styles they had experienced, mostly from international travel. Handcraft beer production and its consumption were on the rise. As Acitelli noted, it became clear large beer producers needed to improve their holding by eliminating small-scale brewery competition and handcraft beer-rising production.

In recent years, craft beer has gained popularity and evolved into an immense industry. Watson (2016) reported the total number of breweries in the United States reached an all-time high of 4,144, a number not seen since the late 1800s. This number rose to 5,301 in 2016, where 5,234 were craft breweries. The beer industry has changed significantly over the past 30 years. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (n.d.) reported there were 49 breweries in 1983. At the end of 2019, the data showed there were 11,584 reporting breweries.

The continued growth in small, upstart breweries make the U.S. beer market a dynamic and competitive industry where small business owners face challenges to sustain their business beyond 5 years. Small Business Administration (SBA, 2020a) reported from 1994–2018, an average of 67.6% of new employer small businesses survived at least 2 years. During the same period, the 5-year survival rate was 48.8%, the 10-year survival rate was 33.6%, and the 15-year survival rate was 25.7%. SBA further reported

in 2017, 1 million small businesses opened, and 898,000 small businesses closed. The purpose of the study was to explore the application and implementation of business strategies that small business owners used to stay operational for 5 or more years. A qualitative phenomenological design was suitable for this study because it explored the lived experiences of business owners who share an event or phenomenon.

Chapter 1 includes all elements that set the foundation for this study. The chapter begins with the background and introduction, followed by the problem statement aligned with the purpose of the study. To enhance clarity of the study's focus and offer a streamlined discussion, a set of key definitions is included following the research question section. A brief discussion about the significance of the study is included toward the end of the chapter. Chapter 1 concludes with a summary statement that encapsulates the essence of the chapter.

### **Study Background/Foundation**

Murray and O'Neill (2012) claimed interest in small breweries initially gained acceptance in commercial markets. The increase in craft beer popularity contributed to the expansion of craft breweries in the 1980s and 1990s. Although large-scale brewers continued to control most of the market, craft beer has continued to gain popularity. Recreational homebrewing became a popular pastime. The American Homebrewers Association (2017) conducted a survey in 2013 about beer production. The data revealed over 1.2 million barrels of beer were produced by homebrewers in the United States, producing more than 2 million barrels per year. As such, the homebrewing industry appears strong and poses a potentially competitive threat to the craft beer industry.

Microbreweries have primarily driven growth in the craft beer industry in recent years. Microbreweries have an annual production of 15,000 barrels or less, typically catering to local consumers. Garavaglia and Swinnen (2018) concluded the growth of the craft beer market is tightly linked with the development of variation in beer style and preference. The advent of craft brewing has stimulated the experimentation of beer and production that had previously been neglected.

Modern craft beer was born in the late 20th century, but the industry did not experience its greatest boom until the 1990s. The Brewers Association (2018) reported the number of craft breweries in the United States increased from 1,574 to 6,266 between 2004 and 2017. According to Acitelli (2013), production grew from just over 5 million barrels to more than 25 million. Many consumers prefer local products; may choose to support small, local businesses; purchase produce at the farmers' market; or drink beer at local breweries. With such climatic growth in craft breweries, business owners need to consider the strategic management of their resources and management decisions.

Microbrewery business owners must review and understand business strategies if they wish to continue to seek growth and sustain competitive advantage. The lack of insight into what strategies are successful may negatively impact the ability of microbrewery business owners to continue their operations beyond 5 years. Doern (2016) emphasized few researchers have focused on the necessary strategy for small business owners to succeed long term. As Miettinen and Littunen (2013) noted, insufficient financial management, human capital, education and knowledge base, social capital, and lack of business experience are key factors associated with failure within 5 years. Miettinen and Littunen mentioned other research scholars have attributed planning,



timing, mode of entry, marketing, industry competitiveness, culture awareness, and preparation to growth.

### **Small Business Failure**

The number of craft breweries has increased exponentially over the last 30 years. Many craft breweries have not survived. Watson (2014) contrasted a 48.5% failure rate for brewpubs and a 24% failure rate for microbreweries since 1980. Kleban and Nickerson (2012) confirmed the business failure rate of craft breweries is the result of competition in the market. Other potential reasons for these closures include changes in demand, low production, and, in some cases, availability and acquisition of ingredients. With such climatic growth in the microbrewing industry, microbrewery business owners need to consider the strategic management of their resources and management decisions. Microbrewery business owners must review and understand business strategies to continue to seek growth and competitive advantage.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021a), 20% of small businesses fail in their 1st year, 30% fail in their 2nd year, and 50% fail after 5 years. After the 10th year, 70% of small businesses fail. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021b) also summarized gross job losses from closing and contracting private-sector establishments reached 20.4 million from March 2020 to June 2020, increasing 12.6 million jobs from the previous quarter. The difference between gross job gains and gross job losses yielded a net employment loss of 14.6 million jobs in the private sector during the 2nd quarter of 2020.

The SBA (2020a) reported from 2000 to 2019, small businesses created 10.5 million net new jobs, whereas large businesses created 5.6 million. Small businesses have

accounted for 65.1% of net new jobs creation since 2000. In 2017, 1 million business establishments opened, and 898,000 establishments closed. From 1994–2018, an average of 67.6% of new small business establishments survived at least 2 years. During the same period, the 5-year survival rate was 48.8%, the 10-year survival rate was 33.6%, and the 15-year survival rate was 25.7% (SBA, 2020a).

### ***Reasons for Small Business Failure***

According to Eid and El-Gohary (2013), small business is integral to worldwide economic development. Small business owners have difficulty keeping their businesses from failing because few have access to enough financial and nonfinancial resources. Goetsch and Davis (2014) claimed new businesses fail at a significantly higher rates than existing businesses, and small businesses have failed at considerably higher rates than large corporations. Besser and Miller (2013) noted a lack of uniformity or consensus on a definition of failure has contributed to the confusion about the causes. Small business failure is an opportunity to plan; poor strategic planning results in a high failure rate of new businesses.

Business failure can have negative consequences for business owners. According to Toft-Kehler et al. (2014), successful small businesses use failed business attempts as learning tools for future opportunities. Failure occurs because of barriers to success, limited access to capital, and ineffective management. The greatest lesson gained from failure is learning what not to do during the next attempt.

### **Entrepreneurs**

Miskin and Rose (1990) illustrated the definition of an entrepreneur is inconclusive and subjective based upon varying interpretations. A formal description by

the SBA (2014) extended the definition and described the word entrepreneur in a quantitative manner, depicting the individual as a small business owner with up to 500 employees who assumes risk for the business. Sedliacikova et al. (2016) reported scholars have studied various aspects of entrepreneurship, including why and how small business entrepreneurs become successful. Growing and sustaining a business through multiple strategies and resources before starting a new venture is a growing interest.

Miskin and Rose (1990) used a quantitative approach to research the impact of situational variables and the resulting success of 1,002 new business ventures in Washington. Among many descriptions, Miskin and Rose described entrepreneur as an individual who undertakes social and personal risk and provides services and goods that satisfy new and existing markets. Harker and Lam (2013) used an in-depth, longitudinal qualitative research approach to explore three Hong Kong businesses in China over 11 years. Harker and Lam agreed with previous research and positioned entrepreneurs as risk takers. Miskin and Rose concluded these profit-seeking individuals organize startup activities and bear financial uncertainties based on the intentions of lucrative financial gain.

Kritikos (2014) found entrepreneurship positively influences economic growth by introducing innovative technologies, products, and services and by raising the productivity of firms and economies. According to Akaeze and Akaeze (2016), small business owners and entrepreneurs create two out of every three new jobs and produce more innovations per employee than large business firms produce. Ritthaisong et al. (2014) suggested creating wealth and taking a competitive advantage require small business owners to develop exclusive, firm resources that competitors cannot duplicate.

## **Strategic Management and Planning**

Strategic management is the framework for directing business activities, allocating resources, supporting key objectives and decisions, and enhancing performance for sustainable competitive advantages (Aboramadan & Borgonovi, 2016). Strategic management includes examining internal resources and external environments to provide overall direction to management and business owners to achieve their business goals. Petrova (2015) concluded strategic management is a continuous process of developing and implementing business strategies to maintain an effective functioning business in changing environments.

Strategic planning guides the activities directed to increase the economic prosperity of the business. When choosing strategies, managers rely on specific, internal capabilities that support strategic management activities (Storchevoi, 2015). The resource-based view describes internal capabilities, such as dynamic capabilities, as a combination of resources, people, and knowledge that works together to create new competitive resources. Goldman et al. (2015) compared the historical concept of strategy as military and political origins and noted strategy has always been about obtaining a competitive advantage and controlling the impact of change. Strategic management is concerned with the actions of small business owners and decisions that direct business toward survival, growth, and competitive advantage through the formulation and implementation of goals and initiatives based on the consideration of internal resources and external factors.

Strategic management activities support management and strategies by addressing external threats in uncertain and dynamic environments (Esmaeili, 2015). Williams

(2015) acknowledged managing with indifference or ignorance could create leadership rigidity, but so can absolute certainty. As future challenges emerge in the business environment, the need arose to explore the business phenomenon. Strategic management studies should focus on the issues that significantly affect long-term growth of the business.

### **Current State of the Field in which the Problem Exists**

The beer industry has become increasingly crowded (Nobile, 2018). Some business owners have wondered whether there is a beer bubble ready to burst. The competition for microbrewery business owners can be even more acute at tap handles because retailers can add floor space to sell more beer products; conversely, expanding tap options at a bar is not easy. Lombardo (2021) mentioned brewers compete primarily based on quality, taste, branding, and marketing. To a lesser extent, brewers also need to be price competitive. Raw materials are the highest cost for microbrewery small business owners, and fluctuations in input costs can negatively affect industry operators' pricing.

The Brewers Association (2019) reported small and independent brewers collectively produced 25.9 million barrels and realized 4% total growth in 2018, increasing craft's overall beer market share by volume to 13.2%. The total of craft breweries operating in 2018 was 7,346, including 4,521 microbreweries, 2,594 brewpubs, and 231 regional craft breweries. There were 1,049 new brewery openings and 219 closings throughout the year, a closing rate of 3% (Brewers Association, 2019). The beer landscape faces new realities with category competition, societal shifts, and other variables in play. There are still pockets of opportunity in geography and business

models, but brewers need to be vigilant about quality, differentiation, and customer services.

The nature of business is synonymous with risk. A good business owner will want to know their odds of success before placing considerable resources into an endeavor that may or may not work out. According to the SBA (2020a), there are 31.7 million small businesses in the United States, where 81% have no employees and 19% have paid employees. The number of small employers has increased after a decline during the Great Recession. From 1994–2018, an average of 67.6% of new employer establishments survived at least 2 years. During the same period, the 5-year survival rate was 48.8%, the 10-year survival rate was 33.65%, and the 15-year survival rate was 25.7%.

There are various reasons small businesses fail, but a few stand out among the rest. CB Insights (2021) analyzed 101 small startup businesses and identified 20 reasons small businesses fail: no market need, ran out of cash, did not have the right team, were outcompeted, priced user-unfriendly product, pushed a product without a business model, marketed poorly, ignored customers, mistimed the product launch, lost focus, endured disharmony among the team, pivoted badly, lacked passion, failed geographical expansion, had no financing, faced legal changes, did not use a network, burnt out, and failed to pivot. Other reasons for small business failures included poor financial performances, limited access to funds, and flawed financial projections (Karadag, 2015). According to van Vugt and Ronay (2014), the failure rate for small businesses not meeting their profitability target could be as high as 60%, and Suriadi et al. (2014) noted small business owners could assume certain risks and manage such risks to grasp market opportunities.

## Historical Background

In terms of historical precedent for assessing the potential impact of a recessionary period following the current crisis, the Brewers Association (2020) noted the periods of growth and recession since 1995 do not reveal significant differences in beer volume-produced growth. During this period, the 10 quarters covered by recessions averaged 0.08% growth for the industry, whereas the 88 covered by growth average were 0.27%. The growth quarters were better, but that difference was not statistically significant. Although beer sales declined after the 2008 financial crisis and as the ensuing Great Recession wore on, it was more likely due to factors associated with consolidation than anything else (Brewers Association, 2020).

In less than a decade (i.e., from 2008–2016), the number of small business owners in the United States expanded by a factor of six, whereas the number of employees at those breweries grew by approximately 120%. As this ascent occurred, a simultaneous decline occurred in the overall U.S. beer market, with significant brewers' shipments dropping precipitously. U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (2019) reported total annual U.S. beer production in 2019 was over 179.7 million barrels or approximately 5.5 billion gallons, generating about \$100 billion in revenue. Moreover, the manufacture of beer in 2019 was 3.51 million barrels less than in 2018, when brewers produced 183.23 million.

According to the Brewers Association (2019a), breweries that opened between 2015 and 2019 contributed a combined 94% to total craft growth last year, whereas those established in 2014 or earlier contributed only 6%. Stump (2020) commented just how difficult it is to become long-established brewers and how their aging management teams

struggled to compete with evolving consumer preferences for new and different products in an increasingly competitive and creative marketplace.

### **Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Arasti et al. (2012) pointed out small business researchers have focused on success rather than failure. The SBA (2014) mentioned the U.S. government does not collect data on nonbankruptcy closures. When studying business failure in Iran, Arasti et al. concluded the results of qualitative interviews showed an overwhelming lack of organizational management, financial management, marketing, and human resources management on the part of the business owners.

Otar (2018) stated 45.4% to 51% of small businesses survive beyond 5 years. Multiple factors affect whether a small business succeeds or fails. Although small businesses play a critical role in the economy, there is a lack of research on what causes small businesses to fail at such a high rate (Mayr et al., 2020). Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2018) took a stance on the lack of synthesis across the literature to explain the stages of decline that ultimately lead to small business failure. The successes and failures of small businesses have been widely analyzed through quantitative research, such as the analysis of financial records. A common misconception among business owners is those small businesses are put under the same category as larger businesses because they share similar characteristics.

### **Problem Statement**

The general problem is small business owners embark on small business initiatives with limited knowledge on how to implement business strategies, which results in premature business failures. From 2005 to 2009, small business bankruptcies increased



from 39,201 to 60,837 (Hanks et al., 2011). The bankruptcy cases reflected poor leadership or lack of business knowledge in marketing, organizational management, financial management, or strategic planning. Microbrewers search for the opportunity to start living their dreams of owning their microbrewery business and decide to start their ideal business; however, microbrewery business owners are not efficiently changing, adapting, nor managing their business strategies for success beyond 5 years.

Microbrewery and small business owners have acknowledged that specific strategies performed by more extensive business firms might increase cost effectiveness (Brammer et al., 2012). Microbrewery and small business owners are unwilling to invest the required resources to compete with larger business firms. The approach is taken through a strategy to seek competitive advantages. Microbrewery and small business owners can successfully compete with the appropriate strategies to determine a firm's profitability. Poor planning and management, lack of cash flow and capital, wrong location, inadequate marketing plan, lack of research on competition, the wrong choice of business, and rapid business growth are leading factors to microbrewery failure.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) reported from March 2018 to June 2018, gross job losses from closing and contracting private-sector small businesses were 7.2 million, an increase of 536,000 jobs from the previous quarter. Nearly 80% of all small business failures occur in the 1st year, approximately 70% occur in the 2nd year, and only half of businesses survive the first 5 years (Gilliard, 2018). The Brewers Association (2019b) reported 8,275 craft breweries operating in 2019, including 3,011 brewpubs, 2,966 taproom breweries, and 240 regional craft breweries. Throughout that year, there were 942 new brewery openings and 294 brewery closings. Although craft

brewers entered 2020 on a solid foundation, the beer landscape dramatically shifted from that of 2019. Brewers Association (2021) reported the overall beer market dropped 3% by volume in 2020. Retail dollar value was estimated at \$22.2 billion, representing a 23.6% market share and a 22% decline over 2019. Brewery owners face new realities due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, with extended closures, tight cash flow, societal shifts, and other economic variables in play.

### **Audience**

This study is essential to small business communities, business owners, entrepreneurs, governmental agencies, business leaders, and scholars in understanding the needs of small business owners to sustain business in the long term. The result of this phenomenological research provided lessons to new business owners to gain knowledge when facing similar business practices. The findings help microbrewery business owners understand the success and failure phenomenon seen throughout the lived experiences of microbrewery business owners who have sustained their businesses beyond 5 years.

### **Specific Leadership Problem**

The specific problem is the beer industry has reached saturation, and a small percentage of microbrewery business owners stay in business for more than 5 years. New small business owners have continued to flood the market as demand for craft beer persists (Lombardo, 2021). In a 5-year span between 2016–2021, the percentage of small business owners rose 11% to 9,472 small business owners. The influx of new small business owners has resulted in declined profit for the industry, as a high concentration of new small business owners weighs the average lower; additionally, the industry profit—

defined as earnings before interest and taxes—is expected to decline, accounting for 4.2% of revenue in 2021 (Lombardo, 2021).

There were 93 Washington breweries during the last economic recession. Of these operations, roughly 70% remained in operation by 2017 (Calen et al., 2019). Among those breweries that produced at least 500 barrels in 2009, 89% still operated in 2017. Of the 56 breweries in 2009 that produced less than 500 net barrels, only 13 survived (Calen et al., 2019). Microbrewery business owners want to create a sustainable business that survives beyond 5 years. They must understand how to implement business strategies to sustain long-term growth and improve performance.

Change has consistently created significant opportunities and obstacles for microbrewery business owners. Other challenges facing microbrew business owners are becoming agile leaders and managers; not all business owners get a thrill from implementing a new, creative business strategy. Small business owners inspire followers through various leadership styles (Coates & Howe, 2015). One leadership style is not suitable for every small business, and small business owners should be flexible to adjust their business styles based on organizational need. Microbrewery business owners need to conduct market analysis to understand the market share, potential competitors, product offers, pricing, and promotion strategies.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the application and implementation of business strategies that microbrewery business owners used to stay operational for 5 or more years. The craft beer segment has become highly competitive due to the easy availability of funds to finance startup operations, which has

led to explosive growth in the number of craft breweries operating in U.S. market preferences and distribution techniques. Competition is based on price, leading to a drastic decline in the quality and integrity of beer products (Kleban & Nickerson, 2011). The Pacific Northwest and California are the most competitive craft beer markets in the United States in number of breweries and consumer awareness (Kleban & Nickerson, 2011).

The SBA (2020a) reported the number of created businesses in the United States continues to increase; yet, more than 67.6 % of business owners are unsuccessful after 2 years. Improper business strategies account for most business failures. Microbrewery business owners will benefit from this qualitative phenomenological study, which explored how to overcome challenges during the first 5 years in business and acquire new knowledge to achieve success through the documented, lived experiences of successful small business owners.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1. What business strategies did business owners use to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

RQ2. How have business owners implemented business strategies to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

RQ3. What impacted business owners' business strategies to keep the microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

### **Methodology and Research Design Overview**

A researcher spends considerable time identifying an appropriate method and design for a study and considering what approach may answer the central research

questions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) mentioned in planning a research project, researchers need to identify whether to employ a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach. The approach is based on bringing together a worldview or assumptions about research. A researcher chooses from a wide range of potential qualitative research designs, seeking one that reflects the study's intentions. Researchers conduct qualitative research designs to study or observe individual or group issues that are hard to measure numerically, and quantitative research design is appropriate when analyzing numerical data and describing or noting statistical changes of a population (Cronin, 2014). A qualitative research approach involves examining events or experiences from the perspective of the individual experiencing the phenomenon. Ilkay (2013) pointed out the significant advantage of using a qualitative methodology because it produces more in-depth and comprehensive information. A phenomenological design was suitable for this study because it explored the lived experiences of business owners who shared an event or phenomenon.

### **Phenomenological Research**

In phenomenological research, Moustakas (1994) started by discussing different human science perspectives and models. He illustrated five human science research approaches that use qualitative methodologies: ethnography, grounded theory, hermeneutics, empirical phenomenological research, and heuristic research. This phenomenological study focused on exploring the experiences of small business owners who have sustained business beyond 5 years.

Primary data were collected through telephone or virtual interviews to gain insight into how small business owners change, adapt, and manage business strategies.

Phenomenology research involves the phenomenon's essence, as the essential meaning of the phenomena involved participants' lived experiences. Marshall and Rossman (2016) emphasized phenomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the importance of individual lived experience, noting, "How they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (p. 17).

Moustakas (1994) posited phenomenology is an appropriate tool for exploring and describing shared experiences related to phenomena. Phenomenology seeks to understand the human experience to explore phenomena and how it is perceived and experienced by an individual in the phenomenological event. In doing so, the researcher must guide the participant to relive their experience, or phenomenon. The participant must share that experience in all of its lived details, unfettered by the researcher's interpretations or judgments.

### **Study Limitations**

Limitations are possible weaknesses the researcher cannot control (Esmaeilzadeh et al., 2014). This study's focus was the quality and depth of data collected versus the quantity of data collected. A qualitative study incorporating participant interviews can be limited by potential participant bias and participants' ability to recollect past performance events accurately. The researcher can mitigate bias by avoiding viewing data through a personal lens. Viewing data through a personal lens is a form of bias, resulting in the misinterpretation of the meaning and shared experiences of participants (Balzacq, 2014).

Microbrewery business owners may have felt discomfort disclosing information about their business failures or successes and may not have precisely recollected their experiences conducting business. Participants also may have felt uncomfortable or

reluctant to reveal all the business information necessary to fully evaluate the business strategies used to improve profits. Criteria for microbrewery business owners were limited to a minimum of 5 years of being in business. Microbrewery business owners in operations for fewer than 5 years or who changed ownership and failed after the transference of operations were excluded from the study. Researcher bias occurs when the researcher has personal biases or prior assumptions they cannot bracket (Onwuegbuzie, 2003). This bias may have subconsciously transferred to the microbrewery business owners, affecting their behaviors, attitudes, or experiences.

### **Study Delimitations**

Barratt et al. (2011) identified delimitations as the bounds and scope of the research study. The study was delimited to 12 microbrewery business owners who had been in business for 5 or more years; microbrewery owner was defined as those with less than 100 employees and who produce less than 15,000 barrels of beer annually in the Washington State Puget Sound region. The first two recruited microbrewery business owners were included in a pilot study.

Onwuegbuzie (2003) outlined confirmatory thematic analyses can be conducted in which qualitative replication studies assess the replicability of previous emergent themes or test an existing theory when appropriate. The findings and results of the study may not necessarily generalize to other subjects, locations, or future periods.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

*Barrel.* A barrel is a wooden vessel used to age, condition, and ferment beer. A standard measure in the United States is 31 gallons (Craft Beer, n.d.).

*Brewpub.* A brewpub is a restaurant–brewery that sells 25% or more of its beer onsite. The beer is brewed primarily for sale in restaurants and bars. The beer is often dispensed directly from the brewery’s storage tanks. Where allowed by law, brewpubs often sell beer to go and distribute to offsite accounts (Craft Beer, n.d.).

*Causation.* Causation is the act or process of causing (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

*Craft Beer.* Craft beer is specialty beer produced in limited quantities (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

*Effectuation.* Effectuation is to cause or bring about something, to put something into effect or operation (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

*Entrepreneurial Orientation.* Entrepreneurial orientation is a single or multidimensional construct applied at the organizational level that characterizes a firm’s entrepreneurial behavior (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

*Homebrewing.* Homebrewing is the art of making beer at home (Craft Beer, n.d.).

*Large Brewery.* A large brewery is classified as a brewery with an annual beer production of over 6,000,000 barrels (Craft Beer, n.d.).

*Microbrewery.* A microbrewery is a brewery that produces less than 15,000 barrels of beer per year, with 75% or more of its beer sold offsite (Craft Beer, n.d.).

*Nano Brewery.* A nano brewery produces fewer than 30 barrels of beer per year (Craft Beer, n.d.).

*Regional Craft Brewery.* A regional craft brewery is an independent, regional brewery that has either an all-malt flagship or has at least 50% of its volume in all-malt beers or in beers that use adjuncts to enhance rather than lighten flavor (Craft Beer, n.d.).



*Small Business.* A small business is independently owned and operated with a maximum of 500 employees, and is a significant contributor to job creation, innovation, economic development, and economic welfare (World Bank Group, 2016).

*Small Business Entrepreneurship.* A small business entrepreneurship is one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

*Small Craft Brewery.* A small craft brewery has annual production of 6 million barrels of beer or less (Craft Beer, n.d.).

*Velocity.* Velocity is the speed with which something happens; rapidity of action or reaction (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

### **Significance of the Study**

Small business owners have become engines of producing gross domestic products, social development, economic growth, employment growth, and wealth creation (Ejmalian & Syed, (2015). Small businesses play a vital role in the Washington State economy, which necessitated exploring implementation of business strategies that allow few to succeed. The findings of the study provide insights to microbrewery business owners in understanding the small business implementation of strategies to sustain business beyond 5 years. Results from this qualitative phenomenological study may enhance small business owners' ability to conduct planning strategies to remain competitive, forecast, and study the market to anticipate changes in the handcraft beer industry. Contemporary microbrewery business owners may find value in benchmarking their business against the study's findings to improve their success.

## **Summary**

Microbrewery business owners, in search for the opportunity to start living their dreams of owning their own business, subsequently decide to start up their ideal business. In recent years, the craft beer sector has gained popularity and evolved into an immense industry. The continued growth in small upstart breweries makes the U.S. beer market a dynamic and competitive industry where microbrewery business owners face challenges to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the application and implementation of business strategies that microbrewery business owners who have been in business in the handcraft beer industry have used to stay in business for 5 or more years. When changes occur, microbrewery business owners may struggle to change, adapt, or manage their business strategies efficiently for business success beyond 5 years. Findings from this study provide insights to microbrewery business owners in understanding the implementation of business strategies to sustain business beyond 5 years.

Chapter 2 includes a comprehensive review of academic and professional literature, which involved positioning this phenomenological study in the larger body of existing literature. The literature review allowed the researcher to investigate the most current literature for this study. The literature review presented a comprehensive synthesis of literature related to the study's purpose and consisted of a historical overview and discussion of past and present literature on how to sustain small businesses during the first 5 years of operations.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

According to McFarland and McConnell (2013), small business owners who lacked management and business skills were attributed to small business failures; still, entrepreneurial core competencies could be learned, refined, and developed. According to Criscuolo et al. (2014), small businesses in the United States account for 20% of the workforce, and 50% represent established small businesses. Small businesses are vital to increased financial security, driving innovation, boosting employment opportunities, and economic development and growth. Although individuals desire the career choice to pursue ownership, few succeed in starting and sustaining the business.

Njaramba and Ngugi (2014) insisted small business owners obtain external service providers to meet associated needs and embed them into their organizations for long-term business sustainability. Small business success is impacted by the owners' abilities to use resources and implement strategies to their full potential. In recent years, the strengthening U.S. economy has nurtured many opportunities for entrepreneurs and business owners, with small businesses in the United States growing in number. Small businesses play an extremely significant role in the U.S. economy and are vital to economic development and job creation.

The beer industry has also changed significantly over the past 30 years. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (n.d.) revealed the most recent data show 11,584 reporting brewers at the end of 2019. The continued growth in small, upstart breweries makes the U.S. beer market dynamic and competitive. Washington State has emerged as one of the nation's most vibrant and robust clusters of craft beer producers, ranking it among the top states in the number of microbreweries. The Pacific Northwest

microbrewery industry has grown substantially in recent years. Continued growth depends on increased market share in Washington State and gained traction in domestic and international exports.

Chapter 2 includes a summary of topics related to small businesses in the United States, small business successes and failures, strategies for small businesses, strategic planning, the beer industry, and craft breweries in the United States. A brief discussion of stakeholder theory and strategic entrepreneurship social exchange theory helped develop a working list of subjects to identify gaps in the existing body of knowledge. Chapter 2 concludes with a summary statement that encapsulates the essence of the chapter.

### **Small Businesses in the United States**

Schwekart and Doti (2010) cited Adam Smith who, in 1776, wrote about an economic system of capitalism, which is at the core of entrepreneurship. With their sights set on ownership of private property, financial freedom, and free enterprise, the Founding Fathers established the United States with a belief that all Americans should compete in business and reap the rewards. Before 1900, small businesses were the norm. Stovall (2011) noted small businesses designed, produced, and distributed most goods and services in the United States during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. During the industrial age, some businesses grew and benefitted from economies of scale. Small businesses grew by 50% during the first half of the 20th century to approximately 17 million (Blackford, 2003).

According to Walters (2010), modern corporations replaced entrepreneurship after World War II. Big business, union labor, and the U.S. government worked jointly to deliver economic growth evolving into stagflation, and entrepreneurial innovators

exposed the old industrial model's failures. Yallapragada and Bhuiyan (2011) reported small businesses were critical contributors to the U.S. economy and comprised 97.5% of U.S. exporters, paid approximately 51% of U.S. payroll, and generated more than 65% of new jobs from 1990 to 2010.

### **Growth of Small Business**

Horta and Camanho (2013) found scholar-practitioners and researchers have spent the past 3 decades conducting extensive research to explicitly explore why small businesses fail and sought methods to predict business growth proactively. Panggabean and Jermias (2020) noted business owners attribute a host of factors to the success of their businesses. A variety of factors support the growth of small businesses. Koryak et al. (2015) mentioned although some elements are relevant for all sectors, some factors are specific to certain growth areas. In general, competition, entrepreneurial orientation, continuous improvement, market development, and strategic management are critical to small business growth.

Over the years, many models of growth and development have emerged in the literature. Kelley and Marram (2010) explained early models focused on the intrinsic aspects of the small business that were discovered through behavior-driving economic activity, loss of startup investments, changing outcomes that result based on external influences related to that investment, drive for equilibrium in dynamic processes, and empirical research and policy analysis.

The Small Business Administration (SBA, 2018) reported 294,834 small businesses exported goods from the United States in 2015. Of these, 287,835 (i.e., 97.36%) were small businesses that generated 32.9% of the \$1.3 trillion in total exports.

In the third quarter of 2017, 241 small businesses started up, generating 851,000 new jobs in the United States. In the same year, 226,000 small businesses exited, resulting in 763,000 jobs lost (SBA, 2018).

Small businesses are responsible for a significant portion of the U.S. economic activity and are vital to local economies. The SBA (2019) reported small business owners in the United States employed 59.9 million people, or 47.3% of the private workforce, in 2016. Small businesses created 1.8 million net jobs in 2016. Firms employing fewer than 20 employees experienced the most significant gains, adding 1.2 million net jobs. The lowest increases were in firms employing 100 to 499 employees, which added 259,591 new jobs.

### **Economic Development**

Small businesses are the backbone and the commerce builders of the U.S. economy (Nadel, 2013). Omri and Ayadi-Frikha (2014) shared research on how small businesses have increased, although factors contributing to small business growth remain under debate. Essential tools are necessary to advance business stability and economic development. Flourishing small business owners spark economic development and represent a significant source of new jobs, contributing to economic growth through innovation and making solutions to small business survival a necessity (Robbins & O’Gorman, 2016). Small businesses are complex, adaptive systems that require a reconceptualization of strategic management to assist with solutions to long-term business sustainability (Pederzini, 2016).

The SBA (2012) reported 27.5 million small businesses in 2009, 6 million employer firms in 2007, and 21.4 million nonemployer firms in 2008, with 3.6 million

firms with fewer than five employees. Criscuolo et al. (2014) reported over 28 million small businesses exist in the United States and account for 54% of all sales nationally, causing money to move through the U.S. economy to generate almost 50% of the country's gross domestic product. Ribeiro-Soriano (2017) mentioned small businesses have been a force to national identity throughout U.S. history and have played a pivotal role in its economic success. Figure 1 provides the most recent data of small business profiles. The SBA (2020b) reported 31.7 million small businesses and employed 60.6 million.

**Figure 1**

*2020 Small Business Administration Profiles for the States and Territories*



*Note.* From “2020 Small Business Profile” by Small Business Administration, 2020, p. 1. (<https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/04144224/2020-Small-Business-Economic-Profile-US.pdf>). Copyright 2020 by the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy.

According to SBA (2020a), from 2000 to 2019, small businesses created 10.5 million net new jobs, whereas large businesses have accounted for 65.1% of new job creation since 2000. Small businesses owned by entrepreneurs significantly impact economic development. As a dominant component of economic growth, the resilience of small businesses is crucial in the competitive market.

### **Source of Employment**

According to Pollack and Adler (2016), the small business model has a rich history of contributing to economic and social health. Small business owners and gross domestic product production have proven essential to the economy of the United States (Mutoko, 2014). Calopa (2017) indicated small business owners have become the backbone of the U.S. economy with significant contributions in job creation and economic development.

According to Quan and Huy (2014), small business owners have low expansion and survival rates. Many employees lose their jobs within a couple of years. According to Dilger (2022a), in 2017, there were 7.86 million employer establishments and nearly 6 million employer firms. Small business owners provided 47.1%, or approximately half, of all jobs in 2017. From 2010 to 2019, opening/startup small businesses accounted for just under 30% of all employment gains in the United States each year. By definition, opening/startup establishments do not affect employment losses, which result from



establishments contracting or closing. Figure 2 represents small business job growth and opening/startup establishments from 2010 to 2019.

**Figure 2**

*Net Employment Change, Gross Employment Gains, and Losses Overall*

Year	Net Employment Change Overall	Gross Employment Gains Overall	Gross Employment Losses Overall	Gross Employment Gains From Opening/Startup Establishments	Share of Gross Employment Gains From Opening/Startup Establishments
2010	(2,684,236)	10,075,081	(12,759,269)	3,236,263	32.1%
2011	1,908,912	11,629,458	(9,720,546)	3,334,090	28.7%
2012	2,669,334	12,215,721	(9,546,387)	3,554,056	29.1%
2013	2,120,900	12,044,755	(9,923,855)	3,491,508	29.0%
2014	2,274,389	12,282,242	(10,007,853)	3,582,255	29.2%
2015	2,717,966	12,833,679	(10,115,713)	3,691,014	28.8%
2016	2,511,589	13,167,936	(10,656,347)	3,773,906	28.7%
2017	2,032,665	12,953,630	(10,920,965)	3,797,214	29.3%
2018	2,168,233	13,116,333	(10,948,100)	3,757,496	28.6%
2019	1,875,053	13,134,027	(11,258,974)	3,775,168	28.7%

*Note.* From “Small Business Administration and Job Creation” by R. Dilger, Congressional Research Service, 2022, p. 4. (<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R41523.pdf>). Copyright 2022 by Congressional Research Service.

Economic research on net job creation suggests small businesses play a very important role in job creation but have a more limited effect on net job creation over time; about one third of all small businesses close by their 2nd year of existence and fewer than half of all small businesses are still in business after 5 years (Dilger, 2022a). Economic research also suggests the influence of small business owners on net job creation varies by firm size. Small business owners who employ fewer than 20 employees

tend to have a negligible effect on net job creation over time, whereas small business owners who employ 20–499 employees tend to have a positive employment effect that continues to increase for 5 years after their formation before decreasing.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Dhliwayo (2014) explored how characteristics of small business owners and entrepreneurs were identifiable in strategy development's evolution process. Hiatt and Shine (2014) described the small business owner as a person who develops and manages a business to reach personal goals. Entrepreneurs and small business owners are vital to maintaining and supporting the expanding marketplace and are critical drivers of growth and innovations. Herrington and Kew (2017) indicated the Global Entrepreneurial Monitors reported more than two thirds of the adult population across 62 economies believe entrepreneurs are well regarded and enjoy high status in their societies.

Small business owners succeed by listening to their customers' desires and investing aggressively in products and services to satisfy their current and future needs (Christensen, 2013). Ritchie et al. (2013) insisted the environmental and social forms of prosperity and traditional economic affluence align theoretically with the entrepreneurial profitability theory concept. Entrepreneurship combines comprehensive coverage with a wide variety of real-life cases by starting, developing, and managing ventures to give entrepreneurs the tools to succeed in launching a business in today's competitive environment.

### **Definition of Entrepreneurship**

Welter et al. (2017) defined entrepreneurship as a social method used to help organizations achieve defined goals. Malerba and McKelvey (2018) argued

entrepreneurship extends beyond management and small business to include innovation and growth. Malerba and McKelvey considered entrepreneurs to be individuals who create knowledge, make new products, and develop resources to introduce change to markets. Stam (2015) endorsed entrepreneurs converting ideas to a product or service to generate jobs and revenues.

### **Risk of Business Failure**

Entrepreneurs are subject to numerous potential risks, but risk is an integral part of entrepreneurship. Business failure risk increases when entrepreneurs take on more risk (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). Ng and Jenkins (2018) shared the fear of failure emotion by small business owners is rooted in the argument individuals are risk averse. Further, the presence of risk involved in starting a business—specifically in terms of potential business failure and associated financial, social, and emotional costs—reduces the probability of an individual starting a business.

Business risk includes the possibility of inadequate or lost profits due to unforeseen or uncertain situations (Torabi et al., 2016). Torabi et al. described the influences of governmental regulations, economic climate, and competition on business risk. The sources of business risk include changes in the managerial system, a lack of strategic focus and knowledge of the external environment, poor business planning, communication problems, poor system or procedure implementation, and unclear competencies and responsibilities.

According to Belás et al. (2015), small business risk can be classified into 14 categories: financial, organizational, legal, operational, market, security, strategic, technical, criminal, reputation, service, project, relationship management, and

technological. Belás et al. analyzed data from 375 small business owners indicating the very significant impact of the external environment on profitability and suggested the most important business risk for small business owners is the market risk.

### **Causation and Effectuation Principles**

Sarasvathy (2001) defined causation and effectuation as follows: Causation processes take a particular effect as given and focus on selecting between means to create that effect. Effectuation processes take a set of means as given and focus on selecting the possible effect that can be created with that set of means.

According to Ciszewska-Wlilnaric et al. (2016), causation and effectuation are characterized by different sets of principles. The causation principle is the maximization of expected returns and focus on optimal decisions, competitive analysis, exploitation of preexisting knowledge, and predictable aspects of uncertain future. The effectuation approach follows an iterative process that is risk averse and means driven. The effectuation principles include affordable loss and focus on experimentation, strategic alliances and stakeholders, exploitation of contingencies, and focus on controlling an unpredictable future.

Ciszewska-Wlilnaric et al. (2016) also noted, because effectual entrepreneurs let others influence the goals and direction of the business to a large extent, entrepreneurs run the risk of relying too much on the judgment and opinion of others. Also, entrepreneurs may be unwilling to adjust their direction based on new, negative information or events. By trying to leverage all contingencies they encounter, entrepreneurs may drift away and constantly change the direction of their business. These

biases are important to consider when talking about the influence of effectuation and causation on business performance.

### **Entrepreneurial Orientation Capabilities**

Entrepreneurial orientation refers to the strategic direction of leadership that supports business owners' abilities to remain competitive and confront turbulent environments (Kajalo & Lindblom, 2015). Gupta et al. (2014) defined dynamic capabilities as the means to gain a competitive advantage, and such a definition points directly to entrepreneurial business orientation as a dominant dynamic capability. Muchiri and McMurray (2015) acknowledged entrepreneurial orientation capabilities relate to a business innovation capability, risk-taking attitude, and organizational behavior. According to Brouthers et al. (2015), market competitiveness creates a vital need to understand the concept of entrepreneurial orientation as a growth method in the small business context. Implementing strategies often takes owners and managers a willingness to dedicate significant resources to pursue calculated risk opportunities that could lead to sustainable growth.

### **Entrepreneurship in Small Business**

Harker and Lam (2013) explored the scope of free enterprise creation and suggested entrepreneurship extends beyond the conception of a new venture. Entrepreneurial involvement includes preparing activities that occur before and after creating the business. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) noted strategic planning, particularly in small and medium enterprises, is critical to enhancing venture performance and overall business success. Harker and Lam (2013) pointed out a focus has been on

decision-making strategies to improve overall business success. Physical and human capital strategies have gained an advantage in the small business discussion.

A small business is not necessarily an entrepreneurial venture created by self-employed individuals. An entrepreneurial experience is a business created either by individuals or people (Parente & Feola, 2013). A small business may produce massive earnings without essentially being entrepreneurial. Differences exist in determining whether a small business can be the same or different from an entrepreneurial venture. Ramos-Rodriguez et al. (2015) reported more than 80% of small businesses are freelance entrepreneurs. Approximately one in 10 adults in the United States become an entrepreneur of a small business for a minimum of 3.5 years. Harker and Lam (2013) emphasized amid rapid economic growth, or even decline, men, women, and young adults continue to show interest in entrepreneurship.

### **Small Business Success**

Defining success is challenging because definitions and measurements of the concept vary from the researcher's perspective (Gorgievski et al., 2011). Financial achievement serves most often to evaluate success. Leskinen (2011) suggested using factors such as survival, independence, or self-fulfillment to measure business success. When measuring success, Kerzner (2017) noted key point indicators (KPIs) are percentages or numerical metrics that identify goals on the way to business success. The ultimate purpose of KPIs are to identify what needs to be done to improve performance and keep the strategy on track. Brush et al. (2012) recognized a mix of financial and nonfinancial factors should measure success as a multidimensional concept. Abdullahi (2018) posited the importance of financial resources stems from the numerous challenges

encountered by small business owners. Eniola and Entebang (2016) explained understanding the objectives and the importance of financial literacy can positively impact sustaining business and mitigate failure.

The Small Business Act of 1953 authorized the U.S. SBA agency and justified the agency's existence on the grounds that small businesses are essential to the maintenance of the free enterprise system (Dilger, 2022b). Congress decided to allow the SBA to establish size standards to ensure only small businesses were provided SBA assistance. The Small Business Act of 1953 defined a small business as one organized for profit, with primary operations at a place of business in the United States. Moreover, the act noted a small business was one making a significant contribution to the U.S. economy through payment of taxes or use of U.S. products, materials or labor, was independently owned and operated, and was not dominant in its field on a national basis.

Successful business owners have recognized the need to improve their strategies and are receptive to change (Herlina et al., 2019). Strategies are a key component to business success because of the necessity to make a clear decision to follow and meet business objectives. Gjini (2014) noted competitive strategies are important to determine growth when measuring how the business performs against the competition. Siren and Kohtmaski (2016) specified competency strategies, knowledge, and skills enabling a process used by small business owners were essential to focus on high quality over quantity to competitively manage limited resources and provide better services or products to customers. By linking strategic planning to strategic learning process and performance, a need to understand the purpose of planning and skillfully develop strategic plans becomes necessary to achieve a sustainable business.

## **Definitions of Success**

The terms *success*, *growth*, *performance*, and *profit* have often appeared synonymous in small business research. The most common definition for success included return on investment, increased sales, and profit relative to a target or a goal (Reijonen & Komppula, 2010). Success is subjective and definable by nonfinancial measures, including job satisfaction, work–family balance, and autonomy. The development of a standard definition of small business success is necessary to obtain accurate future research results.

Stricker (2015) specified the importance of a good business plan to ensure ease in a business decision, understand the business owner’s direction, monitor current business performance, and determine future business goals. Managing risk is essential to business success and requires proper planning and contingency plans to deal with uncertainty. According to SBA (2016), small businesses represent 99.7% of all U.S. firms, employ about half of the private sector, and provide approximately 43% of the total national payroll. Only about half of new small businesses in the United States survive beyond the 5-year benchmark. Gao (2017) emphasized sustaining business beyond 5 years is achievable by applying and implementing business strategies conducive to meeting business goals, improving business performance, and gaining a competitive advantage.

## **Operating a Small Business**

In his research, Wallace (2017) found the following critical operating strategies for success focus on knowing the direction of one’s business, finding opportunity first, focusing on strengths, understanding all aspects of the business, and understanding the operating environment. Business scholars have investigated motivators and personal



attributes that inspire prospective entrepreneurs to become small business owners. A small business owner's characteristics are significant for their success, including individual personality, unique traits, entrepreneur orientation, demographic characteristics, self-confidence, autonomy, innovativeness, risk taking, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness.

Small businesses have more excellent opportunities for growth compared to larger enterprises. Small business owners can respond quickly to technological and market changes and identify and serve niche markets better than larger businesses because of their small size. Warfield and Glover (2011) indicated small business size enables faster responsiveness to emerging technological practices. Warfield and Glover also reported the growth of small business is associated with increased sales, target market, profitability, the accomplishment of organizational goals, and competition. Yallapragada and Bhulyan (2011) researched small businesses and identified adequate financing, qualified personnel, efficient operation and production, effective marketing and sales, supportive information management, and trustworthy administration as the seven prerequisites for successfully operating a small business and increasing the likelihood of survival.

### **Small Business Failure**

Simmons et al. (2014) defined small business failure as when a business has consecutive adverse losses, which requires the small business owner to dissolve or exit the market. Haynes (2017) concluded the common perception is that all business owners share universal traits; yet, motivations for entry into ownership are far more complex and variable. Although individuals desire the career choice to pursue ownership, few succeed

in starting and sustaining the business. Small business owners typically exit when they go from having at least one employee to having none and remaining closed for at least 1 year.

Small business failure has been a problem in the United States for 400 years (Schwekart & Doti, 2010). By the end of the 20th century, small business numbers started consistently outpacing small business closures. During the 1st decade of the 21st century, the average number of small business starts was similar to small business failure. Failure in business occurs when there is a decrease in business revenue or an increase in expenses in the magnitude that makes the company insolvent and unable to attract new funding in debt or equity.

Mutoko (2014) specified small business owners face challenges that hinder their survival and growth. Small businesses often fail because business owners lack management skills and leadership strategies for change (Cojocariu & Stanciu, 2012). Abas-Mastura et al. (2013) described business failure as a process. Identifying the symptoms of this process in time is essential for survival. Financial ratios could give early warning signals about small businesses' financial health and trajectory toward failure (Koyagialo, 2016).

### **Characteristics of Failure**

Entrepreneurs have been recognized as the most vital factor in small business failure (Ropega, 2011). Failures associated with entrepreneurs include insufficient capital, poor business knowledge, or inadequate management skills. Williams (2014) added small business failure does not come from external factors; rather, a poor internal decision to deal with the external environment's shocks leads to failure. This statement

implies failure is an activity that is internally driven. Delalic and Oruc (2014) noted the attitude, personality traits, and strong motivation of the entrepreneur are sufficient to overcome obstacles to startups and business growth. Hayes et al. (2015) specified that slow rates of accounts receivables, tax issues, theft, overexpansion, and poor record keeping also lead to business failure. These aforementioned issues are further classified as fraud, lack of planning, diminishing product or service demand, and government support.

Scherger et al. (2014) argued small businesses fail because of the lack of demand for their product and support for their customers. Aside from financial constraints, factors that lead to business failure include market reach and the failure of advertising and promotions to result in stimulating demands. Small business owners suffer from a smaller customer base and market share, which translates into lower profits. Racon (2013) mentioned those who start businesses often make location decisions based on proximity to their home, cheap rent, and nearby busy establishments. People often make rash emotional decisions on location because they feel a sense of urgency. This simplistic way of thinking could quite possibly contribute to the reasoning behind so many failing small businesses. There are many complex considerations to be made when selecting a successful business endeavor.

Commercializing a new handcraft beer product is an essential objective for a microbrewery business. Small business owners face a 40% failure rate when introducing new products to the market (Anderson et al., 2015). A new products' failure rate is the percentage of new products introduced to the market that fail to meet the commercial objective of the business. Although the firm could expect some failure as a natural

outcome of innovation, approximately one out of two new products fail in the market, presenting a burden to the firm's human resources and financial capital.

### **Craft Beer Industry**

Once seen as a hobby, the craft beer production industry has transformed into one of the fastest-growing and most popular alcoholic beverage segments in the United States. Craft breweries in the United States have meticulously developed and cultivated a social identity that places them directly at odds with the image of mass-produced U.S. breweries (Barlow et al., 2018). Over the past 2 decades, the craft beer industry has attracted a loyal group of consumers who share their social identity and actively engage in market discourse, strengthening the broader craft beer industry's collective identity.

The beer industry in the United States has experienced rapid growth in the craft beer segment and declined sales in more mainstream segments (Cohen, 2017). By 2016, the craft segment had grown to 21.9% of U.S. beer sales by dollar value, whereas domestic sales were down by 2.8%. It is no surprise the definitions of these categories are contested, and larger breweries have increasingly moved into the craft space. Ferguson (2014) reported large brewers had done so by introducing craft-like brands and acquiring formerly independent craft breweries. Critics have called these actions *craft washing*, which draws from greenwashing that describes deceptive marketing practices for environmental issues. The benefit of a marketing strategy is to adapt to the local market potential that can join with customer needs to business sustainability (Zeriti et al., 2014). According to Hale et al. (2017), the objective for sustainability is to magnify values that can assist with building a complete picture of the present and enhance the viability of the microbrewery business owners.

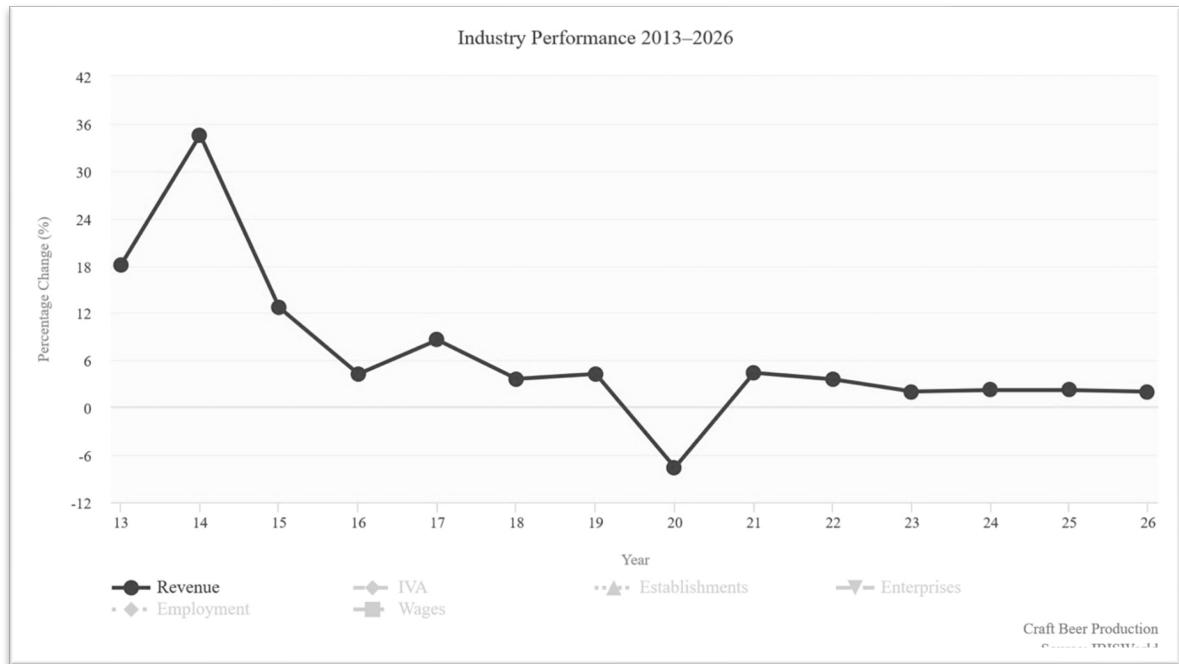
America's Beer Distributors (2020) reported the top-five brewers' and importers' market share changed significantly over the past 10 years. Since 2009, more than 1% of market volume has shifted from large brewers and importers to smaller breweries and importers. The continued growth in small, upstart breweries makes the U.S. beer market dynamic and competitive.

According to Lombardo (2021), despite the economic volatility amid the COVID-19 global pandemic, demand for industrial goods has remained high; yet, small business owners have struggled to reach their end consumers, particularly in 2020, in the height of nonessential business closures and limited operational capacities. For months, microbrewery business owners could not serve consumers through in-house tasting rooms and bars, a crucial outlet for microbrewery business owners. The decline in sales is expected to be short lived, however, with the craft beer industry rebounding in 2021 (Lombardo, 2021). Lombardo analyzed the beer industry and reported brewery industry revenue recovered somewhat in 2021, growing an estimated 3.9% after a 5.5% decline in 2020.

Figure 3 represents craft beer industry revenue which grew by more than 300% from 2013 to 2016. Thousands of new independent breweries and brewpubs have entered the industry. Industry employment has more than tripled, and the influx of new breweries has put unprecedented pressure on its ingredient suppliers. In 2020, the craft beer industry experienced its first revenue decline in nearly 2 decades, as the COVID-19 global pandemic caused significant operational disruption for many microbrewery business owners.

**Figure 3**

*Industry Performance 2013–2026*



*Note.* From “Craft Beer Production” by C. Lombardo, April 9, 2021, IBIS World.

(<https://www.ibisworld.com/united-states/market-research-reports/craft-beer-production-industry/>). Copyright 2021 by IBIS World.

### **Growth of Craft Beer**

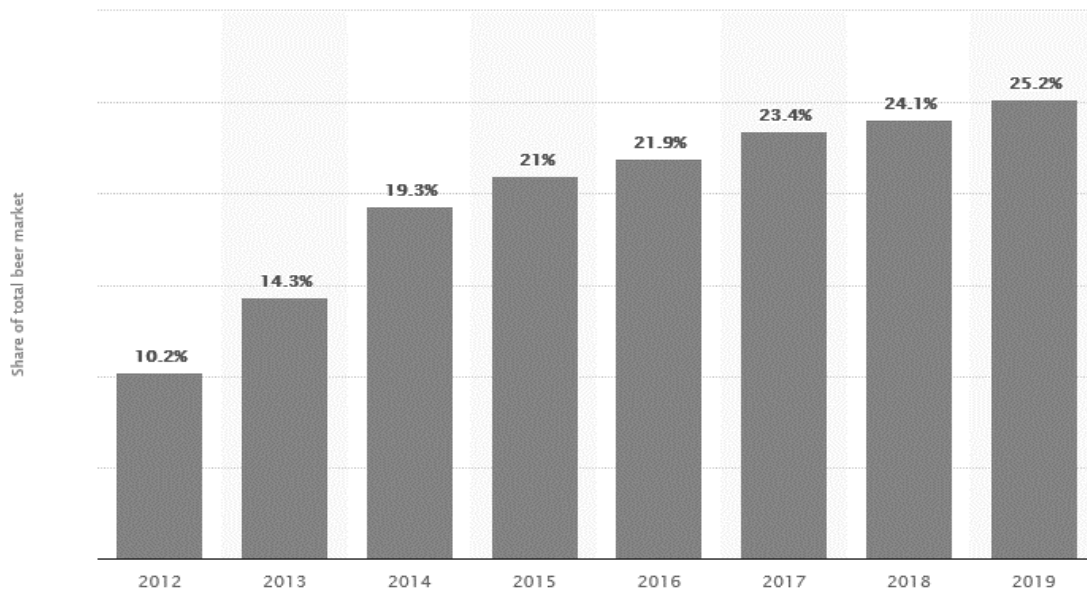
According to Watson (2016), the craft beer community further articulates its identity as craft brewers and its beer offerings by highlighting the bold, flavorful, innovative, and creative ingredients distinguishable from mass producers. The strategy behind these products is not to gain the largest market share possible nor leverage cost-based economies of scale, but instead to signal a shared system of values and beliefs predicated on creativity, artistic expression, and authenticity. Product differentiation also

serves to reinforce defined boundaries between various products and broader segments of the market.

The continued discourse between producers and consumers regarding craft brewers and mass producers in the U.S. beer industry has sharpened the prototypical product's ideologies that typify each market segment. Figure 4 represents craft beer share that accounted for roughly a quarter of the total U.S. retail beer market. Starting with a market share of just 10% in 2012, craft beer has become much more popular in recent years.

**Figure 4**

*Craft Beer Share in the United States, 2012–2019*



*Note.* From “Craft Beer Share of Retail Beer Market in the United States From 2012 to 2019” by Statista, 2020. (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1093653/craft-beer-dollar-share-of-us-beer-market/>). Copyright 2020 by Statista.

## **Craft Breweries in the United States**

Craft brewery operations are small and considered traditional and independent. They are traditional in that they produce malt flagship or full-bodied brew beers, many of which are made from German or English brewing origins (Murray & O'Neill, 2012). Those homebrewers sought to rediscover traditions and authenticity by using old-fashioned brewing methods or distinctly different brewing methods not found in mass-produced beers from large breweries (Murray & O'Neill, 2012). This rediscovery of authentic beer-making processes and experimentation hones the skills and crafts of the brewer.

One cultural characteristic of the United States is well distinguished as a beer-drinking nation (Colen & Swinnen, 2016). Most U.S. leaders have been quoted as beer drinkers, from founders and beer appreciators (e.g., Thomas Jefferson and George Washington) to former president, Barack Obama (Harry, 2019). Beer has long been a fixture of U.S. culture. Harry (2019) reported President Jimmy Carter signed HR 1337 to legalize homebrewing at the federal level, thereby giving Carter the dubious distinction of homebrewing hero.

The Brewers Association (2021) categorized the beer industry into large, midsize, and microbrewery. In terms of production, large-scale breweries typically distribute their products nationally and have multiple brewing facilities. Midsize breweries are a bit smaller than large-scale breweries and distribute their products regionally. Microbreweries have far less production than large and midsize breweries and typically distribute their products locally. Large breweries dominate the beer market, but smaller craft breweries have gained market share in recent years by introducing various new



products that sell at higher price points. Some major beer makers have acquired popular craft brands to limit competition from the fast-growing craft beer section. Ballast Point Brewing Company was bought in 2015 for \$1 billion by Constellation Brands, the company that owns Corona.

Watson (2020) reported craft sales in the United States increase about 4% to 5% each year, whereas overall beer sales typically remain flat. From 2005 to 2020, the craft segment has more than doubled its market share to 13% of total beer sales volume. The number of brewers has steadily increased in the craft market, from 1,500 in 2008 to 7,500 in 2018.

Flack (1997) acknowledged craft breweries differentiate themselves from regular beer producers by focusing on quality. Their organizational structure is consequently different. Craft breweries cannot compete with large breweries due to their advantages with higher economies of scale. Competition in the domestic craft beer segment is based on product quality, consistency, freshness, and taste. Craft breweries must also be keen on their ability to differentiate products by utilizing various methods—mainly promotional tactics, customer satisfaction programs, distribution costs, and price.

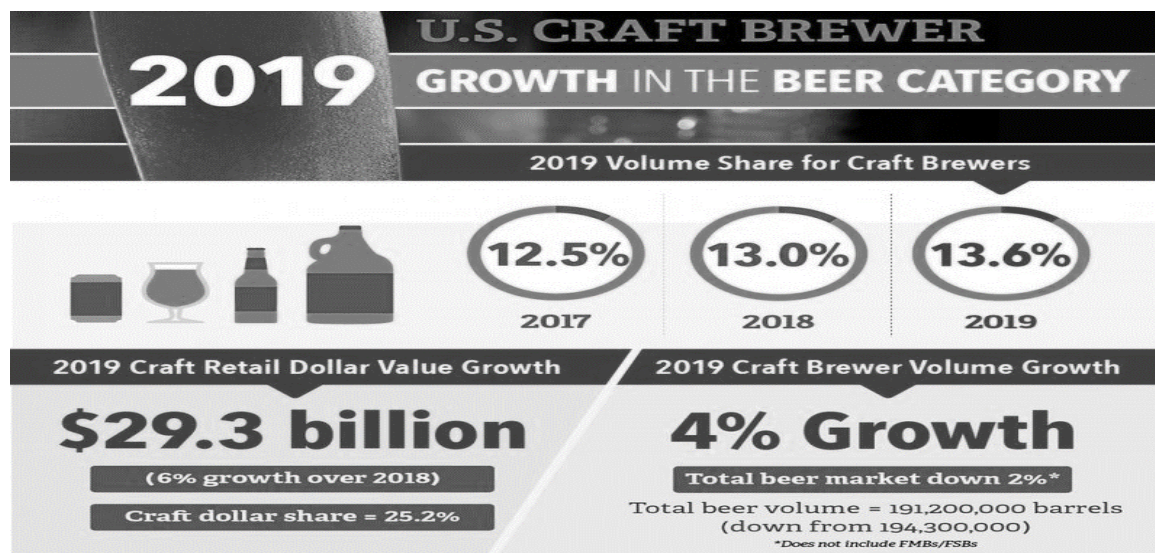
### **Popularity and Growth of Microbreweries**

Microbrewery business owners have become increasingly popular in the United States. Their growth in recent decades demonstrates this popularity. A microbrewery has the characteristics to distribute its product locally and is usually associated with one geographic location. Flack (1997) mentioned a microbrewery identity with a specific area is supported by the frequent use of local culture in their marketing and beer names. Further, microbreweries stimulate the local economy, foster the idea of neolocalism, and

appeal to a more sophisticated beer consumer. As Nobile (2020) reported and Figure 5 displays, the U.S. craft beer sector continued to take market share from large beer companies, accounting for 13.6% of the total beer market by volume in 2019—up from 13% in 2018 and 12.5% in 2017.

**Figure 5**

*Craft Beer Growth, 2019*



*Note.* From “Brewers Association: Craft Beer Grew in 2019, But the Pandemic Presents New Challenges for 2020” by J. Nobile, April 15, 2020, *Crain’s Cleveland Business*. (<https://www.crainsicleveland.com/jeremy-nobile-blog/brewers-association-craft-beer-grew-2019-pandemic-presents-new-challenges-2020>). Copyright 2020 by Crain’s Cleveland Business.

## Strategic Planning

Kumpf (2004) defined strategic planning as developing a structured scheme to effectively achieve a specific goal or objective that addresses the organization’s long-

term direction and identifies the best approach for accomplishing the goals. The strategic planning process of decision making identifies fundamental values and needs to be addressed by the business owners, establishes the patterns of goals and objectives to be achieved, and sets essential guidelines and procedures for achieving them.

Strategic planning begins when a business opportunity is developed. Abdalkrim (2013) indicated a strategy should combine creativity, analysis, planning, and learning. The goal is to enhance small business performance on both the financial outcome and survival. Alstete (2014) declared many small business owners fail to understand the significance of proper strategic planning for business success due to a lack of knowledge and skill. Ibrahim (1993) emphasized the importance of small business owners selecting the appropriate business strategy. The business strategy sets a pattern of objectives, purposes, and goals for the business.

Strategic leadership requires vigilance amid business threats and opportunities, and a lack of strategic direction hinders organizational competitiveness (Tawadros, 2015). Strategic leadership enables business leaders to integrate business and risk management in overall business strategies. Muhonen et al. (2017) found small business owners can make their brand into a unique and effective source of competitive advantage if they develop their brand identity.

### **Strategic Mindset**

According to Wei-Hin et al. (2014), a need exists for formal strategic planning by using available tools to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that business owners face. Strategic planning enables market changes, making business owners more resilient at increasing their businesses beyond 5 years. Porter

(1980) wrote strategic planning should be based on competition in the market and an understanding of its internal capabilities. Increased awareness of managers' decision making in a dynamic, competitive environment extends the knowledge of applying industry analysis techniques during the strategic planning process.

Aside from traditional strategic planning, Vargo and Seville (2011) claimed there is also a need for small business owners to have plans to deal with major and minor crises. Small business owners tend to suffer ripple effects, being affected by client expectations and market behaviors. Small business owners are more vulnerable to trouble because of their financial and human resource constraints; yet, small business owners react to problems more favorably by learning from previous mistakes. Strakova (2017) suggested small business owners need to focus on changing their mindset to achieve uniqueness, originality, and maximal use of their organizational potential. Organizational leaders need to increase business literacy in strategic management areas by focusing on internal and external industry environment analyses to understand the characteristics and components that influence business model performance.

Small business owners base their decisions on more sensible intuition than academic principles (Mazzarol et al., 2014). Strategic planning in small businesses may be regarded as rudimentary compared to larger firms. Mazzarol et al. (2014) stated informal planning processes for specific projects, as opposed to the entire company, can result in unforeseeable alleys without a strong sense of commitment and awareness. Scherger et al. (2014) identified small businesses fail because of the lack of demand for their product and support from their customers. Aside from financial constraints, the factors that lead to business failure include the business's market reach and the failure of

advertising and promotions to result in stimulating demands. Business owners suffer from a smaller customer base and market share, which translates into lower profits.

### **Effective Planning**

The small business model has made a significant contribution to the U.S. economy through innovation, competitiveness, and influential employer. McDowell et al. (2016) noted business management depends on the business owners' skills or talents due to finite resources. The dual roles prevent business owners from devoting attention to managing resources, creating competitive advantage, and focusing on strategy implementation, innovation, growth, and sustainability. Small business owners must have the flexibility to adopt new strategies to improve internal systems for small business owners to achieve growth. Rakicevic et al. (2016) suggested the first step for small business owners is to improve planning by seeking help from a support system. Support systems are an institution that provides small business owners with financial or nonfinancial resources to support business operations.

The contribution of effective planning depends on the organizational integration it creates (Dey & Lehner, 2016). Effective planning incorporates patience, teamwork, perseverance, and meaning on the mission and vision of a business, focusing on results rather than outputs. According to Saleem (2012), effective planning enables an organization to expedite direction for the future. Saleem related the importance of strategic planning to the midterm future of a business, positing small business owners can achieve additional success by identifying their businesses' SWOT analyses.

McDowell et al. (2016) identified a relationship between strategy and business performance, consequently implying small business owners must implement effective

planning. Small business owners are often busy attending to short-term challenges of running a business, which limits the resources available for long-term planning. Wynn and Jones (2018) noted effective small business owners use planning to identify long-term goals and evaluate the ability to achieve these goals. Wolf and Floyd (2017) described business planning as a focus on strategy over time, and business planning combines business goals with actionable steps to achieve the desired outcome during a specified period of time.

### **Strategies to Outperform Competition**

Craft breweries differentiate themselves further by embracing several core principles. Craft brewers tend to be very involved in their communities through philanthropy, product donations, volunteerism, and event sponsorship. According to Brewers Association (2022) craft brewers have distinctive, individualistic approaches to connecting with their customers. Craft brewers aim to connect with their customers through advertisement and distinctive, individualistic approaches. Klein and Ferrari (2015) mentioned business planning strategically involves a vision, an industry evaluation, knowledge of competitors, business model innovation, and implementation. Fillis (2015) noted a lack of marketing knowledge and planning in business becomes a threat and a barrier to the success of organizations.

According to Dillen et al. (2018), creating sustainability strategies begins with understanding social or environmental issues, target market, and the competitive landscape. Microbrewery business owners need to incorporate sustainability into their core values and develop sustainability competencies. Sustained growth requires resources, sustainability strategy, and innovative practices. With an improved

understanding of potential strategies, microbrewery business owners may improve their sustainability, thereby raising their business's chance of surviving beyond 5 years. Establishing operating practices and having a strong market understanding of systematic processes can help microbrewery business owners adjust their business models proactively as external environmental factors change. Shoham and Paun (2015) stated some microbrewery business owners adopt strategies large business firms have already used with successful outcomes. Other small businesses customize their strategies through differentiation and innovative marketing efforts.

Menkhoff et al. (2016) recommended researching a company's strengths, possible weaknesses, opportunities, and market threats to remain competitive. Bulley et al. (2014) suggested using competitive intelligence in decision making and strategic planning. Competitive intelligence includes acquiring and analyzing information related to products, customers, and competitors to establish core competencies. Block et al. (2015) suggested using differentiation and cost-leadership strategies for core competitive advantages. Differentiation strategies include acquiring capabilities to create a unique market products and services.

Strategy determines structure to help manage details, and lack of clarity creates chaos, confusion, or uncertainty (Porter, 2008). Strategy emerges from the fixed vision. The market environment may change because of economic factors. Microbrewery business owners must juggle multiple components when hiring, creating jobs, and marketing from a strategy perspective. According to Porter (2008), a strategy requires building defenses against competition or establishing a position in an industry where

there are vulnerabilities. Strategic planning implies strategy is crucial to the vision, mission, and effectiveness of a business's objective outcomes.

### **Differentiation Strategy**

Microbrewery business owners operate in a competitive, changing, and highly turbulent environment (Teti et al., 2014). Consequently, to outperform competitors, microbrewery business owners must learn to apply and implement business strategies better than their competition. Microbrewery business owners position the differentiation strategy to gain the loyalty of customers, promote customer satisfaction, or make their business unique in the marketplace. Simeone et al. (2015) underpinned microbrewery business owners can attract more consumers by offering differentiated services and products that customers perceive better than competitors' services and products.

Microbrewery business owners must consider market needs before implementing differentiation strategies and ensure employees have adequate training to offer services under flexible conditions (Haddad et al., 2015). In the United States, microbrewery business owners maximize profitability by instituting differentiation strategies. Banker et al. (2014) pointed out microbrewery business owners who maximize their market share through differentiation strategies can charge above-average prices and premiums to increase their profit margins and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. Implementing differentiation strategies has helped business owners achieve more extraordinary financial performance for success. Microbrewery startup business owners who are unique in product areas that customers value can see higher economic performance and sustain their business beyond 5 years.



Microbrewery business owners can offer exceptional design and customer support products by investing in extensive research, product design, and marketing. Lechner and Gudmundsson (2014) found differentiation strategies were positively related to small business performance. Banker et al. (2014) found business owners who pursued a differentiation strategy had a more sustainable financial performance than those following a cost-leadership strategy, because business is harder to imitate.

### **Cost-Leadership Strategy**

Microbrewery business owners employ the cost-leadership strategy to target price sensitivity, attain above-average returns over competitors, and achieve business sustainability and higher profitability (DeMelo & Guerra Leone, 2015). Kapto and Njeru (2014) suggested microbrewery business owners focus on operating with low-cost strategies while providing good quality services. According to Ensari (2016), microbrewery business owners with cost-effective strategies use resources efficiently by lowering costs to increase market shares. Failing to use cost leadership strategies could result in unsuccessful strategic plans. DeMelo and Guerra Leone (2015) mentioned minimizing cost enables business owners to expand business operations beyond traditional borders and create advantage over competitors. To maximize profits and sustain a business for the long haul, microbrewery business owners should reduce administrative costs.

The ultimate goal of any business is to achieve a competitive advantage over rival small businesses (Huo et al., 2014). Pursuing a cost strategy entails a detailed structure with a focus on process efficiency. Cost-leadership strategy requires microbrewery business owners with high-level skills to support stability and increase control

management efficiency. Porter (1986) explained a high level of communication is necessary between the organization and the suppliers to reduce the product development cost. Cost-leadership strategy leads to better financial results.

Microbrewery business owners are more likely to adopt a cost-leadership strategy because they require less time and fewer costs (Kato et al., 2016). Implementing a cost-leadership strategy involves seeking cost reduction and minimizing marketing expenses and product development costs. Cost leadership often entails charging customers the lowest price to compete with competitors and using technology to enhance operational efficiency and remain profitable. Block et al. (2015) believed when microbrewery business owners adopt the cost-leadership strategy, they run the risk of their business being more fragile when facing challenges and changes in the marketplace. Banker et al. (2014) pointed out cost leadership positively influences business performance, enhancing cost-efficiency. Cost leadership focuses on the low cost of operations through quality management, cost minimization, low overhead, and technology improvements.

### **Focus Strategy**

Morgan (2015) asserted microbrewery business owners implement a focus strategy to provide unique services and products to customers in a narrow market segment. Business owners employing the focus strategy use either the cost-leadership strategy or the differentiation strategy to serve the industry's specific target (Kyengo et al., 2016). Microbrewery business owners provide consumers a unique service by selecting a market niche with a distinctive need or preference and focusing on less competition. The focus strategy can be either differentiation or cost focus.

DeMelo and Guerra Leone (2015) enumerated business owners who focus on a specific market are better positioned to determine available buyers. Microbrewery business owners could meet the demands of the market by ensuring optimum positioning in the marketplace. Microbrewery business owners with long-term goals of sustaining their business implement the focus strategy by engaging in continual networking and benchmarking and developing and strengthening business processes for optimal results. Microbrewery business owners who use the focus strategy experience a high degree of customer loyalty. Dhliwayo (2014) contended the focus strategy could impede business operations in international markets if the focused segment is too small and uneconomical. Microbrewery business owners can use the focus strategy to earn their customers and sustain their businesses beyond 5 years by offering specialized services and products for a market niche and focusing on a specific niche in the market.

According to Ibrahim (1993), microbrewery business owners implement focus strategies to narrow services for specific business needs. The focus strategy helps business owners concentrate on unique products and services. Morgan (2015) said microbrewery business owners who adopt a focus strategy have a specific market. Kyengo et al. (2016) pointed out the business owner chooses a market niche where clients have a distinctive preference when implementing a focus strategy. Focusing on selected markets or services, microbrewery business owners need to adopt a narrow competitive scope. Porter (1980) described a firm competitive range as the coverage of the target market to sustain optimum positioning. When microbrewery business owners ensure optimum positioning in the marketplace, their business satisfies the demanding need of the market (Skinner, 1974).

Pulaj et al. (2015) argued adopting and implementing focused strategies could be costly and sometimes difficult to execute, because microbrewery business owners should meet consumers' specialized needs. It is essential for microbrewery business owners to implement focus strategies with low-cost strategies in the market niche to generate profit. Palupiningrum et al. (2016) noted microbrewery business owners with long-term goals develop and strengthen business processes and engage in continual benchmarking and networking for optimal results with a focus strategy.

### **Definition of Entrepreneurship Theoretical Underpinnings**

Selecting more than one model, framework, concept, or theory is perfectly feasible to underpin a research study (Varadarajan, 2019). It is certainly possible to take a multi-theory approach even if a study does not seek to develop a new model, framework, concept, or theory from the number that already exist. The theory that underpins a study is often viewed as a *lens*. The word lens is used in the sense of assessment, where certain features are focused upon and emerge, and where the rest of the picture falls into the background (Varadarajan, 2019).

Lenses are used as an analytical tool to aid the interpretation and analysis of data in research. The analysis of the data determines and shapes the results of the study. The analysis of data is fundamental to any study. One of the significant factors of underpinning theories is how they encompass both technical and social contexts in the phenomena under study.

### **Stakeholder Theory**

Freeman (1984) developed stakeholder theory to study capitalism; the theory stresses the interconnected relationships between a business and its customers, suppliers,

employees, investors, communities, and others who have a stake in the organization. Stakeholder theory has evolved from a corporate-centric perspective into a broader research field, addressing business–society relations from various perspectives (Steurer, 2006).

Alvarez et al. (2013) defined stakeholders as persons with an interest or concern who engage in direct trade and economic transactions. Secondary stakeholders represent those the company indirectly affect through financial transactions and trade.

Microbrewery business owners need primary stakeholders to survive and provide connections through networks involving environmental, economic, and social activities globally and locally. Strong stakeholder relationships could help perform essential functions in successful sustainability efforts. Valuing stakeholder contributions to long-term sustainability provides a needed foundation to build a stakeholder hierarchy that can prove critical to long-term existence. Adopting such a model can allow for a more refined and manageable approach to sustainability efforts.

Unlike the shareholders, stakeholders care about the community and carry a lifetime of commitment (Dawkins, 2014). Microbrewery business owners wanting to increase sustainable performance can create ongoing loyalty by building community. Stakeholder engagement leads to effective networking alliances and marketing strategies to engage the primary stakeholder consumer. Without the consumer, all other microbrewery business owners' decisions become null and void; thus, microbrewery business owners who provide value to stakeholders are more likely to be successful.

Microbrewery business owners face a variety of stakeholder-related issues, such as environmental concerns and diminishing aquifers. Consumers are increasingly aware

of the impact of depleting resources and the threat of water scarcity (Zhang et al., 2017). According to Wang et al. (2015), microbrewery business owners who concentrate on sustainable development increase their resources while benefiting stakeholders and becoming more competitive. Labanauskis and Ginevicius (2017) defined primary stakeholders as communities, investors, and suppliers, and defined secondary stakeholders as competitors, governments, and advocacy groups. Using expansive parameters, Benlemlih and Bitar (2018) described primary stakeholders as product characteristics, diversity, the environment, and employee relations, and secondary stakeholders as human rights and local charities.

Microbrewery business owners should know the definition of a stake and stakeholders, and they should understand the importance of addressing stakeholders' needs to improve operational efficiency. A stake is an interest advanced through a valid, normative claim in stakeholder theory principles. According to Kury (2017), the normative perspective carries a moral requirement that microbrewery business owners value all stakeholders and their interests. The instrumental view holds that all stakeholders are considered and satisfied, and microbrewery business owners eventually receive positive feedback returns. Regardless of the assumption or definition, microbrewery business owners' use of normative and instrumental theories affect their stakeholders, ultimately influencing a small business owner's ability to improve water consumption practices to achieve operational efficiency.

### **Strategic Entrepreneurship Theory**

One of the few areas of strategic management literature involves strategic entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs create innovations in the face of competition and thereby

generate economic growth (Schumpeter, 1934). Entrepreneurs create changes in the economy by taking risks, leveraging opportunities, and making decisions for achievement and power.

An entrepreneur, as an innovator, creates profit opportunities by devising a new product, a production process, or a marketing strategy (Schumpeter, 1934). According to Jones and Wadhwani (2006), Schumpeterian thinking is generally reduced to making innovation the key to competitiveness and the entrepreneur the destroyer of economic balance. These two factors constitute the principles of economic growth and development.

Ireland et al. (2013) developed the model of strategic entrepreneurship. The premises of the strategic entrepreneurship model are advantage-seeking and opportunity-seeking behaviors to be competitive and improve business performance. Applying strategic entrepreneurship in business strategies can improve business performance and integrate it into business success opportunities. Bula (2012) explained entrepreneurship includes multiple functions correlated to personal responsibility and competence related to psychological, sociological, anthropological, and economic theory. The application of knowledge helps create an understanding of the exploration of the phenomena and behaviors. Entrepreneurship implies the quality of leadership, initiative, and business innovation. Entrepreneurs and small business owners seek economic growth and have a foundational role in the economy.

Dhliwayo (2014) suggested creating wealth and taking a competitive advantage requires managers to develop exclusive, firm resources that competitors cannot duplicate. If a business consistently offers the customer something new or different from its

competitors, it will have a competitive advantage. The advantage is temporary, which means the business needs to search continually for innovation. Bates and Robb (2014) found microbrewery business owners who used the innovative entrepreneurial process to plan and organize their activities into business strategies may be able to keep their business viable. The creative entrepreneurial process comprises the activities entrepreneurs undertake in pursuit of their innovative business ideas.

Taneja et al. (2016) created a model to help small business decision makers understand strategic innovation and its key elements. The researchers presented the key aspects as a passion for creating and innovating, cooperation and collaboration, internal innovation capabilities, organizational culture, and supportive employees, customers, and suppliers. Gilliard (2018) explained how using the model of strategic entrepreneurship as the study's lens may help microbrewery business owners identify how to approach, deploy, and implement strategies while improving business performance through entrepreneurial opportunities.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social exchange theory is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in organizational behavior and envisions any social interaction between people involving costs and rewards. Homans (1961) used the term social behavior for what later was called a social exchange and wrote, "Social behavior is an exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige" (p. 606). Huang et al. (2016) wrote researchers use social exchange theory to explain how individuals seek exchanges with other parties when they somehow benefit, and how social exchange relationships exist until a connection is no longer beneficial to both parties. According to



Senior (2016), social exchange theory can be used to evaluate whether the investment in a small business is reciprocal. When there is an exchange of financial and socioemotional sources, the customer feels committed to patronizing the company and advocating for its success. The more engaged microbrewery business owners are in their community, the more cognitive, emotional, and physical capital is returned in kind by its clientele.

Cheng-Min et al. (2013) noted the attitudes and behaviors in the social exchange theory are determined by rewards that emanate from the interactions without considering costs or penalties from the interactions. Among the core assumptions of the social exchange, the theory states the benefits derived from the business are provided based on general uses in the future. Tsai and Cheng (2012) explained the social exchange involves vague obligations because they do not have a specific price attached to them, and it is not possible to bargain out the nature of the return. Social exchange theory is broad (Lioukas & Reuer, 2015). It gives explanatory accounts that are common for different outcomes from interactions between organizations and individuals. The results of social exchanges include trust, perceived support, and citizenship in interorganizational and interpersonal exchanges. Social exchange theory can lead to organizational commitment, defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement with an organization (Tsai & Cheng, 2012).

### **Summary**

Small business success is impacted by owners' abilities to use resources and implement strategies to their full potential. In recent years, the strengthening U.S. economy has nurtured many opportunities for entrepreneurs and business owners, with microbrewery business owners in the United States on the rise. Small businesses play an

extremely significant role in the U.S. economy and are vital to economic development and job creation. Washington State has emerged as one of the United States' most vibrant and robust clusters of craft beer producers, ranking high among states with the largest number of microbreweries. The Pacific Northwest microbrewery industry has grown substantially in recent years.

Large breweries dominate the beer market, but microbrewery business owners have gained market share in recent years by introducing various new products that sell at higher price points. Some major beer makers have acquired popular craft brands to limit competition from the fast-growing craft beer section. Although individuals desire the career choice to pursue ownership, few succeed in starting and sustaining the business. The beer industry has changed significantly over the past 30 years. The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (n.d.) revealed most recent data show 11,584 reporting brewers. The continued growth in small, upstart breweries makes the U.S. beer market dynamic and competitive.

Chapter 3 includes the methodology and design of the study, a description of the role of the researcher, ethical considerations for the proposed research, the process of participant recruitment, and the importance of the study. Chapter 3 describes the data collection instruments, study population, and sample. The data contributed important information to existing knowledge and implications for positive change with microbrewery business owners who aim to sustain business beyond 5 years.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the application and implementation of business strategies that microbrewery business owners used to stay in business for 5 or more years. The lived experiences provided insights that may help other small business owners make decisions when applying and implementing business strategies.

The qualitative research method was appropriate to study how microbrewery business owners have sustained their businesses beyond 5 or more years. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) explained the qualitative research method is proper for investigating a phenomenon, contrary to a quantitative approach, which focuses on measurable factors. Moustakas (1994) indicated the qualitative approach leverages a poststructuralist perspective toward comprehending the lived experiences of human occurrences.

Research is a tool to obtain new information by investigating and reviewing existing sources to reach new conclusions and establish facts. McLaughlin and Alfarao-Velcamp (2015) explained researchers must protect the privacy of each interviewee throughout the research process. Wallace and Sheldon (2015) suggested researchers use consent forms to safeguard the confidentiality of individuals willing to participate in studies. Individuals who decline to participate are not subject to negative consequences. Participants who wish to withdraw from the study after agreeing to participate could do so without repercussions.

Chapter 3 includes the study method to explore and understand the phenomenon of the decision by microbrewery business owners to sustain business beyond 5 or more years. Chapter 3 contains details of the design for the study based on the problem and

research questions. Chapter 3 includes the appropriateness of the design and methodology, and a discussion of the study population, data collection, and data analysis. An explanation of the rationale behind the validity and reliability techniques is applied to ensure quality, rigor, and trustworthiness. Chapter 3 concludes with a summary statement that encapsulates the essence of the chapter.

### **Research Method**

Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the three types of research methods. Cronin (2014) explained the qualitative approach focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribing to a phenomenon of interest. The quantitative method is used to examine the relationship between variables and analyze the data using statistical procedures. Mixed methods are a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods used to extend the understanding of the researchers to the research problem. Cronin emphasized the qualitative method in mixed methods is used to understand the problem by understanding people's experiences with the issue, making assumptions based on qualitative findings, and validating the assumptions through quantitative research.

The selection of a study type is based on two issues. The first issue is the problem driving the study. The second issue is the data available to the researcher. Kornbluh (2015) explained researchers use qualitative research to understand a phenomenon through participants' lived experiences. The qualitative research method was the most appropriate for this study. Researchers use this method to record interviews, make meaningful summaries of participants' actions and thoughts, and gain valuable insights.

Fletcher et al. (2016) mentioned researchers find the qualitative method valuable for gathering conversations and context-sensitive fieldwork information.

### **Quantitative Research**

Miller (2017) suggested researchers use quantitative research to examine a social phenomenon. Quantitative analysis involves the application of statistical methods versus methodological steps to establish reliability and validity. Quantitative researchers use numbers and hypothesis testing to determine if a relationship exists between two or more variables. Quantitative research involves analyzing identified variables to determine a correlation, significance, relationship, and testing theories using hypotheses.

Hunt (2014) noted the quantitative method is ideal for studies with hypotheses and theories to explain the role of variables. The quantitative method did not align with the purpose of this study because the goal was not to test hypotheses about the relationships or differences of variables. Quantitative methodology was not appropriate for the research because it explored the application and implementation of business strategies and did not perform a statistical analysis of numerical data. Landrum and Garza (2015) explained researchers use the quantitative method to produce generalizable results. Quantitative researchers focus on analyzing statistical data and may fail to furnish information on the strategies of participants.

### **Mixed-Method Research**

According to Denzin (2012), mixed methods combines quantitative and qualitative methods and is valid for generating and verifying findings. In this method, researchers use quantitative and qualitative data analysis to support and validate their results. This study did not meet the definition of mixed-methods research because it did

not combine and synthesize qualitative and quantitative data into one dataset (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). One objective of this research was to explore why microbreweries so often close within 5 years. Neither the quantitative research method nor the mixed-methods approach was appropriate for this study.

In this study, the researcher explored the application and implementation of business strategies microbrewery business owners used to stay in business for 5 or more years. The data available were the perceptions of the business owners of starting and operating a business. Caruth (2013) noted mixed methods are a complex and robust research approach. Researchers intending to use mixed methods should be well-informed in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method designs. Fetters (2016) explained researchers consider using mixed methods to be a rigorous approach to identifying anything novel.

### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is descriptive rather than explanatory, and exploratory rather than testing. It is subjective, so everything must be transparent and made explicit. Qualitative research is a powerful approach that can open new areas and stimulate further research on a larger scale. This approach is carried out to understand specific phenomena, and it follows a research strategy and reveals detailed and vivid descriptions. Grosseohme (2014) alluded to qualitative research as the systematic collection, organization, analysis, and interpretation of people's words from conversations, written texts, or visual forms about a social phenomenon experienced by individuals in their natural settings.

In a qualitative study, Cronin (2014) mentioned a researcher chooses from a wide range of potential designs, seeking one that reflects the study's intentions. Researchers

conduct qualitative studies to study or observe individual or group issues that are hard to measure numerically. Quantitative research is appropriate when analyzing numerical data and describing or noting statistical changes of a population. A researcher using a quantitative method does not consider the feeling of participants, observations, and experiences from the individual experiencing the phenomenon (Bernard, 2013). The significant advantage of using a qualitative study is its production of more in-depth and comprehensive information (Ilkay, 2013).

A qualitative research method for this study was used to find meaning and understand small business owners' decisions during their first 5 years of business. The qualitative design was appropriate because the phenomenon in this study was explored through the collection of interview data from participants and the hidden meanings of their language.

### **Research Design**

A research design is an entire strategy for integrating the diverse study components logically and coherently to ensure the plan adequately addresses the research problem. Researchers should understand and select the appropriate research design to critically assess data relevant to a study, answer a set of questions, and draw accurate conclusions (Ioannidis et al., 2014). Research design is used to communicate collected information to improve the understanding of traders of a bounded system (Yazan, 2015). The grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative are not suitable for this study. Phenomenology was the most appropriate design for exploring the lived experiences of microbrewery business owners who shared an event or phenomenon.

## **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory design is appropriate to generate or discover theories based on or grounded in data. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) explained grounded theory designs seek to learn new theories, concepts, or discoveries. Individuals who experience the phenomena provide context for new insights and theory. The grounded theory approach can be used to discover ideas, concepts, hypotheses, and propositions directly from data rather than prior assumptions, other research, or existing theoretical frameworks. In business research, a grounded theory design may determine product design or redesign. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the researcher collects data during the research study and feeds information back into the study to analyze theoretical frameworks. Grounded theory was not suitable for this research because a general concept emerges and creates original theories. The purpose of the study was to explore the phenomena of the lived experiences of microbrewer business owners.

## **Ethnography**

Englander (2012) stated ethnographical researchers must become part of the cultural group to study their people. Zarif (2012) mentioned ethnographical research requires ongoing, time-consuming, and expensive observations of participants to evaluate individuals for data collection. Baines and Cunningham (2013) indicated ethnographical researchers study how behaviors, beliefs, and languages form patterns in a cultural or social group. An ethnographic design is appropriate when studying a group's shared thoughts, actions, and experiences over time.

Huo et al. (2014) said research is another qualitative method used to understand a specific group. The focus of ethnographic studies in different cultural settings in a society



is to understand the theory through human interactions. Yin (2014) mentioned studies with an ethnographic design include a high level of involvement and engagement with participants in their culture and environment. On the other hand, Stadler et al. (2013) mentioned the most significant drawback to the ethnography study is that observation can be costly and time consuming.

### **Case Study**

Yin (2011) explained case study researchers explore experiences, reasons, or possible explanations for a phenomenon. Yin mentioned the case study approach is most suitable when the researcher conducts evaluations and determines what happened or why it happened. Moll (2012) explained case study research is most appropriate when studying a phenomenon in its natural setting. Petty et al. (2012) suggested researchers use case study research to understand a specific event using an individual, system, classroom, process, or clinic.

Yin (2014) indicated researchers use the qualitative case study design to answer the *why* and *how* questions in a research study. A case study is appropriate for investigating real-life issues and current phenomena. Shekhar (2014) explained researchers augment the external validity of data to avoid observer biases using a qualitative case study design. Vohra (2014) mentioned researchers use case study to achieve a quality data context that strengthens and supports the study's patterns.

### **Narrative**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained stories, also called narratives, have become a popular qualitative data source. The key to this type of qualitative research is the use of reports as data. Specifically, first-person accounts of experiences are told in story form.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) explained narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, stored in the living and telling. Narrative inquiry follows a recursive, reflexive process of moving from field-to-field texts to interim and final research texts and can be learned by listening, telling, living alongside, writing, and interpreting texts. Daiute (2014) mentioned the narratives found in interviews are stories that people share about their experiences and are constructed with a researcher.

### **Phenomenology**

Researchers use a phenomenological research design to gather firsthand, otherwise invisible experiences from participants (Dowden et al., 2014). Phenomenology research involves the phenomenon's essence, as the phenomena's essential meaning comprises the participants' lived experiences. The phenomenology research design was the most appropriate to interview the participants in this study. Phenomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the importance of individual lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Phenomenology seeks to understand human experience to explore phenomena and how it is perceived and experienced by an individual in the phenomenological event.

Robson and McCartan (2016) indicated a phenomenological design focuses on understanding how humans view themselves and the world around them. A phenomenological researcher focuses on the participants' lived experiences. This study explored the application and implementation of business strategies during the first 5 years of business. The phenomenological research design was selected for this study because it provided insight into a phenomenon through personal experiences.

## **Participants**

Yin (2014) mentioned qualitative researchers should establish participant eligibility for useful data collection. Using eligibility criteria helps researchers select experienced participants who can provide them with valuable and relevant data. Researchers should ensure the potential participants are knowledgeable of the research topic. One strategy researchers use to gain participants is to rely on acquaintance network referrals (Shwed & Kalev, 2014). McAreavey and Das (2013) indicated it is appropriate and ethical for researchers to access potential participants by requesting permission from organizational gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are contact persons such as principals, administrators, and business owners, who allow researchers to access participants in an organization.

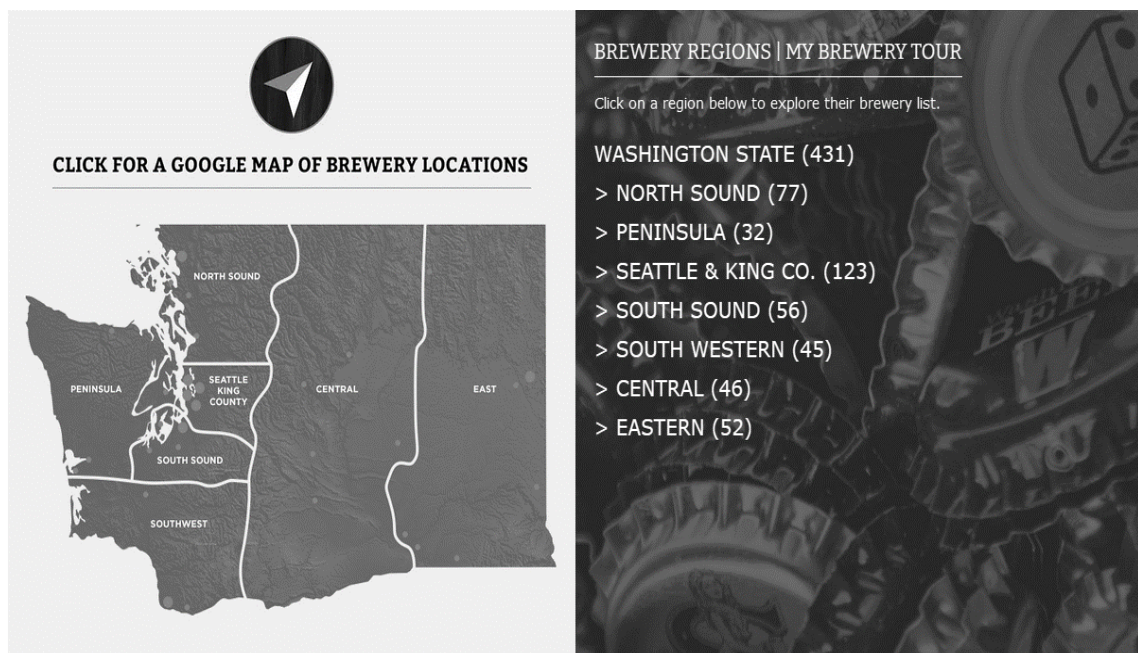
Patton (2015) noted many researchers using the qualitative method rely on interviews with individuals with predefined characteristics. Kristensen and Ravn (2015) found that the selected interviewees could affect the researcher's knowledge through a research study. The microbrewery business owners would only provide data from their viewpoints. Hagaman and Wutich (2017) pointed out the researcher would select the individuals who could provide information that would help answer the interview questions. The eligibility criteria for choosing the participants for this study were microbrewery business owners who set the strategies for their businesses and had been in the handcraft beer industry for 5 or more years in the Washington State Puget Sound region.

## Population

Washington State Craft Beer (n.d.) reported a population of 431 microbreweries in Washington State. The location of breweries considered for this study were found in the following regions: North Sound, Peninsula, Seattle and King, South Sound, South Western, Central, and Eastern Washington. Figures 6 and 7 provide a reference by brewery regions.

**Figure 6**

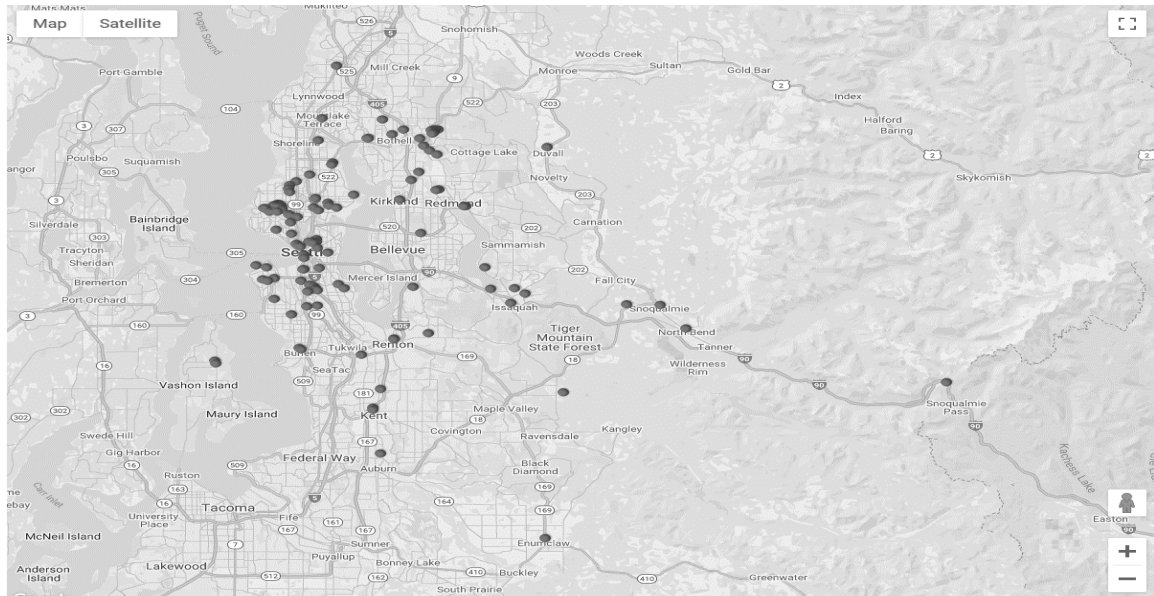
*The Breweries*



*Note.* From “The Breweries” by Washington State Craft Beer, n.d., retrieved October 26, 2020 (<https://washingtonbeer.com/breweries/#>). Copyright 2022 by Washington State Craft Beer.

**Figure 7**

*123 Microbreweries in Seattle and King County*



*Note.* From “Seattle and King County Breweries Locations” by Washington State Craft Beer, n.d., retrieved October 26, 2020 (<https://washingtonbeer.com/breweries/brewery-map.php?r=3>). Copyright 2022 by Washington State Craft Beer.

Business owners who set the strategy for their business were the most appropriate interview participants. The research population consisted of microbrewery business owners in the Washington State Puget Sound area, including the relevant participants. They provided their experiences and shared relevant details of being in business beyond 5 years.

The sample size of a study should reach the number of participants sufficient to meet data saturation standards, at which point the data become repetitive (Dworkin, 2012). Researchers who utilize purposeful sampling should strive to select business

owners who provide sufficient information on the phenomenon under study (Evans & Buehner, 2011).

## **Sample**

Dworkin (2012) claimed the sample size should reach the number of participants sufficient to meet data saturation standards, in which the data become repetitive. Data saturation occurs when the researcher uncovers no additional insights, themes, or perspectives related to the subject phenomenon (Suri, 2011). The sample size should reach the number of participants sufficient to meet data saturation standards. Evans and Buehner (2011) mentioned the researcher in purposeful sampling should strive to select participants who provide more information on the phenomenon under study.

Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain enough data to sufficiently describe the phenomenon of interest and address the research question. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommended the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. Creswell (1998) recommended five to 25 interviews for phenomenological studies, and Morse (1994) suggested six interviews. This study included a purposeful sample of 12 microbrewery business owners who had operated for 5 or more years in the Washington State Puget Sound area. The first two microbrewery business owners were selected for the pilot study.

The sampling technique for this study was purposive. Purposive sampling is a judgmental sampling technique used to select participants with experience or knowledge to provide rich information on a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Turner et al. (2014) mentioned the researcher uses purposive sampling because the selected participant can communicate experiences, qualities, and opinions in an eloquent,

expressive, and reflective manner. DeFeo (2013) suggested purposeful sampling allows researchers to intentionally sample a group of people who are most likely to have experiences and information about the research question under investigation. The researcher should select the most relevant participants who best serve the research objectives as part of the purposeful sample.

### **Data Collection**

The purpose of the Brewers Association (n.d.) is to promote and protect U.S. craft brewers, their beers, and the community of brewing enthusiasts. The Brewers Association is a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit trade association. The association is an organization of brewers, for brewers, and by brewers. The Brewers Association created the website, [crafbeer.com](http://crafbeer.com), which provides the option to search microbreweries by name, city, or state. Craftbeer.com offered the flexibility to select participants in seven regions in Washington State; for example, the Seattle and King County region displayed a total of 123 potential participant breweries (see Figure 7).

This study included a sample of 12 microbrewery business owners who had been in business for 5 or more years in the Washington State Puget Sound area. The first two microbrewery owners were selected for the pilot study. The business owners were invited to participate via e-mail or telephone calls. The most popular approaches to data collection for qualitative research include participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and analyzing audiovisual materials and documents (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The data were collected through a combination of telephone or virtual semistructured interviews where perceptions and experiences could be explored through the participants' responses.

The researcher asked each participant the same questions in the same order to enhance the reliability of the study and gather data from the participating microbrewery owners about their experiences in changing, adapting, and managing their business strategies. Participants were used to check the data for accuracy (Merriam, 2014). It was requested for all microbrewery business owners to review their interview transcripts to ensure the validity of the study.

The researcher in this phenomenological study conducted and concluded the participant interviews within 3 months and accounted for any additional follow-up interviews regarding verifiable confirmations. The first action the researcher took in the interview session was establish rapport with the participant (Smith et al., 2009). The participant needed to be comfortable with the researcher, know what the researcher wanted, and have trust in the researcher. Unless the researcher succeeded in establishing this rapport, they were unlikely to obtain good data from the participants. The researcher had to learn how to put the participants at ease with regard to asking them about their lived experiences.

According to Smith et al. (2009), the interviewing process allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in light of participants' responses. The researcher could then inquire about another interesting area that arises. A single interview is often not sufficient; a second interview allows for increased methodological rigor, as the researcher engages and connects with the participant for a longer time, allowing a deeper relationship to develop (Smith et al., 2009). More than one interview provided opportunities for the researcher to confirm, clarify, and build on the information given in previous interviews. The second interview



with each participant was used to review the recorded information and discuss interpretation to avoid misinterpretation of the research during data transcription.

Not all microbrewery business owners implemented the same strategies, nor were all strategies equally effective. By establishing rapport and using interview questions, the researcher elicited clear and detailed answers about the collaborative techniques used in microbrew businesses that succeed beyond the 5 years. Snyder (2012) recommended the use of electronic devices as a research tool. Using a recorder during the interview process ensured accuracy and aids in the transcription process. To ensure accuracy of the interviews, each participant received a copy of the transcript for review. The participants had an opportunity to provide feedback through transcript review, which supported the credibility of the results. Yun et al. (2013) mentioned protecting microbrewery business owners' privacy is essential to comply with ethical research standards. The ethical protection process provides the notes and transcripts that do not contain personal identifiers and requires the researcher to keep raw and processed data locked in a safe box accessible only to the researchers. The researcher used fictitious names to disguise business owners' identities and ensure confidentiality.

### **Instruments**

Cooke (2014) ascertained the participant and the researcher's interaction produces qualitative study data. Qualitative researchers who use semistructured interviews can explore perceptions and experiences through the participants' responses. Rowley (2012) claimed the interview is the primary data collection source in a qualitative study. Qu and Dumay (2011) noted the researcher is the primary data collector and suggested semistructured interviews relax the participants and facilitate open dialogue with the

researcher. A semistructured format with open-ended questions is favorable in qualitative research.

In their respective research studies, Gibson et al. (2013) described how the researcher provides each participant with a consent form outlining the study's intended use, the purpose, and the interview risk. The consent form also explained the steps taken to protect participants' businesses and keep personal identities confidential.

Microbrewery business owners were not obligated to complete the interviews and could halt the interview process at any time. All printed materials, when not in use, were secured in a safe box. Once the research study concluded, all personal information and other sensitive materials used in the research were stored securely and will remain secured for 5 years. After 5 years, all records will be destroyed.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) recommended defining the interview protocol (see Appendix A) before the interviews to ensure a common approach. The interview guide (see Appendix B) focused on reducing interview bias, maintaining organization, and providing all participants with the same questions in the same order. A protocol is essential for a qualitative phenomenological study design and helps researchers focus on the topic and ensure reliability (Yin, 2014).

### **Pilot Study**

The purpose of the pilot study was to check for accuracy and modify the research questions. Yin (2014) recommended using a pilot test to refine the interview questions, data collection plans, and procedures. The data collection procedures were tested in a pilot study with two business owners to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the

interview guide. The pilot study allowed the researcher to practice interviewing and analyzing data.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested conducting a pilot study to discover any specific issues with the adequacy of the interview questionnaire and develop a keen awareness of design, fieldwork procedures, environmental issues, or analysis procedures. The two-pilot study selection was to send invitations via e-mail and telephone calls to microbrewery business owners located in the Washington State Puget Sound area. The first two microbrewery owners were selected for the pilot study. The two pilot study participants were informed of the purpose of the study through the same methods for participants as the intended study. An introductory solicitation telephone call to the potential pilot participants was used to request participation in creating the study design.

The interview questions were not included in the study results, and the pilot study was initiated to evaluate the interview questions used for the study. The pilot study was used to determine if the interview questions were valid and sequenced correctly. Interview questions for the actual research were not revised based on the responses from the two participants in the pilot study. The informed consent form (see Appendix C) and participant withdrawal form (see Appendix D) were sent to the two participants for the pilot study by e-mail or fax. Before, during, or after the interview, the pilot participant could choose to withdraw from the pilot study through a virtual meeting, telephone, fax, or e-mail (see Appendix E). None of the participants withdrew from the pilot study.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

Phenomenological analysis seeks to understand the sense, essence, and nature of individuals' phenomenon-based experiences and make them more straightforward

(Patton, 2014). The primary source of data for this study comprised telephone or virtual semistructured interviews of microbrewery business owners. A qualitative study usually relies on inductive reasoning processes to interpret and structure the meaning derived from data.

Thorne (2000) distinguished inductive from deductive inquiry processes to identify what counts as qualitative research. Once data were collected and organized, the next step was to code the information, where coding is the active process of identifying data as belonging to or representing some phenomenon. Primary coding begins with an examination of the data and assigning words or phrases that capture their essence. A code, in qualitative data analysis, is a word or short phrase that captures the meaning of the data (Saldaña, 2016). Coding can be used to protect the confidentiality of the participants and label participants with pseudonyms (Rowley, 2012).

Text analysis software programs offer the ability to quantify qualitative data more efficiently (Firmin et al., 2017). Electronic assistance in qualitative coding has grown from using the function available in Microsoft Word and Excel programs to organizing and assisting with qualitative coding and memos. Professional researchers now often use qualitative analysis software, such as NVivo, to help manage, sort, index, arrange, and rearrange qualitative information data. Menter et al. (2011) mentioned once the material is coded, the software allows the researcher to systematically sort the material to ensure all relevant indexed pieces of text are included in the analysis process and minimize overlooking relevant information.

According to Willgens et al. (2016), the phenomenological researcher should leave the reader with a strong grasp of what it is like to have experienced the stated

phenomenon. First, to fully capture the essence of a given phenomenon's lived experience, researchers reject the reductionist perspective. Second, a hallmark of phenomenology is the concept of bracketing. Third, data collection included interviews, written self-reports, and other personal expression forms. Creswell (2013) mentioned minimally structured interviews with general questions offer a participant focus, although it is crucial to gather depth and breadth of the phenomenon under study. Fourth, data analysis allowed codes to emerge from the data rather than being preassigned. The researcher used the coding process to generate a description of the setting, people, or themes for analysis. These themes appeared as significant findings in qualitative studies. The phenomenological research should give the reader a firm grasp of what it is like to have experienced the stated phenomenon.

This phenomenological study followed the 7-step process of Moustakas (1994) to identify patterns and themes in participant interviews. Step 1 was to transcribe each interview verbatim. During the horizontalization process, each interview was audio recorded and transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. Assignment of value to responses was equal in the horizontalization step. Step 2 involved a reduction to remove any insignificant data. In this step, excluding vague statements or comments not relevant to the experiences is necessary to manage the data. In the reduction phase, the removal of all irrelevant information from transcribed interviews occurs.

According to Moustakas (1994), Step 3 is the clustering phase. The transcribed interviews were analyzed using commonly occurring phrases and recorded manually on a list. These phrases were grouped into nodes in a qualitative data analysis computer software. Step 4 was the process of validating the themes from the transcribed interviews.

A text query was conducted in the qualitative data analysis computer software to validate themes for the data collected. The text query identified commonly occurring phrases.

According to Moustakas (1994), Step 5 included multiple reviews of transcripts. Step 6 was the structural description of the experiences of the participants. Step 7 was the final step. Themes emerged by carefully analyzing the interview data by mining key phrases and answers. This process was repeated and carefully analyzed by listening, manually transcribing, and reading interviews. The process yielded the thematic phrases.

The researcher analyzed the qualitative data by coding and recoding the words and phrases. The researcher codified or grouped the data into emergent patterns, themes, and developed a coding scheme. The researcher performed initial coding to break the raw data into smaller, manageable data groups. The researcher applied axial coding by reviewing the data, linking data, reassembling data, and performing theoretical coding during the interpreting phase of data analysis. The researcher integrated the existing data into one group during the interpreting phase, from which themes emerged.

### **Limitations**

Esmaeilzadeh et al. (2014) mentioned limitations are possible weaknesses the researcher cannot control. The focus in this context was the quality and depth of data collected compared to the quantity of data collected. A qualitative study incorporating participant interviews can be limited by potential participant bias and participants' ability to recollect past performance events accurately. The researcher could mitigate bias by avoiding viewing data through a personal lens. Personal experience could often create bias and alter the research findings (Balzacq, 2014). Viewing data through a personal lens

is a form of bias, resulting in the misinterpretation of the meaning and shared experiences of the participants.

Microbrewery business owners could feel discomfort disclosing information about their business's failure or success and might not precisely recollect their experience in conducting business. Participants could feel uncomfortable or reluctant to reveal all business information necessary to fully evaluate the business strategies used to improve profits. Criteria for small businesses were limited to a minimum of 5 years of being in business. The requirement for 5 or more years in business excluded microbrewery business owners who successfully performed for fewer than 5 years or who changed owners and failed after the transference of operations. Researcher bias occurs when the researcher has personal biases or prior assumptions they cannot bracket (Onwuegbuzie, 2003). This bias may be subconsciously transferred to microbrewery business owners to affect their behaviors, attitudes, or experiences.

### **Delimitations**

Barratt et al. (2011) identified delimitations are the bounds and scope of the research study. The study was delimited to microbrewery business owners who had been in business for 5 or more years with fewer than 100 employees and who produce 15,000 barrels of beer annually in the Washington State Puget Sound area. The study population consisted of 12 microbrewery business owners who had been in the handcrafted beer industry for 5 or more years. The first two microbrewery business owners were included in the pilot study.

Onwuegbuzie (2003) outlined confirmatory thematic analyses can be conducted, in which qualitative replication studies are directed to assess the replicability of previous

emergent themes or test an existing theory when appropriate. The findings and results of the study may not necessarily generalize to other subjects, locations, or future periods.

### **Role of the Researcher**

A researcher spends significant time identifying an appropriate method and design for a study by considering what approach may answer the central research questions. Patton (2015) mentioned the central figure's role in a qualitative research study is to collect data through in-depth, open-ended interviews and written communications. The selection of data collection depends on the most appropriate approach to obtaining the data that would answer the research questions.

Robson and McCartan (2016) stated the researcher must ensure the language of the questions is understandable and unambiguous to respondents. Randall et al. (2013) mentioned a qualitative researcher's role involves interacting and collaborating with participants to understand the phenomenon of the study. Berger (2015) noted the relationship between a researcher and a research area is a researcher's way of understanding participants' perceptions.

A qualitative researcher is typically involved in the entire research process. It is critical for the researcher to clarify their role in the research process. The role of the researcher in the data collection process is to collect reliable and valid data to answer the research question (Anyan, 2013). The role of the researcher in this study was to collect data using semistructured telephone or virtual interviews, audio recording, and notes from interview observations to explore the successful strategies used by microbrewery business owners who had been in business for 5 or more years.



## Ethical Research

Yin (2014) mentioned the qualitative researcher could discover and refine concepts by addressing *how*, *what*, and *why* in the study. Morse (2015) explained a qualitative researcher has a dual mission of generating knowledge through rigorous research and upholding ethical principles and standards. In this study, the researcher had a moral obligation to the interview participants. The researcher honored any promises made to the participants on the data collected for the study. The researcher did not deceive the participants and had to demonstrate respect for all of them.

Akhavan et al. (2013) recommended applying the 1979 *Belmont Report*, which provided ethical guidelines to mitigating any form of bias during the interview process. The three principles listed in the report focus on respect, beneficence, and justice. Researchers use the *Belmont Report* to respect participants' decisions and apply ethically accepted research standards at all times. The researchers should not be affiliated with study participants to mitigate research bias and avoid viewing data through a researcher's lens. Bell (2014) mentioned researchers should omit their viewpoints, rather than those of the selected participants, to avoid bias and generate a deeper understanding of the research topic. Yin (2014) pointed out researchers should be aware of the possibility of predispositions, personal assumptions, and values that affect the research environment during data collection and analysis.

Morse and Coulehan (2015) mentioned data gathered during the research study remains confidential for privacy purposes. Protecting the study participants' privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality was a core tenet of research ethics. To ensure confidentiality, the names of participants and their organizations were omitted from the

study. Electronic data are protected with passwords and hard copies will be stored safely for at least 5 years to safeguard participants. After 5 years, the documents will be destroyed to avoid privacy violations and data leaks.

### **Quality of Evidence**

The discussion about the quality of evidence derives through research participants' authentic lived experiences. The usage of truthfulness forms the basis of the research method. Qualitative research is incomplete absent an assessment of the significant components of trustworthiness, such as reliability, dependability, validity, credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Yin, 2014). Maintaining rigor in qualitative research is necessary for researchers to produce quality studies readers can trust. A variety of methods and processes were implemented to collect and analyze data. It is essential to conduct research that is valid and reliable and can be used in future research.

### **Reliability**

Mariotto et al. (2014) mentioned the concept of reliability in a qualitative research study because if other researchers choose to follow the same research procedures, they will achieve results similar to what was received by the initial researcher. Grosseohme (2014) noted the reliability of a study is the ability of another researcher to replicate the task in a similar setting and obtain similar results. Leedy and Ormrod (2013) stated minimizing error and researcher bias are core objectives of qualitative research. Reliability does not guarantee validity. Without reliability, the likelihood of validity is limited.

Thomas and Magilvy (2011) described repeating the interview approach enables other researchers to replicate the design. The following six steps ensure the reliability process aligns with the interview questions: (a) develop the central research questions, (b) document and store the responses and related data, (c) request the participants review their respective transcripts, (d) secure the data to protect confidential information, (e) apply analytical approaches consistent with case studies, and (f) destroy the data after 5 years.

The researcher ensured the interview process was uniform and consistent with each participant to address dependability in the study. Harvey (2015) suggested follow-up member checking of data interpretation, which allows each participant to review the interpretation of the interviewer and enhance the dependability of a study. Munn et al. (2014) mentioned dependability and reliability are equivalent to the definition of consistency. Dependability is satisfied when the same phenomenon is addressed using the same design, procedure, and protocol resulting in a similar conclusion. To ensure the study results were dependable, the researcher followed the same research protocol for each interview, which also aided in the consistency of data.

### **Dependability**

Dependability shows study results are consistent and replicable (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018). Data are trustworthy if they have established trustworthiness. Researchers demonstrate dependability through an audit trail of reflexive and operational memos. Polit (2014) indicated researchers ensure dependability to minimize errors in their study. The researcher employed member checking by sending e-mails to review preliminary findings and interpretations against the raw data, ensured data validation,

reduced errors, and noted preconceptions in the research findings. Allen et al. (2014). Member checking is when researchers communicate the summary of the results and request feedback from participants.

Houghton et al. (2013a) mentioned dependability often refers to the stability and the reliability of the data collected in a research study. Participants had an opportunity to validate the researcher's interpretations from the content analysis to ensure the interpretations were valid. After data collection occurred through interviews, observations were completed.

Korstens and Moser (2018) noted researchers defined dependability as the audit trail. Conney (2016) described dependability as the stability of research data based on the nature of the study. Researchers use dependability to describe the research methods process from the beginning to reporting their research findings. Moon et al. (2016) mentioned researchers use dependability to display and document consistency in the research findings, allowing readers to follow, audit, or critique the research findings. The researcher used data from each source to support the other data sources and strengthen the study findings. To ensure dependability, the researcher in this study followed an interview protocol and interviewed participants until data saturation was achieved. Computer software helped attain dependability because it provided a traceable coding process.

## **Validity**

It is essential to document how one develops results (Elo et al., 2014). Readers should be able to follow the researcher's analytical process to the results. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) mentioned validity relates to the accuracy of the research findings and

depends on the researcher's trustworthiness. Street and Ward (2012) described validity as a measure of the reliability and credibility of the content of data-gathering vehicles, such as surveys and interview scripts, and the subsequent findings and results. Thomas and Magilvy proposed three criteria for testing qualitative research validity: credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Leedy and Ormrod (2013) mentioned validity concerns truth; provides affirmation that data collection was accurate; ensures findings, interpretations, and conclusions emerging from the research were factual; and accurately represents real-world phenomena. Leedy and Ormrod posited qualitative validity involves trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity. Grant (2014) mentioned transferability in relation to the readers and future researchers is addressed by ensuring thorough assumptions and research content. The technique provides a generalization of the research findings so the reader and future researchers have the freedom to allocate the conclusion to another context or setting. The researcher included member checking, disclosing, and monitoring researcher bias and discrepant data to ensure validity. Member checks allowed participants to confirm interview summaries accurately reflect their experiences, feelings, and views.

### **Credibility**

Cope (2014) recommended including audit trails to support credibility when reporting a qualitative study. An audit trail could include notes or materials the researcher used to arrive at assumptions or decisions. Data saturation was a critical component for establishing creditability. Walker (2012) mentioned a researcher confirms data saturation

when repeated data occur or when the researcher uncovers no additional insights, themes, or perspectives related to the subject phenomenon.

Anney (2014) mentioned a qualitative researcher could establish credibility through prolonged and varied field experience, time sampling, field journals, triangulation, member checking, peer examination, interview technique, established authority as researcher, and structural coherence. Castillo-Montoya (2016) suggested qualitative researchers can enhance credibility of research by establishing a reliable interview protocol that contributes to the credibility of their research study. Conney (2016) noted peer debriefing, reflective journaling, extended engagement with research participants, persistent observation, and member checking are proper techniques and useful for establishing credibility. To ensure credibility, the researcher accurately reported data with replication and consistency. Engagement and open dialogue were essential for the credibility of research findings. The researcher encouraged openly discussing the phenomenon, thereby facilitating access to the experience while considering the participants' realities.

### **Confirmability**

Houghton et al. (2013b) mentioned maintaining an audit trail consists of a comprehensive collection of documentation on all aspects of research, facilitates an orderly and organized study, and ensures confirmability of the study. Urhuogo et al. (2014) mentioned ensuring confirmability involves using an audit trail and providing a detailed report of the data and a detailed interpretation of the data analysis. Another term for the audit trail is a recording log, maintained with detailed notes researchers use to see the sequence of events and changes in the information collected.

Describing how to derive interpretations and conclusions from the data established the trustworthiness of this study through the dependability, credibility, transferability, and conformability of the study findings. To ensure confirmability, the researcher in this study kept complete notes of the contextual background of collected data and rationales for all methodological decisions to help increase research rigor. Confirmability derives from audit trail accuracy promoted by the choices of this study. In the report portion of this study, the researcher illuminated confirmability by providing quotes from the participants.

### **Transferability**

Hanson et al. (2011) stated research must be transferable. The transferability of a study relates to how the results of a study can be generalized or transferred. da Mota Pedrosa et al. (2012) claimed a researcher must provide detailed information about the design and findings to allow the audience to determine whether the study could apply to another possible research project. Transferability requires providing detailed, sample descriptions, and results can be used in additional contexts. Barratt et al. (2015) reasoned researchers ensure transferability through detailed descriptions and purposeful sampling. Detailed descriptions involved the researcher sharing the process they undertook to allow other researchers to replicate their work in various settings under similar conditions.

Houghton et al. (2013b) mentioned the validity of qualitative research refers to how the findings are generalizable to other studies or more than one setting. Agostini et al. (2014) explained researchers could achieve transferability through data saturation, which also ensures the validity of a study. Ensuring data saturation involves completing the same findings through continuous interviews or interviewing until the data obtained

makes no further study contributions. Fusch and Ness (2015) confirmed reaching data saturation affects the quality of study findings and, subsequently, the credibility and validity of the study. Agostini et al. pointed out data saturation is not dependent on the quantity of the data collection, but on the quality and depth of the data. To ensure transferability, the researcher provided additional details in the various appendices to enable future researchers to expand on the current study. The researcher also included detailed explanations of the research processes and provided procedures. Explanations were provided to explain why certain methods and resources were selected and used in this study.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the phenomenon of the lived experiences of microbrewery business owners located in the Washington State Puget Sound area to analyze if the findings contributed to future sustainable businesses. The researcher selected business owners by implementing criterion sampling. Interviews were the main instrument for collecting data from business owners. The interview instrument consisted of 17 open-ended interview questions aligned with the three research questions. Data analysis involved using the transcripts of the recorded interviews, and the researcher created codes to find significant statements and related themes from the transcripts. The themes were generated to answer each research question for this phenomenological study and were based on meaningful statements.

Chapter 4 provides data collection, coding, analysis, and results obtained from diverse data themes. Chapter 4 contains the findings that described and explained the lived experiences of microbrewery business owners who sustained business for 5 or more



years. The research goal was to explore the applications and implementation of business strategies microbrewery business owners have used to stay operational for 5 or more years.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the application and implementation of business strategies microbrewery business owners have used to stay operational for 5 or more years. A microbrewery business owner's sustainability strategy is the unique quality that sets a microbrewery business apart from all other microbreweries. Microbrewery business owners need to allocate their limited resources to activities that enhance their business strategies.

A challenge for microbrewery business owners is identifying business strategies that maximize their energies and resources to sustain business beyond 5 years. The business strategies are how the business owners align themselves with their environments to create and maintain a competitive advantage.

Chapter 4 describes the research study results conducted among microbrewery business owners in the Washington State Puget Sound area. The researcher focused on significant themes that emerged from the coding and analytical processes of the data generated from participant interviews. Chapter 4 consists of the research questions, pilot study, data collection, participant demographics, data analysis, and presentation of the findings. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary statement that encapsulates the essence of the chapter.

### **Pilot Study**

Qualitative research does not use statistical methods for testing questions for validity. A qualitative researcher typically uses a field test of the instrument. The pilot study results aided the research efforts by providing valuable information. Once the

Institutional Review Board Certificate of Approval was received, the pilot study was scheduled and conducted.

The first two microbrewery business owners interested in participating in the research were selected for the pilot study. A pilot study was initiated to pretest the interview questions used for the study. After explaining the study parameters and intent, the microbrewery business owners signed the informed consent form (see Appendix C) to participate in the pilot study. After signing the informed consent letter, each pilot study participant received the interview questions via email and then participated in a telephone interview. To ensure confidentiality and participants' privacy, their names were replaced with pseudonyms, PS1 and PS2. The two pilot study participants indicated viewing the interview questions during the telephone interview resulted in a more precise understanding of the questions and the study. The pilot test participants confirmed the interview questions and protocol would provide sufficient data to understand the application and implementation of successful business strategies.

Before, during, or after the interview, the pilot participants could withdraw from the pilot study through notification by telephone or email. After the pilot study was completed, the two pilot participants provided feedback to help identify questions or processes that were vague or difficult to answer. The researcher found there were no changes necessary to the open-ended questions. Responses from pilot study participants were not included in the study. The pilot study was essential to validate the research questions for reliability. The approach ensured the questions were relevant, open ended, and semistructured to collect data.

## **Data Collection**

Although age, education, gender, or race did not associate with the criteria for study participant selection, the participants revealed how each of these categories contributed to the success of their businesses. The participants met the research criteria of operating a business for 5 or more years, setting the strategy for their business, and having their business based in the Washington State Puget Sound area. The participants were microbrewery business owners who credited their tenacity, business relationships, training, and longevity in business as instruments that have brought them business success.

The researcher contacted microbrewery business owners via email to invite them to participate in the research. The researcher explained to prospective research participants the informed consent (see Appendix C), which participants carefully reviewed, understood, and signed the consent form. The researcher conducted 10 semistructured telephone interviews with microbrewery business owners in the Washington State Puget Sound area. The use of telephone interviewing allowed for the capturing of lived experiences and information shared by the participants. The interview process followed a scripted guide (see Appendix A) for ease of transition and consistency. Included in the interview was the opportunity for participants to provide comments after formal questions. Each interview ranged from 30–45 minutes in length. To ensure confidentiality and the participants' privacy, their names were replaced with pseudonyms: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10.

## Demographic Information

All participants were male owners who set the strategy for their business. They were involved in their business operation and started in the Washington State Puget Sound area. One (10%) participant started three businesses, one (10%) participant started two businesses, and eight (80%) participants had one business. Eight (80%) participants reported Caucasian ethnicity, and two (20%) were Hispanic. The highest level of education was one participant (10%) with a Juris Doctor (JD) degree, four participants (40%) with a master's degree, three (30%) with a bachelor's degree, one participant (10%) with high school diploma, and one participant (10%) with an associate's degree. Table 1 provides the demographic questions, which included years in business, number of employees, age, gender, education, and ethnicity.

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics Owners Section 1*

Participant	Years in business	Employees	Age	Gender	Education	Ethnicity
P1	5	4	52	Male	Master's degree	Caucasian
P2	7	3	51	Male	Bachelor's degree	Caucasian
P3	7	3	52	Male	Bachelor's degree	Caucasian
P4	8	12	51	Male	Master's degree	Caucasian
P5	7	12	43	Male	Juris Doctor degree	Caucasian
P6	7	2	38	Male	Master's degree	Hispanic
P7	31	5	58	Male	Bachelor's degree	Caucasian
P8	8	2	45	Male	Associate's degree	Caucasian
P9	25	None	56	Male	High school diploma	Caucasian
P10	5	None	39	Male	Master's degree	Hispanic

The 35–40 age group consisted of two participants (20%), the 41–45 age group consisted of two participants (20%), the 50–55 age group consisted of four participants

(40%), and the 56–60 age group consisted of two participants (20%). Two (20%) participants reported 12 as their average number of employees, one participant (10%) reported five employees, one participant (10%) reported four employees, two (20%) participants reported three employees, two (20%) participants reported two employees, and two (20%) participants did not report any employees in their business. One participant (10%) had 31 years of experience, one participant (10%) had 25 years of experience, two participants (20%) had 8 years of experience, four participants (40%) had 7 years of experience, and two participants (20%) had 5 years of experience. Table 2 provides the demographic questions that included current business involvement, how many businesses the participants started, and their business locations.

**Table 2**

*Participant Demographics Owners Section 2*

Participant	Current involvement in the business	Started businesses	Location
P1	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Gig Harbor, WA
P2	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Arlington, WA
P3	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Blaine, WA
P4	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Marysville, WA
P5	Business operations manager and master brewer	2	Seattle, WA
P6	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Edmonds, WA
P7	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Arlington, WA
P8	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Marysville, WA
P9	Business operations manager and master brewer	3	Stanwood, WA
P10	Business operations manager and master brewer	1	Snohomish, WA

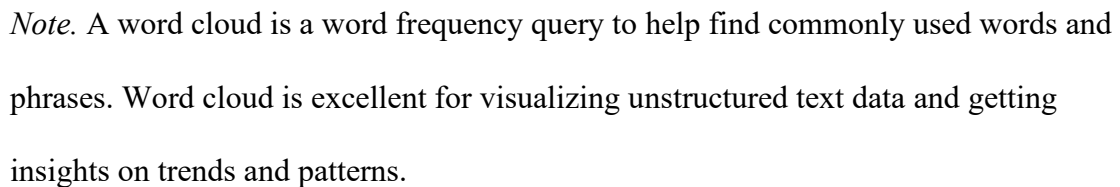
## **Data Analysis**

Upon completion of the data collection and data organization phase, the researcher began data analysis. Analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data helped bring order and understanding to the data and to answer the research questions. The interview questions (see Appendix D) were reviewed before the data analysis process, and interview recordings and researcher notes were reviewed. After the telephone interviews were complete, data were analyzed logically and sequentially to identify the findings and to capture the significance of the study. The researcher analyzed and interpreted the interview data relative to the problem and research questions.

By codifying (i.e., grouping) data into emergent patterns and themes, the researcher developed a coding scheme. The coding scheme helped identify emerging patterns and themes harmonious with the research questions, interview questions, and problem statement. The researcher applied axial coding and theoretical coding methods in the research.

A combination of manual and software-based techniques was used to organize and link responses. Keywords and phrases were identified relating to a specific interview question by examining each response to that question within each interview. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to assist in the data analysis process. NVivo grouped the responses, enabling the identification of recurring keywords and phrases across participants. Figure 8 represents word frequency results in NVivo software.

## Word Frequency



Identifying common themes and making interpretations is a critical step of the phenomenological data analysis process. A researcher deduces interpretations based on the common patterns or themes identified and links them to the study's purpose.



## **Presentation of Findings**

The participants had a significant role in the daily operations of the brewery. Participants did not describe their day-to-day presence as the result of their inability to pay for management staff, but instead attributed it to their drive for their business survival and success. Participants perceived their daily presence as a strength of their business, and in some cases, their presence was an expectation of their customers. Participants demonstrated strong leadership skills brought new ideas and solutions to the organization that influenced performance.

Although each participant discussed their strategy for business sustainability over competitors, each took a different approach early in their business formation to create a unique business niche that has allowed sustainability beyond 5 years in business. Four themes emerged from the participant's responses to the interview questions.

### **Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked: What business strategies have business owners used to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years? To answer Research Question 1, participants were asked to answer six questions about starting a business, the role of any professional advisors, business strategies, barriers incurred while implementing strategies, and strategies in place to sustain the business.

#### ***Theme 1: Customer Experience is Key to Exceeding Customers' Expectations***

The first theme to emerge was the need for microbrewery business owners to provide excellent customer service to their customers, as 100% of the participants mentioned customer satisfaction as an essential component of building a sustainable microbrewery business beyond 5 years. Establishing trust with customers, suppliers,

vendors, employees, and other industry professionals is one key component of building a sustainable small business.

A solid connection to the community was an overarching theme described by most participants. Most participants stated they took time out of their busy schedules to get to know their customers personally whenever possible. There must be a belief at the core of a microbrewery business owner that drives them to impact people's lives in one's society, community, and environment.

Providing customers with the products they want and ensuring they stay loyal and come back regularly is essential to remaining profitable. This statement supported the existing body of literature that indicated microbrewery business owners acknowledge, understand, and implement this customer loyalty into their products by manufacturing customers' specific demands to stay competitive. The participants stated the following:

- P1. Began with the customer experience in mind.
- P2. Good management of money and people, and care for the customers. If the customers know that you care and want the best for them, they will continue to come back.
- P3. Primarily, we tried to focus on relationships with our customers, both wholesale and retail.
- P4. Establish what you are willing to risk, build a business that supports itself, and focus on meeting and exceeding customers' expectations.
- P5. Engage customers consistently across multiple touchpoints. Culling bad regulars [people who turn off other customers] is difficult, but it's helped us grow.
- P6. Customers expect transparent communication. Businesses lose potential customers because they fail to implement transparency practices.
- P7. Provide excellent care and excellent customer service.
- P8. Rely on social media to develop a customer-based, word of mouth, implemented mug club to get a sense of community.
- P9. Excellent customer service and repeat business. Customers recommend your business. Profitability!
- P10. People are unpredictable and unique. No strategy can predict how people will text, but they help identify contingencies that might be worth putting in place.

Business owners described doing more than customers expected, trying harder, and going above the norm. Customer service is a key attribute many customers value more than the price or quality of the product. The participants were successful in meeting the expectations of keeping their customers updated and following up with them. Customer experience developed loyalty with customers, who eventually became the best brand advocates.

Additionally, customer service experience was one of the strategies most participants suggested as helping to sustain profitability beyond 5 years. Participants shared their customer service experiences for their respective businesses. Developing good customer relationships and maintaining those relationships is a significant challenge for the participants, but doing so produces substantial rewards. A good customer relationship is sustainable if it permeates the business. The participants identified the importance of not losing sight of why the business exists. Customers are at the core of the microbrewery business.

### ***Theme 2: Passionate Business Owners Love What They Do***

The more passionate a person is about their passion, the more sentimental they will be about achieving their business goals. Passion drives microbrewery business owners to generate enough revenue to create escape velocity from the startup to the sustaining phase. Passion was at the root of the successful microbrewery business owners in this study, because they noted they enjoy what they do, what they offer, and the impact of their efforts. The participants stated the following:

- P1. A coach advised me to do what I love.
- P2. We had been making beer at home for around 20 years and enjoyed the hobby.
- P3. I founded the brewery out of my passion for brewing.

- P4. We started our business to fulfill our dream to create a place for people.
- P5. My business partners and I worked hard to achieve what we wanted.
- P6. Inspired to do what I like to do.
- P7. Inspired by family.
- P8. We have a passion for brewing.
- P9. Converted a hobby into an income source.
- P10. Strong desire for a brewery.

According to participants, passion gave them a powerful edge they have used to stay one step ahead of their competitors. Passion denoted the drive, ambition, and love for what participants have created with their breweries. Passion provided participants with a very special view of the craft beer industry others often do not see.

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked: How have business owners implemented business strategies to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years? To answer Research Question 2, participants were asked to answer six questions about business development methods, characteristics of a well-managed business, lessons learned about implementing business strategies, barriers encountered, reviews and changed business strategies, and advice to new or struggling business owners trying to stay in business.

### ***Theme 3: Business Strategies Build Foundations to Sustain Business***

Participants made a strong case for developing and maintaining strategies in place to sustain their businesses. When asked about implementing business strategies, microbrewery business owners acknowledged planning improved their business performance. The participants stated the following:

- P1. A strict budget. Cash flow cannot be endless.
- P2. Any business strategy has evolved from reading books and setting up systems to comply with reporting requirements.
- P3. Our vision, and subsequently our strategy, were primarily born of the apparent opportunities and constraints of opening and operating a microbrewery.

- P4. Our business strategy resulted from many years of documenting what we eventually wanted to have for a business, combined with extensive market research in industry trends.
- P5. Direct-to-consumer sales.
- P6. I just began the business with the hope of building up clientele and growing the business.
- P7. Bought the place and kept the existing strategy.
- P8. Ask other brewers, do not have a business background.
- P9. Business plan, including financial and marketing.
- P10. Selected it by analyzing competitors in the region. Identified unique gaps that needed to be filled.

The participants started their businesses from their passions and through taking risks to seek opportunities. The creation of business strategies resulted in strategizing from a systematic perspective and identifying key elements. Identifying the elements resulted in a focus on the capacity to connect with their goals, visions, and competencies.

After analyzing the semistructured interview data, the researcher identified three comprehensive subthemes: The importance of business planning, marketing planning is designed to generate a positive return on investment, and financial planning provides meaning and direction in achieving goals. Participants articulated the significance of business planning to start, grow, and maintain a successful business.

**Importance of Business Planning.** Planning is essential to successfully implementing strategies to improve business performance, because it increases client retention and profits for business success. Business planning requires core skills to meet the goals of the business owner. Participants explained microbrewery business owners should consider using a systematic approach to gain long-term business success. Strategies necessary to meet business objectives through business planning entail conducting effective internal and external research, considering appropriate alternatives,

applying effective communication, implementing appropriate strategic activities, and monitoring all facets connected to the business's success.

An effective business plan can help microbrewery business owners determine potential risks and weaknesses and formulate a plan to capitalize on their inherent strengths and market opportunities. Business sustainability is driven by microbrewery business owners who can identify key business opportunities, formulate a plan to take advantage of the opportunities, and implement the appropriate strategies to capitalize on identified opportunities. Participants agreed on the importance of business planning and the revision of business goals to accommodate for change. Participants stated the following:

- P1. It's all about accountability.
- P2. Developing our business plan has involved free advertising [e.g., social media], merchandise sales to keep our brand out there, and saving money for future expansions.
- P3. Our business plan focuses on relationships with our customers. We also focused on creating opportunities for cross-promotion with our vendors and customers.
- P4. Our main business planning was creating and building a loyal following through excellent product and association with elevated craft beer experiential establishments.
- P5. We know what our strengths are and devote time to our community.
- P6. I didn't have an overall plan, more of a learn about something of my interest and make a business out of it type of deal.
- P7. Community involvement via service groups, meet as many people as possible.
- P8. Rely on social media to develop a customer-based, word of mouth, implemented mug club to get a sense of community.
- P9. Developed short- and long-term goals: Startup goals, first 6 months' plan and goals, 1–3-year plan, and 5 years and beyond plan.
- P10. Customer reviews, employee reviews of the business, and previous employer's lessons learned, cost of goods tracking, and competitor analysis.

A good business plan helped participants focus on the specific steps necessary to make business ideas succeed. It also helped them achieve short-term and long-term objectives.

Building a business plan allowed participants to make some of their critical business

decisions ahead of time. Business planning helped the participants broadly understand the competition and the market they were operating in, including consumer trends and preferences, potential disruptions, and other insights that were not always plainly visible.

### **Marketing Planning is Designed to Generate a Positive Return on**

**Investment.** Participants indicated they used advertising as a strategy in sustaining their business beyond 5 years. Many described using public relations and an internal advertising group to create specific marketing strategies to target different demographics. They also noted marketing strategies related to product awareness, market share, and profitability are the key control strategies for microbrewery business owners to improve performance and sustain their businesses.

Participants agreed knowing and understanding the business environment allowed them to prepare for seasonality and other challenges. By conducting market research, participants expressed they were able to understand market trends and competitors, identify potential customers, advertise, and provide products customers want. Knowing the target market improved marketing strategies for product awareness, market share, and profitability, all of which are essential for well-managed business performance. The participants stated the following:

P1. I determined who my target customers were and then researched the best methods to reach these customers and then built a marketing plan to reach target customers.

P2. Good marketing management and care for the customers. If the targeted customers know that you care and want the best for them, they will continue to come back.

P3. You also need to be able to adapt to competition and consumers without fully compromising that vision. I learned something, applied what I learned, and feel proud of the results.

P4. The main characteristics of a well-managed small business revolve around the business owner being honest with the current situation, potential future developments, and staying true to their established marketing plan.

- P5. Clear lines of communication; shared short-, medium-, and long-term goals; good relationships with vendors; and respect for the community.
- P6. Every winter, I spend a couple of weeks examining data and plotting an introductory course for production and marketing for the following year.
- P7. Policies and procedures. This works well for employees, as they know what is expected of them and makes their life easier. Sometimes, we need to quickly change our marketing plan to provide consistent service for our targeted customers.
- P8. Constantly reevaluating, but need to improve marketing and sales aspect of the business.
- P9. Set goals for marketing, follow-up contacts, and product development. Targeted customers and researched how to approach these customers and build a marketing plan to reach target customers.
- P10. Great customer service, great product and service line. Great marketing business planning. Great marketing skills or staff to maintain the business size within size appropriate for the market demand.

Participants specified they conducted market planning and research to understand business trends and customer needs. Conducting market research allowed the participants to design marketing products to specific demographics and conduct regular market research to survey the market to prepare and adapt to changes. Market planning guided the participants in scouting their direct competitors and looking for suppliers to acquire quality products at the best prices.

### **Financial Planning Provides Meaning and Direction in Achieving Goals.**

Capital and financial management procedures can aid in the sustainability of a small business. During the interviews, participants mentioned proper funding or financial management strategies as a critical component of building a sustainable business.

Effective planning of financial resources contributed to achieving small business goals and involved the participants' abilities to secure or obtain access to lines of credit, personal savings, or owner financing. A critical factor for the participants' success was having access to financial resources or capital. The participants expressed challenges with acquiring capital or funding from banks. The participants discussed their considerations



of other measures that required varied planning stages to facilitate securing financial resources to start and maintain their business. The participants stated the following:

- P1. I've been planning for approximately 7 years. We haven't borrowed money to start this venture. I felt it best to invest what we could lose.
- P2. Initially, we used all the money from sales towards ingredients and upgrades to space.
- P3. Direct to consumer sales. Wholesale relationships. We worked closely with buyers and owners at our wholesale accounts to relay our story.
- P4. We were cautious not to take on large bank loans that would have made the jump possible, as we did not want to be controlled by our debt. The result was highly long hours and lots of sacrifices, but it paid off immensely.
- P5. We took on debt from a friendly lender. We hired experienced bartenders who understood the importance of cultivating regulars.
- P6. Keep expenses at a minimum, offer the product to friends, family, and friends of friends.
- P7. Developed a financial plan to reach goals faster. Established what we are willing to risk.
- P8. Commodity from other brewers.
- P9. Financial stability, because you have costs and sustainability costs before you begin turning a profit.
- P10. Penny pinching. We need to balance food and drink offerings.

Financial planning helped participants to determine whether they were on the right track to achieve their business goals and overall financial success. Participants applied financial planning to assess the financial situations of their business, establish short-term and long-term goals, and create a strategic plan to achieve the goals. Financial planning helped the participants make informed and better decisions by clearly identifying the business's goals and the actions to attain such goals.

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked: What has impacted the business owners' business strategies to keep the microbreweries open for 5 or more years? To answer Research Question 3, participants were asked to answer five questions about critical factors that contribute to success, types of failures encountered, characteristics of business owners,

effectiveness of strategies, and concerns regarding the sustainability of the business.

Financial planning largely helped participants determine whether they were on the right track to achieve their business goals and overall financial success.

#### ***Theme 4: Internal and External Factors Influence Business Sustainability***

The participants highlighted several obstacles that could contribute directly or indirectly to a high failure rate within 5 years of business. Several internal factors required consideration when starting and keeping a vibrant and sustainable business. Internal factors included but were not limited to the participants' education, experience, financial resources, competition, growth opportunities, and the attendant risk of maintaining their businesses. Participants explained flexibility and vision were crucial in their thought process to increase success and mitigate failure. Participants stated the following:

P1. I think failure is a strong word. I don't look at it as a failure. I see it as a branch or sequel, and I've likely planned a route back to the plan from there.

P2. There have been purchases that weren't necessarily needed and beers that didn't turn out right.

P3. Overconfidence and stubbornness in focusing solely on a niche product have been a humbling experience.

P4. We have experienced countless failures during our existence, but thankfully, none have been too catastrophic to recover from them. We believe that it is because of our willingness to try and fail in some things as we continue to work toward our ideal that we have experienced growth and success.

P5. We had a terrible handyperson who cost us thousands of dollars before we caught on to their ineptitude. Trusting the wrong person can be expensive and destructive.

P6. I don't like to call them "failures" but rather, see them as lessons learned. I've learned that having a support system is essential. In addition, management is critical. Need to have your plan and be able to adapt as necessary.

P7. Investing in advertising and marketing plans that were expensive and not fruitful.

P8. Get ahead of ourselves; three distributors, we did not know what we were doing did not work out. The second distributor did not work out. Not a failure, consider as a learning opportunity.

- P9. Attempting to manufacture too many different products instead of focusing on a few highly desired products. I needed to scale it back. Lack of use in the social media and other modern marketing methods arena. Lack of marketing skills.
- P10. Failed to vet employees properly. Use of hiring services and referrals is of value.

Participants expressed a strong belief in preplanning and long-term preparation for their businesses as a strategy to increase probability of success. Business planning includes strategies that address external factors that could impede a business's success and continually address these external factors. Some participants overlooked or did not emphasize critical considerations when developing strategies to maintain their businesses, which, if not addressed, could have impeded the goal of achieving a successful business.

Participants stated the following:

- P1. I spent 20 years in Special Forces, which gave me a diverse set of problem-solving skills and the ability to understand social situations quickly.
- P2. We make very good beer and focus on the customer experience. We are also very responsive to our distribution accounts, as we count them as customers too.
- P3. Timing: We opened when there were half as many breweries in the United States and half as many breweries in the Bellingham area. So much less competition for people's attention.
- P4. The most significant factor contributing to our success is the culture of care and belonging that our guests feel when they visit.
- P5. I have been planning for approximately 7 years to focus on quality beer and customer service. Years of experience in the industry. Honest enthusiasm about all aspects of the business.
- P6. Family business! Having people who care about the business go out of their way to do the hard work required to keep the business open.
- P7. Showing up. Putting in the time and effort to be successful. Emulating the success of others. Not always trying to reinvent the wheel.
- P8. Passion, dedication, good product, time management.
- P9. Networking with other business owners and customer markets. Sticking with your business plans and goals. Reevaluating your business plan and goals with changing markets and events.
- P10. Work ethic, uniqueness, and good employees.

Changes in the modern microbrewing industry are so frequent that every change brings many new challenges. Participants described needing to be vigilant about these changes

to gain success in the beer industry. The relationship between internal and external factors is an intimate one. After all, internal factors are strongly affected by external factors. Businesses in the craft beer industry depend on various external factors when deciding which strategies to employ. If a competitor creates a superior product, the focal strategy may involve matching or surpassing the created product.

Brewing is the process of making beer. The four main ingredients of beer are grains, water, yeast, and hops. As beer is mostly water, the composition of the brewing water can affect the quality of beer. According to Galloway and Timmons (2022), brewing water should be clean and odorless. Access to water is not the brewers' only concern. As many beer businesses grow, municipal water systems struggle to handle highly concentrated brewery wastewater, which can be harmful to watershed and local ecosystems. In the United States, there are more breweries in operation than in the last 150 years. As the industry grows to record levels, brewers across the country make business decisions based on resource management. Quality of water is critical to brewers. Breweries everywhere spend thousands of dollars to test water quality to ensure their primary ingredients produce a product beer drinkers adore.

The beer supply chain requires a system of crucial steps taken from recipe conception through production, brewing, bottling, and delivery to the consumer. Beer, like any other product, follows the rule of supply and demand; yet, the brewing process can be complicated, and so too is the beer supply chain. The beer industry is experiencing a scarcity of hops due to adverse weather, bush fires, and other environmental events. With rising temperatures reducing soil moisture and droughts exacerbating water shortages, climate change poses a real threat to the availability of raw materials necessary

to the beer supply chain. Additionally, the price of ingredients for beer and aluminum cans has skyrocketed due to supply chain issues throughout the world.

### **Summary**

Participants had the opportunity to articulate the application and implementation of business strategies to sustain business beyond 5 years. A pilot study was initiated to pretest the interview questions used for the study. The pilot test participants confirmed interview questions would provide data to explore research to understand the application and implementation of business strategies. The pilot participants were excluded from the final study sample, and the researcher did not find necessary changes to the open-ended questionnaire.

The 10 participants met the research criteria of microbrewery business owners who credited their tenacity, business relationships, training, and longevity in business as instruments that have brought them business success. A combination of manual and software-based techniques was used to organize and link interview responses from the participants. Keywords and phrases were identified relating to a specific interview question by examining each response to that question for each interview. Four themes emerged from participant's responses to the interview questions. These themes aligned with the literature on effective business strategies.

Chapter 5 provides conclusions gleaned from the research that help explore the application and implementation of business strategies to sustain business beyond 5 years. The researcher lists a review of the themes developed from participants' responses to the 17 interview questions. Chapter 5 includes interpretation of results, application of

findings and conclusions to the problem statement, application to business, implications, recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, and a summary.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Microbrewery business owners strive to identify effective strategies to sustain business beyond 5 years. The practical application of the research findings would encourage microbrewery business owners to consider the value and benefit of applying and implementing business strategies. The information gained from the research could potentially guide microbrewery business owners to reduce their risk of failure and increase their opportunity to sustain business beyond 5 years.

Successful business owners recognize the need to improve their strategies and are receptive to change (Herlina et al., 2019). The practical application of the research findings encourages microbrewery business owners to consider the value and benefit of applying and implementing business strategies. An increase in the success rate of microbrewery businesses serves to create positive social change by increasing jobs, sales revenue, tax revenue, and reducing the unemployment rate.

Chapter 5 includes a detailed discussion of each theme as first compared to the related literature discussed in Chapter 2 to answer each research question. Chapter 5 consists of interpretation of results, application of findings and conclusion to the problem statement, application to business, implications, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research. Chapter 5 concludes with a summary statement that encapsulates the essence of the chapter.

### **Interpretation of Results**

The research results indicated themes identified in Chapter 4 were business strategies used by owners to sustain business beyond 5 years. Data from Chapter 4 are interpreted in Chapter 5 to answer the three research questions.

## Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What business strategies have business owners used to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

### ***Theme 1: Customer Experience is Key to Exceeding Customers' Expectations***

All participants agreed *customer satisfaction* was an important component of building a sustainable business. The responses provided by participants revealed customer experience has been a key ingredient in the sustainability of their businesses. McDowell et al. (2016) identified the necessity of building relationships between strategy and business performance, implying small business owners must implement effective planning. Building a relationship is relevant to improved business practice because understanding this strategy can affect every business owner's ability to sustain their businesses.

Participants suggested offering good service to sustain customer loyalty and create word-of-mouth advertising. Microbrewery business owners should pay close attention to the service component in business operations. The premises of strategic entrepreneurship are advantage-seeking and opportunity-seeking behaviors to stay competitive and improve business performance (Ireland et al., 2013). Applying strategic entrepreneurship in business strategies can improve business performance and integrate it into business success opportunities. Microbrewery business owners who use the focus strategy experience a high degree of customer loyalty. Developing a good customer service experience and sustaining that relationship with the customer has posed a significant challenge for participants, but doing so has produced substantial rewards.



Microbrewery business owners could enhance the confidence of their customers and, in doing so, could optimize their products and sales outcomes. Gjini (2014) noted competitive strategies are important to determine growth when measuring how the business performs against the competition. Strategies are a key component to business success because of the necessity to make a clear decision to follow and meet the business objectives. Some microbrewery business owners adopt strategies large business firms have already used with successful outcomes (Shoham & Paun, 2015). Other microbrewery business owners customized their strategies through differentiation and innovative marketing efforts. Microbrewery business owners have the advantage of interacting more with their customers and using their business size to develop a closer bond with their consumers and offer exceptional products to their customers.

### ***Theme 2: Passionate Business Owners Love What They Do***

Passion is at the root of most successful business owners because they enjoy what they do, what they offer, and the impact their efforts make in their community. Taneja et al. (2016) created a model to help small business decision makers understand strategic innovation and its key elements. The researchers presented key aspects as a passion for creating and innovating; cooperation and collaboration; internal innovation capabilities, organizational culture, and supportive employees; customers; and suppliers.

There must be a belief at the core of a business owner that drives them to impact the lives of people in their society, community, and environment. Taneja et al. (2016) presented key aspects of this drive: a passion for creating and innovation, cooperation and collaboration, internal innovation capabilities, organizational culture, and supportive employees, customers, and suppliers. As demonstrated through the participant interview

responses, having a driven and passionate owner is a sustainability strategy. Participants knew how to treat their customers in a way that made them feel respected and appreciated.

Participants said they are more passionate about their work and are willing to work longer hours when they feel they have autonomy of choice and decision freedom. McDowell et al. (2016) noted, due to a finite number of resources, management of the business is dependent on skills, talents, or passion. Dual roles prevent business owners from devoting attention to managing resources, creating competitive advantage, and focusing on strategy implementation, innovation, growth, and sustainability. Building relationships involve the ability to establish strong internal and external relationships with employees, customers, vendors, suppliers, and industry professionals. Participants mentioned if a business owner does not have specific skills in a particular area, they must recognize their lack of competence and go outside their comfort zone to complete the task.

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 2: How have business owners implemented business strategies to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

### ***Theme 3: Business Strategies Build Strong Foundation to Sustain Business***

According to Klein and Ferrari (2015), business planning strategically involves a vision, an industry evaluation, knowledge of competitors, business model innovation, and implementation. When asked about strategies to sustain the business, participants acknowledged planning improved their business performance. Planning was important to

successful implementation and application of business strategies because it increased customer retention and profits.

The successful microbrewery business owners identified strategies relevant to sustain business beyond 5 years. Gao (2017) emphasized sustaining business beyond 5 years is achievable by applying and implementing business strategies conducive to meeting business goals, improving business performance, and gaining a competitive advantage. Improving business can vary from one degree to another depending on the simplicity or complexity of the strategies.

The documented business strategies in this study might help simplify or neutralize areas of concern affecting business sustainability. All participants in this study had plans for their businesses. Some participants created business plans and others kept their plans for their businesses in their heads. Muhonen et al. (2017) found small business owners can make their brand into a unique and effective source of competitive advantage if they develop their brand identity. Participants had a vision of the identity they wanted for their businesses.

Business risk includes the possibility of inadequate or lost profits due to unforeseen or uncertain situations (Torabi et al., 2016). An effective written business plan can help microbrewery business owners determine potential risks and weaknesses and formulate a plan to capitalize on their inherent strengths and market opportunities. Stricker (2015) specified the importance of a good business plan to ensure ease in a business decision, understand the business's direction, monitor business performance, and determine future business goals. Business sustainability is driven by microbrewery business owners who can identify key business opportunities, formulate a plan to take

advantage of the opportunities, and implement the appropriate strategy to capitalize on the identified opportunities.

### ***The Importance of Business Planning***

Wolf and Floyd (2017) described business planning as a focus on strategy over time. Business planning combines business goals with actionable steps to achieve the desired outcome during a specified period of time. An effective business plan can help microbrewery business owners determine potential risks and weaknesses and formulate a plan to capitalize on their inherent strengths and opportunities in the market.

Bates and Robb (2014) found microbrewery business owners who used the innovative entrepreneurial process to plan and organize their activities into business strategies may be able to keep their business viable. Microbrewery business owners must anticipate change and manage resources to respond to current market expectations and retain a competitive advantage. Successful business planning involves an analysis of internal and external possibilities.

Stricker (2015) specified the importance of a good business plan to ensure ease in a business decision, understand the business's direction, monitor business performance, and determine future business goals. A formalized business planning system compels a structured and disciplined decision-making process. Seven (70%) participants indicated they had had a written plan; three (30 %) admitted although they conducted planning, it was not written. The 30% did not have time to sit down and put the plan in writing. Participants who did not have a written business plan felt the lack of it did not impede their vision nor the development of business goals. The participants indicated they thought about their strategic plans daily. This response was comparable to research

findings that suggested many small business owners engage primarily in adaptive, quick-response, and day-to-day planning.

### ***Marketing Planning is Designed to Generate a Positive Return on Investment***

Findings indicated marketing skills enabled microbrewery business owners to identify competitors' business practices, customers' needs, and the prices consumers were willing to pay. Microbrewery business owners needed to have quality product differentiation, management skills, and strategies for market analysis to sustain business beyond 5 years. Business owners needed to adopt some means of informing consumers of the products offered.

Zeriti et al. (2014) mentioned the benefit of a marketing strategy is to adapt to the local market potential that can join with customer needs to achieve business sustainability. Marketing strategies, in terms of product awareness, market share, and profitability, were described as key control strategies for microbrewery business owners to improve performance. The findings indicated business owners need to differentiate the product to stand out in a competitive market. The literature supported quality differentiation among business organizations because microbrewery business owners adopted a flexible strategy to target value-seeking and quality-seeking consumers.

According to Fillis (2015), a lack of marketing knowledge and planning in business has become a threat and a barrier to the success of organizations. Participants indicated the power of knowledge provided guidance and inspiration to the success of their businesses. Effectively implementing market research to understand customers' thinking and monitor market trends leads to higher profits and competitive advantage. The goal of the participants was to achieve a competitive advantage by motivating repeat

purchases and increasing customer satisfaction. Participants shared their marketing experiences and strategies to differentiate their products compared to their competitors.

### ***Financial Planning Provides Meaning and Direction in Achieving Goals***

Participants agreed on the importance of having adequate financial resources and figuring out ways to minimize expense. Abdullahi (2018) posited the importance of financial resources stems from the numerous challenges encountered by small business owners. Rasca and Deaconu (2018) asserted being a competent business owner means much more than the know-how of writing a business plan. It requires business owners to identify opportunities that fit microbrewery business owners and the environment, act on them, convince customers to participate in microbrewery events, take initiatives, and relate to customers and buyers.

Eniola and Entebang (2016) explained understanding the objectives and the importance of financial literacy can positively impact business and mitigate failure. It is essential for microbrewery business owners' sustainability to adequately oversee financial resources and have the knowledge to understand the relationship and connectivity to financial products and services.

Schumpeter (1934) identified obstacles business owners need to consider when incorporating in their financial plans factors that could potentially increase the probability of sustainability and mitigate failure. Adequate financial resources align with Schumpeter's theory relative to having or obtaining the necessary financial resources to seize opportunities that support the growth and sustainability of the business.

Creating a business plan with a complimentary financial plan was a feasibility study for a successful and sustainable business. Microbrewery business owners used

financial plans to indicate whether the resources were available, or if the market was unstable for investment. The participants monitored the actual results against the budget in the financial plan to access the opportunity for taking essential steps to get back on track.

### **Research Question 3**

Research Question 3: What has impacted business owners' business strategies to keep the microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

### ***Theme 4: Internal and External Factors Influence Business Sustainability***

Factors impacting business sustainability can be divided into (a) internal factors facing microbrewery business owners or their business characteristics, and (b) external factors, such as availability of natural resources, population trends, market outlook, supply chain, and financial availability. Identifying internal and external practices and processes happened through the microbrewery business owners' learning and growth initiatives. The study's findings confirmed microbrewery business owners' perceptions of failure and their management of emotions inherent in failures improved the learning experience.

Dawkins (2014) wrote stakeholders care about the community and carry a lifetime of commitment. Microbrewery business owners who want to increase sustainable performance can, in turn, create ongoing loyalty by building societies. Without the consumer, all other microbrewery business owners' decisions come null and void. Microbrewery business owners who provide value to stakeholders are more likely to be successful.

According to Panggabean and Jermias (2020), business owners attribute a host of factors to the success of their businesses. These factors included identifying the right business opportunities and acknowledging risk-taking activities in the business. Participants shared they continually scanned their environment for changes that potentially affected their business goals and outcomes. Environmental scanning should be a priority consideration in applying and implementing business strategies.

The internal and external business process focuses on value proposition, innovation, operations, and service, while identifying what is needed to perform at maximum performance capability. The successful business strategies each microbrewery business owner used represented their internal and external practices and business processes.

### **Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement**

The general business problem was how small business owners embark on small business initiatives with limited knowledge on implementing business strategies, which results in premature business failures. The beer industry has changed significantly over the past 30 years. The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (n.d.) revealed the most recent data show 11,584 reporting brewers. The number of brewers has been steadily increasing in the craft market, from 1,500 in 2008 to 7,500 in 2018.

The specific problem was industry saturation; namely, the small percentage of microbrewery business owners able to sustain business for more than 5 years. Siren and Kohtmaski (2016) discovered by linking strategic planning to strategic learning process performance, a need to understand the purpose of planning and skillfully develop strategic plans was necessary to achieve a sustainable business. The factors from the data



in this study suggested the success of microbrewery business owners may include the use of (a) customer experience as a key to exceeding customers' expectations, (b) passionate business owners loving what they do, (c) business strategies to build a solid foundation to sustain the business, and (d) internal and external factors that influence business sustainability.

### **Application to Business**

Microbrewery business owners might use the results and recommendations to apply and implement business strategies to remain competitive and profitable. Pederzini (2016) mentioned small businesses are complex, adaptive systems that require a reconceptualization of strategic management to assist with solutions to long-term business sustainability. These results are relevant to professional practice because the research included practical solutions to microbrewery business owners on how they could operate their businesses successfully.

The findings of this study can serve as a practical guide to struggling small business owners to change and improve their business practices. The microbrewery business owners can also use these findings to improve their business strategies to sustain growth and profitability beyond 5 years. Block et al. (2017) found innovation positively affects both business performance and sustainability. The information in this research can help microbrewery business owners sustain business beyond 5 years by assisting them in understanding what needs to happen even before the actual start of a business. Gilliard (2018) explained using the model of strategic entrepreneurship may help microbrewery business owners identify how to approach, deploy, and implement strategies and improve business performance through entrepreneurial opportunities.

Improving business strategies can vary from one degree to another depending on the simplicity or complexity of the strategies. Each participant stressed the path to success was not easy, but that stress can be lessened when understanding how the strategy implemented supported and improved the business performance. The participants spoke of their experiences, concepts, and perceptions of business planning as strategies to improve business performance.

Applying strategic entrepreneurship in business strategies can improve business performance and integrate it into business sustainability. The knowledge derived from this research is significant for microbrewery business owners seeking strategies to sustain their business beyond 5 years. The strategic entrepreneurship model encourages advantage-seeking and opportunity-seeking behaviors to be competitive and improve business performance. Participants mentioned the sustainability of small business is driven by innovation and competition. Failure to maintain microbrewery businesses can harm community resources and jobs. Using the results from the study, microbrewery business owners may create competitive advantages, which could lead to increased profits and longevity of business operations.

### **Implications**

Findings from this study may help microbrewery business owners improve their business sustainability beyond 5 years by providing knowledge about the application and implementation of business strategies. Applying the knowledge gained from this research may enable microbrewery business owners to direct their limited business resources to those areas critical to the survival of the business. Strakova (2017) suggested small business owners need to focus on changing their mindset to achieve uniqueness,

originality, and maximal use of their organizational potential. Maximizing the value created through the efficient use of resources may increase the success of sustaining a business.

Increasing sustainability among microbrewery business owners could cause an increase in employment rates, which may produce revenue at the local and state level. The result of the study can help close the gaps in knowledge about applying and implementing business strategies. According to Hale et al. (2017), the objective for sustainability is to magnify the values that can assist with building a complete picture of the present and includes plans to enhance the viability of microbrewery business owners. The findings from the study could contribute to social change by assisting other microbreweries in applying and implementing business strategies that can lead to greater profitability and success beyond 5 years.

The information and strategies gained from the study provide methods for social change by giving microbrewery business owners ideas to apply and implement. Social exchange theory is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in organizational behavior. Researchers have used social exchange theory to explain how individuals seek exchanges with other parties when they benefit, and how social exchange relationships exist until a connection is no longer considered beneficial to both parties (Huang et al., 2016). Equipping small business owners with information to sustain their businesses could help local communities. This research could help microbrewery business owners improve decision making and overcome potential obstacles. Small business is an integral part of every community, and sustainability benefits have far-reaching effects on the economy.

The primary focus of the study was on business strategies that allowed a novel understanding of business sustainability in the handcraft brewing environment. The implications for positive social change include the potential for this research to provide business strategies to microbrewery business owners to ensure business growth, increase revenues, stimulate job creation, foster social unity, and help provide local and national economic stability.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Microbrewery business owners can benefit from applying and implementing the business strategies small business owners in the Washington State Puget Sound area have used to operate and sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Microbrewery business owners must always plan for growth in the business. All participants agreed the time spent was well worth it, even though studying the competition and the competitive environment involved a great deal of time.

According to Dillen et al. (2018), creating sustainability strategies begins with understanding the social or environmental issues, target market, and the competitive landscape. Microbrewery business owners should identify, formulate, apply, and implement strategies necessary to sustain business beyond 5 years. Any microbrewery business owner can exploit opportunities through effective review and analysis to use business planning as strategies to improve their business performance. Developing and implementing strategies is essential for microbrewery business owners to be aware of how the business is performing to evaluate, and subsequently identify, apply and implement the appropriate strategy to improve business performance. Microbrewery business owners should brainstorm and seek alternatives to effectively apply and

implement business strategies to help prevent failure. They should also review and analyze the most appropriate business strategy to deploy, monitor, and improvise the outcome to engage in proactive short-term or long-term business planning.

Failure motivated the microbrewery business owners in this study to engage in learning activities constantly. The participants pointed out high-consequence issues, such as failure, helped them realize learning is the only way to help their business recover quickly. Any learning delay can lead to severe consequences. Learning should not just stay in their minds; business owners should formulate learning into specific behaviors or actions. Many participants in this study acknowledged they would prevent others from making similar mistakes in the future. Failure provides an opportunity for microbrewery business owners to pause for self-reflection and to figure out what was done wrong and what can be improved. The findings of this research indicated positive learning outcomes could be obtained from failure experiences.

The action plan that microbrewery business owners develop to support the application and implementation of business strategies should list metrics for tracking. These metrics can be divided into milestones and quantifiable performance measures. Microbrewery business owners collect data and turn them into measurable actions to determine which performance measures are key to success. According to Kerzner (2017), the ultimate purpose of key performance indicators (KPIs) is to identify what needs to be done to improve performance and keep the strategy on track. If KPIs are dissected, the following becomes clear:

- Key: A significant contributor to the success or failure of the project.
- Performance: A metric that can be measured, quantified, adjusted, and controlled. The metric must be controllable to improve performance.
- Indicator: A reasonable representation of the present and future performance.

As Kerzner (2017) noted, KPIs are a percentage (i.e., numerical metric) that identifies the goals on the way to the business's success. Monitoring them helps microbrewery business owners recognize the progress of the sales, marketing, customer service experience, and their business's health. By selecting the metrics, the appropriate target markets, and identifying indicators, microbrewery business owners can directly monitor the strategies formulated for their business.

Microbrewery business owners need to stay close to the operational details to measure productivity and profitability. Microbrewery business owners must determine metrics and use KPIs. Their implementation and measurement will help reduce the number of decisions based on instinct, which will lead to making decisions of objectivity and focusing on facts. Microbrewery business owners will quantify the achievement of the goals established by monitoring and measuring against the standards and objectives set for each metric.

Microbrewery business owners spend time trying to scale the business they often fail to evaluate along the way. When building a sustainable business, it is important to measure success using quantitative data over qualitative data. KPIs helped microbrewery business owners measure the success of their efforts and determine where they needed to make changes. The KPIs microbrewery business owners used to evaluate their businesses were (a) relative market share—market share revealed how the microbrewery business

owner performed relative to their competitor; (b) financial–profit and loss, revenue versus target, and expenses versus budget; and (c) customer–customer acquisition cost, customer churn rate, and customer lifetime value.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Limitations are uncontrollable restrictions or weaknesses researchers encounter during the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The participants for this study were 10 microbrewery business owners who had sustained their businesses beyond 5 years. The results could not be generalizable to all businesses in all settings. Future researchers should consider conducting the study in a medium reflective of the large business industry.

Future researchers can use mixed-methods research and involve interviews with a larger population. Quantitative research can also yield more significant data analysis and compare the external validity to different environments. The researcher recommends further research using a quantitative, correlational study of small business owners to test the significance of the relationships among five variables: customer experience, passion as a business owner, business strategies, business planning, and internal and external factors influencing business sustainability.

Future researchers should focus on a larger population sample and geographic base for cross validation. The sample size limited the study and restricted the generalization of the findings. Medium or large businesses may share similar responses or behaviors as microbrewery business owners. Only 10 participants comprised this study, and future research should include additional participants to achieve a broader range of results.

Extroverts and introverts are necessary for business. Between these two types of people, there can exist a natural balance necessary for good functioning and productivity. The greatest leaders and performers in the history of the world have been either introverts or extroverts, or more likely, a mixture of both. Differences may exist, but no matter where inspiration is drawn from, people can use individual strengths to work together and help a business to thrive. Further research on the connection between the business owners' behaviors and the ability to conduct their business can be accomplished. In business, understanding this difference can be of great benefit.

The growth of the beer market is largely being fueled by demand accelerating from emerging markets. The beer sector continues to face a multitude of challenges. Further research should focus on the beer industry's environmental factors. Water consumption and disposal continue to create environmental hurdles that directly impact breweries and the brewing process. Drought and other climatic issues are likely to have a considerable impact on the cost of raw materials. Society is gradually growing more conscious of environmental pollution, which compels companies to implement sustainable measures that reduce or prevent environmental pollution in the production and distribution of beer.

Microbrewery business owners are all about storytelling, community, scientific knowledge, and entertainment. The right content can help advance these stories and foster community growth. Microbreweries impact local and state economies in addition to serving as social hubs for people in communities to interact and engage. Craft breweries often use the local heritage, landscape, and culture of surrounding communities to name



their beers, create label designs and logos, and even name the brewery. Further research should focus on community perception of microbreweries and environmental factors.

### **Summary**

All participants in this study were successful microbrewery business owners. The participants decided to create new ventures when they started their microbrewery businesses. For a business to survive, the business owner needs to put in significant work before opening the doors of the business. There must be agreement on the nature of the products, market, and finance, and understanding what success looks like. Making preparations before starting the business improved the probability of success for the participants.

Understanding how to integrate the strategies from these findings could improve microbrewery business owners' survival rate, improve business performance, and contribute to social change as small business performance affects the growth of the U.S. economy. According to Kucher et al. (2020), small business owners must address the application and implementation of business strategies related to economic comprehension, limited market and industry information, financial accounting, and undercalculating the capital needed to sustain business operations.

Participants recommended anyone thinking about starting a microbrewery business should identify their product's problem for the potential customer base. If business plans are not one of the first measures taken, there is no need to move forward in the small business start-up process. Successful business owners differentiated themselves from their competitors through specialization and focus on a market niche. The microbrewery business is a relationship business. The application and implementation of

business strategies could benefit microbrewery business owners by helping them plan their businesses, attract and retain customers, sustain and increase the value of their customers, promote customer satisfaction, and learn from previous mistakes.

## REFERENCES

- Abas-Mastura, M., Imam, O. A., & Osman, S. (2013). Employability skills and task performance of employees in government sector. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(4), 150–162.  
[http://www.ijhssnet.com/view.php?u=http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_3\\_No\\_4\\_Special\\_Issue\\_February\\_2013/16.pdf](http://www.ijhssnet.com/view.php?u=http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_4_Special_Issue_February_2013/16.pdf)
- Abdalkrim, G. M. (2013). The impact of strategic planning activities on a private sector organizations performance in Sudan: An empirical research. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8(10), 134–143.  
<https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v8n10p134>
- Abdullahi, Y. B. (2018). Impact of effective entrepreneurship and strategic management on business success: An empirical study of SMEs in Malaysia. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 18(8), 1–12.  
<https://journalofbusiness.org/index.php/GJMBR/article/view/2579>
- Aboramadan, M., & Borgonovi, E. (2016). Strategic management practices as a key determinant of superior non-governmental organizations performance. *Problems of Management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 11(22), 71–92.  
<https://doi.org/10.33225/pmc/16.11.71>
- Acitelli, T. (2013). *The audacity of hops: The history of America's craft beer revolution* (1st ed.). Chicago Review Press.
- Agostini, L., Filippini, R., & Nosella, A. (2014). Corporate and product brands: Do they improve SMEs' performance? *Measuring Business Excellence*, 18(1), 78–91.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/MBE-11-2013-0060>

- Akazeze, C., & Akazeze, N. (2016). *Strategies for successful small business ownership in an unstable economy*. Xlibris US.
- Akhavan, P., Ramezan, M., & Moghaddam, Y. J. (2013). Examining the role of ethics in knowledge management process. *Journal of Knowledge-Based Innovation in China*, 5(2), 129–145. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKIC-04-2013-0008>
- Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. (n.d.). *List of permittees*. U.S. Department of the Treasury. Retrieved November 6, 2020, from <https://www.ttb.gov/foia/list-of-permittees>
- Allen, C., Schetzle, S., Mallin, M. L., & Ellen, B. P. (2014). Intergenerational recruiting: The impact of sales job candidate perception of interviewer age. *American Journal of Business*, 29(2), 146–163. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJB-03-2013-0018>
- Alstete, J. W. (2014). Strategy choices of potential entrepreneurs. *Journal of Education for Business*, 89(2), 77–83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2012.759094>
- Alvarez, M., Moreno, A., & Mataix, C. (2013). The analytic hierarchy process to support decision-making process in infrastructure projects with social impact. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 24(5–6), 596–606. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14783363.2012.669561>
- Amankwah-Amoah, J., Boso, N., & Abtew-Agyei, I. (2018). The effects of business failure experience on successive entrepreneurial engagements: An evolutionary phase model. *Group & Organizations Management*, 43(4), 648–682. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601116643447>

American Homebrewers Association. (2017). *Membership homebrewing statistics: Who is the American homebrewer?*

<https://www.homebrewersassociation.org/membership/homebrewing-stats/>

America's Beer Distributors. (2020). *The U.S. beer industry 2020*.

<https://www.nbwa.org/resources/industry-fast-facts>

Anderson, E., Song, L., Simester, D., & Tucker, C. (2015). Harbingers of failure. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 52(5), 580–592. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.13.0415>

Anney, V. N. (2014). Ensuring the quality of the findings of the qualitative research:

Looking at trustworthiness criteria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 5(2), 272–281.

<http://196.44.162.10:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/256/Ensuring%20the%20Quality%20of%20the%20Findings%20of%20Qualitative%20Research%20NEW.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Anyan, F. (2013). The influence of power shifts in data collection and analysis stages: A focus on qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Report*, 18(18), 1–9.

<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2013.1525>

Arasti, Z., Zandi, F., & Talebi, K. (2012). Exploring the effect of individual factors on

business failure in Iranian new established business. *International Business Research*, 5(4), 2–11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v5n4p2>

Baines, D., & Cunningham, I. (2013). Using comparative rapid ethnographic in

international case studies: Strengths and challenges. *Qualitative Social Work Journal*, 12(1), 73–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325011419053>

- Balzacq, T. (2014). The significance of triangulation to critical security studies. *Critical Studies on Security*, 2(3), 377–381.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2014.982410>
- Banker, R. D., Mashruwala, R., & Tripathy, A. (2014). Does a differentiation strategy lead to more sustainable financial performance than a cost leadership strategy? *Management Decision*, 52(5), 872–896. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-05-2013-0282>
- Barlow, M. A., Verhaal, J. C., & Hoskins, J. D. (2018). Guilty by association: Product-level category stigma and audience expectations in the U.S. craft beer industry. *Journal of Management*, 44(7), 2934–2960.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316657593>
- Barratt, M., Choi, T. Y., & Li, M. (2011). Qualitative case studies in operations management: Trends, research outcomes, and future research implications. *Journal of Operations Management*, 29(4), 329–342.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jom.2010.06.002>
- Barrat, M., Ferris, J., & Lenton, S. (2015). Hidden populations, online purposive, sampling, and external validity. Taking off the blindfold. *Field Methods*, 27(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X14526838>
- Bates, T., & Robb, A. (2014). Small-business viability in America's urban minority communities. *Urban Studies*, 51(13), 2844–2862.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013514462>
- Belás, J., Bilan, Y., Kljucnikov, A., Vincurova, Z., & Macháček, J. (2015). Actual

- problem of business risk in SME segment. Case study from Slovakia.  
*International Journal of Entrepreneurial Knowledge*, 3(1), 46–56.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijek-2015-0010>
- Bell, J. (2014). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Benlemlih, M., & Bitar, M. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and investment efficiency. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 148, 647–671.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3020-2>
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- Bernard, H. R. (2013). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Besser, T. L., & Miller, N. J. (2013). Community matters: Successful entrepreneurship in remote rural US locations. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 14(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.5367/ijei.2013.0104>
- Blackford, M. G. (2003). *A history of small business in America* (2nd ed.). University of North Carolina Press.
- Block, J. H., Fish, C. O., & Van Praag, M. (2017). The Schumpeterian entrepreneur: A review of the empirical evidence on the antecedents, behavior and consequences of innovative entrepreneurship. *Industry and Innovation*, 24(1), 61–95.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13662716.2016.1216397>
- Block, J., Kohn, K., Miller, D., & Ullrich, K. (2015). Necessity entrepreneurship and

competitive strategy. *Small Business Economics*, 44, 37–54.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-014-9589-x>

Brammer, S., Hoejmoser, S., & Marchant, K. (2012). Environmental management in SMEs in the UK: Practices, pressures and perceived benefits. *Business Strategy & The Environment*, 21(7), 423–434. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.717>

Brewers Association. (2018). *National beer sales & production data*.

<https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/national-beer-sales-production-data/>

Brewers Association. (2019, April 2). *Brewers association releases annual growth report* [Press release]. <https://www.brewersassociation.org/press-releases/brewers-association-releases-annual-growth-report/>

Brewers Association. (2020). *Quarterly update 11/25/2019*.

<https://www.brewersassociation.org/press-releases/brewers-association-releases-annual-growth-report-for-2019/>

Brewers Association. (2021). *Craft beer industry market segments*.

<https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/craft-beer-industry-market-segments/>

Brewers Association. (2021). *2020 Annual production report*.

<https://www.brewersassociation.org/press-releases/2020-craft-brewing-industry-production-report/>

Brewers Association. (n.d.). *Who we are?* Retrieved October 14, 2020, from

<https://www.brewersassociation.org/who-we-are/>

Brewers Association. (2022). *Craft brewer definition*.

<https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics-and-data/craft-brewer-definition/>



- Brouthers, K. D., Nakos, G., & Dimitratos, P. (2015). SME entrepreneurial orientation, international performance, and the moderating role of strategic alliances. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, 39(5), 1161–1187.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12101>
- Brush, C. G., Edelman, L. F., Manolova, T. S. (2012). Ready for funding? Growth-oriented ventures and the pursuit of angel financing. *Venture Capital: An International Journal of Entrepreneurial Finance*, 14(2–3), 111–129.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691066.2012.654604>
- Bula, H. O. (2012). Evolution and theories of entrepreneurship: A critical review on the Kenyan perspective. *International Journal of Business and Commerce*, 1(11), 81–96. <https://www.ijbcnet.com/1-11/IJBC-12-11106.pdf>
- Bulley, C. A., Baku, K. F., & Allan, M. M. (2014). Competitive intelligence information: A key business success factor. *Journal of Management and Sustainability*, 4(2), 82–91. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jms.v4n2p82>
- Calen, C., Haring, D., McLennon, M., Lobel, B., & Tarhouni, Z. (2019). *Washington beer: Economic impacts in Washington state*. Community Attributes.  
[https://washingtonbeer.com/cms\\_docs/CAI\\_Washington\\_Beer\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_Report\\_2019\\_0315.pdf](https://washingtonbeer.com/cms_docs/CAI_Washington_Beer_Economic_Impact_Report_2019_0315.pdf)
- Calopa, M. K. (2017). Business owner and manager's attitudes towards financial decision-making and strategic planning: Evidence from Croatian SMEs management. *Journal of Contemporary Management Issues*, 22(1), 103–116.  
<https://doi.org/10.30924/mjcmi/2017.22.1.103>

- Caruth, G. D. (2013). Demystifying mixed methods research design: A review of the literature. *Mevlana International Journal of Education*, 3(2), 112–122.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.13054/mije.13.35.3.2>
- Castillo-Montoya, M. (2016). Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *Quality Report*, 21(5), 811–831.  
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2337>
- CB Insights. (2021, August 3). *The top 20 reasons startups fail* [Research brief].  
<https://www.cbinsights.com/research/startup-failure-reasons-top/>
- Cheng-Min, C., Cheng-Tao, Y., Bor-Wen, C. & Pen-Chen, C. (2013). Trust and commitment in relationships among medical equipment suppliers: Transaction cost and social exchange theories. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, 41(7), 1057–1069.  
<https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2013.41.7.1057>
- Christensen, C. (2013). *The innovator's dilemma: When new technologies cause great firms to fail*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Ciszewska-Wlilnaric, M., Obloj, K., & Wasowska, A. (2016). Effectuation and causation: Two decision-making logics of INVs at the early stage of growth and internationalization. *Journal of East European Management Studies*, 21(3), 275–297. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44111949>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Rosiek, J. (2007). *Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: Borderland spaces and tensions*. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 35–79). SAGE Publications.

- Coates, D., & Howe, D. (2015). Combatting staff burnout in mental health: Key managerial and leadership tasks that are fundamental to staff well-being and retention. *Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management*, 10(2), 24–32.  
[https://www.achsm.org.au/Portals/15/documents/publications/apjhm/10-02/Complete\\_Journal\\_Vol\\_10\\_Issue\\_2\\_2015.pdf](https://www.achsm.org.au/Portals/15/documents/publications/apjhm/10-02/Complete_Journal_Vol_10_Issue_2_2015.pdf)
- Cohen, A. (2017, March 28). *Brewers association releases 2016 statistics for craft category* [Press release]. Brewers Association.  
<https://www.brewersassociation.org/press-releases/2016-growth-small-independent-brewers>
- Cojocariu, A., & Stanciu, C. O. (2012). Intelligent technologies for knowledge discovery. *Tibiscus University Economics Journal*, 18(Suppl.), 8–13.  
<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=73796>
- Colen, L., & Swinnen, J. (2016). Economic growth, globalization and beer consumption. *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 67(1), 186–207. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-9552.12128>
- Conney, L. M. (2016). Understanding research: Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, 25(6), 435–436.  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321684950\\_Trustworthiness\\_in\\_Qualitative\\_Research](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321684950_Trustworthiness_in_Qualitative_Research)
- Cooke, M. (2014). The challenges of grounded theory. *Nurse Researcher*, 21(5), 6–7.  
<https://journals.rcni.com/nurse-researcher/the-challenges-of-grounded-theory-nr.21.5.6.s2>

- Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(1), 89–91.  
<https://onf.ons.org/onf/41/1/methods-and-meanings-credibility-and-trustworthiness-qualitative-research>
- Craft Beer. (n.d.). *Beer glossary*. Retrieved October, 26, 2020, from <https://www.craftbeer.com/beer/beer-glossary>
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Criscuolo, C., Gal, P. N., & Menon, C. (2014). *The dynamics of employment growth: Evidence from 18 countries* [Paper no. 1274]. London School of Economics Centre for Economic Performance. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60286/1/dp1274.pdf>
- Cronin, C. (2014). Using case study research as a rigorous of inquiry. *Nurse Researcher*, 21(5), 19–27. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.21.5.19.e1240>
- da Mota Pedrosa, A., Naslund, D., & Jasmand, C. (2012). Logistics case study-based research: Toward higher quality. *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, 42(3), 275–295.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09600031211225963>
- Daiute, C. (2014). *Narrative inquiry: A dynamic approach*. SAGE Publications.

- Dawkins, C. E. (2014). The principle of good faith: Toward substantive stakeholder engagement. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 121(2), 283–295.  
<https://philpapers.org/rec/DAWTPO-5>
- DeFeo, D. J. (2013). Toward a model of purposeful participant inclusion: Examining deselection as a participant risk. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 13(3), 253–264.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-01-2013-0007>
- Delalic, S., & Oruc, N. (2014). Determination of firm growth: A study of rural SMEs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. *Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 4(1), 5–22.  
<https://doi.org/10.14706/JECOSS11411>
- DeMelo, M. A., & Guerra Leone, R. J. (2015). Alignment between competitive strategies and cost management: A study of small manufacturing companies. *Brazilian Business Review*, 12(5), 78–96. <https://doi.org/10.15728/bbr.2015.12.5.5>
- Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6(2), 80–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689812437186>
- Dey, P., & Lehner, O. (2016). Registering ideology in the creation of social entrepreneurs: Intermediary organizations, ‘ideal subject’ and the promise of enjoyment. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 142, 753–767.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3112-z>
- Dhliwayo, S. (2014). Entrepreneurship and competitive advantage strategy: An integrative approach. *Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 23(1), 115–135.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0971355713513356>
- Dilger, R. J. (2022a). *Small business administration and job creation*. Congressional Research Service. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R41523.pdf>

- Dilger, R. J. (2022b). *Small business size standards: A historical analysis of contemporary issues*. Congressional Research Service.  
<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R40860.pdf>
- Dillen, Y., Laveren, E., Martens, R., De Vocht, S., & Imschoot, E. V. (2018). From manager to strategist: An examination of the evolving role of persistent high-growth entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(1), 2–28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-01-2017-0010>
- Doern, R. (2016). Entrepreneurship and crisis management: The experiences of small business during the London 2011 riots. *International Small Business Journal*, 34, 276–302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242614553863>
- Dowden, A. R. Gunby, J. D. Warren, J. M., & Boston, Q. (2014). A phenomenological analysis of invisibility among African-American males: Implications for clinical practice and client retention. *The Professional Counsellor*, 4(1), 58–70.  
<https://tpcjournal.nbcc.org/a-phenomenological-analysis-of-invisibility-among-african-american-males-implications-for-clinical-practice-and-client-retention/>
- Dworkin, S. L. (2012). Editorial: Sample size policy for qualitative studies using in-depth interviews. *Archival of Sexual Behavior*, 41, 1319–1320.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-012-0016-6>
- Eid, R., & El-Gohary, H. (2013). The impact of e-marketing use on small business enterprises' marketing success. *The Service Industries Journal*, 33(1), 31–50.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2011.594878>

- Ejmalian, M., & Syed, A. (2015) Chaos theory approach as remedial strategy for financial in Indian SMEs. *Journal of Finance and Management*, 7(1), 107–120.  
<https://doi.org/10.5958/2229-4503.2015.00009.0>
- Elo, S., Kaariainen, M., Kanste, O., Polkki, T., Utrianinen, K., & Kyngas, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness. *SAGE Open*, 4(1), 1–10.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Englander, M. (2012). A critical case study of cause-related marketing. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 35(2), 290–305. <https://doi.org/10.2753/ATP1084-1806350206>
- Eniola, A. A., & Entebang, H. (2016). Financial literacy and SME firm performance. *International Journal of Research Studies in Management*, 5(1), 31–43.  
<https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrsm.2015.1304>
- Ensari, M. S. (2016). A research related to the factors affecting competitive strategies of SMEs operating in Turkey. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 7(2), 73–80. [http://www.ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_7\\_No\\_2\\_February\\_2016/6.pdf](http://www.ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_7_No_2_February_2016/6.pdf)
- Esmacili, N. (2015). Strategic management and its application in modern organizations. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 4(2), 118–126.  
[https://ijol.cikd.ca/article\\_60399.html](https://ijol.cikd.ca/article_60399.html)
- Esmacilzadeh, P., Sambasivan, M., & Nezakati, H. (2014). The limitations of using the existing TAM in adoption of clinical decision support system in hospitals: An empirical study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 3(2), 56–68. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/rbs/ijbrss/v3y2014i2p56-68.html>

- Evans, L., & Buehner, M. J. (2011). Small samples do not cause greater accuracy – but clear data may cause small samples: Comment on Fiedler and Kareev (2006). *Journal of Experimental Psychology Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 37(3), 792–799. <https://doi.org/10.1037%2Fa0022526>
- Ferguson, R. W. A. (2014, May 31). ‘Craftwashing:’ What makes a real craft beer? *Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/business/craftwashing-what-makes-a-real-craft-beer-20140530-399sd.html>
- Fetters, M. D. (2016). “Haven’t we always been doing mixed methods research?” Lessons learned from the development of the horseless carriage. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 19(1), 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689815620883>
- Fillis, I. (2015). Biographical research as a methodology for understanding entrepreneurial marketing. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 21(3), 429–447. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBr-11-2013-0207>
- Firmin, R. L., Bonfils, K. A., Luther, L., Minor, K.S., & Salyers, M. P. (2017). Using text-analysis computer software and thematic analysis on the same qualitative data: A case example. *Qualitative Psychology*, 4(3), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000050>
- Flack, W. (1997). American microbreweries and neolocalism: Ale-ing for a sense of place. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 16(2), 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873639709478336>
- Fletcher, D., De Massis, A., & Nordqvist, M. (2016). Qualitative research practices and family business scholarship: A review and future research agenda. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 7(1), 8–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2015.08.001>



- Freeman, E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman.
- Fusch, P., & Ness, L. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408–1416. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2281>
- Galloway, I., & Timmons, M. (2022). *Water chemistry for consistent brewing* [Video]. Brewers Association. <https://www.brewersassociation.org/collab-hour/water-chemistry-for-consistent-brewing/>
- Gao, Y. (2017). Business leaders' personal values, organizational culture, and market orientation. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 25(1), 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2015.1076879>
- Garavaglia, C., & Swinnen, J. (2018). *Economic perspective on craft beer: A revolution in the global beer industry*. International Publishing.
- Gibson, S., Bension, O., & Brand, S. L. (2013). Talking about suicide: Confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research. *Nursing Ethics*, 20(1), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0969733012452684>
- Gilliard, T. (2018). *Entrepreneurial opportunities to develop strategies for small business* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/5081/>
- Gjini, K. (2014). Small and medium sized enterprises: Growth factors. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(7), 134–140. <https://ejournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/2818>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Transaction Publishers.

- Goetsch, D. L., & Davis, S. B. (2014). *Quality management for organizational excellence* (6th ed.). Pearson Publisher.
- Goldman, E. F., Scott, A. R., & Follman, J. M. (2015). Organizational practices to develop strategic thinking. *Journal of Strategy and Management*, 8(2), 155–175.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JSMA-01-2015-0003>
- Gorgievski, M. J., Ascalon, M. E., & Stephan, U. (2011). Small business owners' success criteria, a values approach to personal differences. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 49(2), 207–232. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2011.00322.x>
- Grant, A. (2014). Troubling 'lived experience': A post-structural critique of mental health nursing qualitative research assumptions. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 21(6), 544–549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12113>
- Grossoehme, D. H. (2014). Overview of qualitative research. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 20(3), 109–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854726.2014.925660>
- Gupta, V. K., Dutta, D. K., & Chen, X. (2014). Entrepreneurial orientation capability and firm performance under conditions of organizational learning. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 26(2), 157–173. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43488947>
- Haddad, K. M., Wu, A., & Wingender, J. R., Jr. (2015). Competitive strategies and company performance of Taiwanese firms. *International Journal of Economics and Business Research*, 9(2), 170–185.  
<http://www.inderscience.com/offer.php?id=67364>

- Hagaman, A. K., & Wutich, A. (2017). How many interviews are enough to identify methames in multisited and cross-cultural research? Another perspective on Guet, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) landmark study. *Field Methods*, 29(1), 23–41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X16640447>
- Hale, A. E., Shelton, C. C., Richier, J., & Archambault, L. M. (2017). Integrating geoscience and sustainability: Examining socio-techno-ecological relationships within content designed to prepare teachers. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, 65(2), 101–112. <https://doi.org/10.5408/16-177.1>
- Hanks, G. F., Barnett, S., Durden, L., & Woodrum, W. (2011). Isolating relevant policy issues: Exploration of small business bankruptcies in Georgia. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 12(2), 11–26.  
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.1037.3784&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Hanson, J. L., Balmer, D. F., & Giardino, A. P. (2011). Qualitative research methods for medical educators. *Academic Pediatrics*, 48(10), 375–386.  
<https://doi.org/10.1682/JRRD.2010.08.0151>
- Harker, M., & Lam, W. (2013). Marketing and entrepreneurship: An integrated view from the entrepreneur's perspective. *International Small Business Journal*, 3(4), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242613496443>
- Harry, J. (2019, September 30). *Jimmy Carter: American homebrew here?* National Museum of American History Behring Center.  
<https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/papazian>

- Harvey, L. (2015). Beyond member checking: A dialogic approach to the research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(1), 23–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2014.914487>
- Hayes, J. P., Chawla, S. K., & Kathawala, Y. (2015). A comparative study of problems encountered in the development of small businesses in the U.S. and Mexico. *Journal of Developing Areas*, 40(3), 395–406. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/592521>
- Haynes, T. E. (2017). *Exploring strategies microenterprise owners use to succeed in business beyond 2 years* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/4635/>
- Herlina, E., Syarifudin, D., & Kartika, R. (2019). The local knowledge transfer based on continuous improvement implementation at SMEs group. *Journal of Management Review*, 3(1), 958–966. <https://doi.org/10.25157/jmr.v3i1.1805>
- Herrington, M., & Kew, P. (2017). *Global Report 2013/2017*. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. <http://gemconsortium.org/report/49812>
- Hiatt, S. R., & Shine, W. D. (2014). Clear and present danger: Planning and new venture survival amid political and civil violence. *Strategic Management Journal*, 35(5), 773–785. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2113>
- Homans, G. C. (1961). *Social behavior*. Harcourt Brace.
- Horta, I. M., & Camanho, A. S. (2013). Company failure prediction in the construction industry. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 40(16), 6253–6257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2013.05.045>

- Houghton, C. E., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013a). Students' experiences of implementing clinical skills in the real world of practice. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 22(3–4), 1961–1969. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.12014>
- Houghton, C., Casey D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013b). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20(4), 12–17. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2013.03.20.4.12.e326>
- Huang, Y. H., Lee, J., McFadden, A. C., Murphy, L. A., Robertson, M. M., Cheugh, J. H., & Zohar, D. (2016). Beyond safety outcomes: An investigation of the impact of safety climate on job satisfaction, employee engagement and turnover using social exchange theory as the theoretical framework. *Applied Ergonomics*, 55, 248–257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apergo.2015.10.007>
- Hunt, L. (2014). In defense of qualitative research. *Journal of Dental Hygiene*, 88(2), 64–65. <https://jdh.adha.org/content/88/2/64>
- Huo, B., Qi, Y., Wang, Z., & Zhao, X. (2014). The impact of supply chain integration on firm performance. *Supply Chain Management*, 19(4), 369–379. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SCM-03-2013-0096>
- Ibrahim, A. B. (1993). Strategy types and small firms' performance: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, 4(1), 13–22. <https://libjournals.mtsu.edu/index.php/jsbs/article/view/268>
- Ilkay, J. (2013). Identifying motives of mothers who purchase healthy convenience snacks for their children: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 5(2), 237–246.

<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.652.7023&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

- Ioannidis, J. P., Greenland, S., Hlatky, M. A., Khoury, M. J., Macleod, M. R., Moher, D., Schulz, K. F., & Tibshirani, R. (2014). Increasing value and reducing waste in research design, conduct, and analysis. *The Lancet*, 383(9912), 166–175.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(13\)62227-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)62227-8)
- Ireland, A., Drew, P., & Sainsbury, R. (2013). A model of strategic entrepreneurship: The construct and its dimensions. *Journal of Management*, 29(6), 963–989.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063\\_03\\_00086-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0149-2063_03_00086-2)
- Jones, G., & Wadhwani, R. D. (2006). *Schumpeter's plea: Rediscovering history and relevance in the study of entrepreneurship* [Working paper]. Harvard Business School. <https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=21421>
- Kajalo, S., & Lindblom, A. (2015). Market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and business performance among small retailers. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 43(7), 580–596. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-04-2014-0044>
- Kapto, J. S., & Njeru, A. (2014). Strategies adopted by mobile phone companies in Kenya to gain competitive advantage. *European Journal of Business Management*, 2, 352–367. <https://1library.net/document/zw1w6p0q-strategies-adopted-mobile-phone-companies-kenya-competitive-advantage.html>
- Karadag, H. (2015). Financial management challenges in small and medium-sized enterprises: A strategic management approach. *Emerging Markets Journal*, 5(1), 26–40. <http://emaj.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/emaj/article/view/67>

- Kato, T., Nunes, B., & Dey, P. K. (2016). Is keiretsu really a source of competitive advantage for Japanese automotive suppliers? *Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management*, 27(1), 62–81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMTM-06-2014-0077>
- Kelley, D., & Marram, E. (2010). Beyond start-up: Developing and sustaining the growing organization. In W. D. Bygrave & A. Zacharakis (Eds.), *The portable MBA in entrepreneurship* (4th ed., pp. 355–384). John Wiley & Sons.
- Kerzner, H. (2017). *Project management metrics, KPIs, and dashboards: A guide to measuring and monitoring project performance* (3rd ed.) John Wiley & Sons.
- Kleban, J., & Nickerson, I. (2011). The U.S. craft brew industry. *Proceedings of the International Academy for Case Studies*, 18(1), 33–38.  
<https://www.abacademies.org/Public/Proceedings/Proceedings28/IACS%20Proceedings%20Spring%202011.pdf>
- Kleban, J., & Nickerson, I. (2012). To brew, or not to brew- that is the question: An analysis of competitive forces in the craft brew industry. *Journal of the International Academy for Case Studies*, 18(4), 51-58.  
[http://samuellearning.org/bus\\_ana\\_proj/To\\_brew\\_\\_or\\_not\\_to\\_brew--that\\_.PDF](http://samuellearning.org/bus_ana_proj/To_brew__or_not_to_brew--that_.PDF)
- Klein, C. J., & Ferrari, R. (2015). Walk the talk, don't eat it: A call for sustainable seafood leadership from marine scientists. *Environmental Conservation*, 42(2), 102–103. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0376892914000253>
- Kornbluh, M. (2015). Combatting challenges to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(4), 397–414.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2015.1021941>

- Korstens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 120–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092>
- Koryak, L., Mole, K. F., Lockett, A., Hayton, J. C., Ucbasaran, D., & Hodgkinson, G. P. (2015). Entrepreneurial leadership, capabilities and firm growth. *International Small Business Journal*, 33(1), 89–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242614558315>
- Koyagiolo, K. F. (2016). *Small business survivability beyond five years* [Doctoral dissertation, Walden University]. Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies. <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/2554/>
- Kristensen, G. K., & Ravn, M. N. (2015). The voices heard and the voices silenced: Recruitment processes in qualitative interview studies. *Qualitative Research*, 15(6), 722–737. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114567496>
- Kritikos, A. S. (2014). Entrepreneurs and their impact on jobs and economic growth. *IZA World of Labor* 8, 1–10. <https://wol.iza.org/articles/entrepreneurs-and-their-impact-on-jobs-and-economic-growth/long>
- Kucher, A., Mayr, S., Mitter, C., Duller, C., & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, B. (2020). Firm age dynamics and cause of corporate bankruptcy: Age dependent explanations for business failure. *Review of Managerial Science*, 14(3), 633–661. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11846-018-0303-2>
- Kumpf, V. A. (2004). Strategic planning. *ASHRAE Journal*, 46(8), Article 70. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/220444807?pq-origsite=summon>



- Kury, K. W. (2017). Needs and challenges of pursuing a stakeholder consequence research stream. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, 14(2), 10–23.  
[http://www.na-businesspress.com/JLAE/KuryKW\\_Web14\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.na-businesspress.com/JLAE/KuryKW_Web14_2_.pdf)
- Kyengo, J. W., Ombui, K., & Iravo, M. A. (2016). Influence of competitive strategies on the performance of telecommunication companies in Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Human Resource and Business Administration*, 2(1), 1–16.  
[http://iajournals.org/articles/iajhrba\\_v2\\_i1\\_1\\_16.pdf](http://iajournals.org/articles/iajhrba_v2_i1_1_16.pdf)
- Labanauskis, R., & Ginevicius, R. (2017). Role of stakeholders leading to development of higher education services. *Engineering Management in Production and Services*, 9(3), 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.1515/emj-2017-0026>
- Landrum, B., & Garza, G. (2015). Mending fences: Defining the domains and approaches of quantitative and qualitative research. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2(2), 199–209.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000030>
- Lechner, C., & Gudmundsson, S. V. (2014). Entrepreneurial orientation, firm strategy and small firm performance. *International Small Business Journal*, 32(1), 36–60.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242612455034>
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2013). *Practical research: Planning and design* (10th ed.). Pearson Publisher.
- Leskinen, R. (2011). Success in the female entrepreneurial networking process. *Annals of Innovation & Entrepreneurship*, 2(1), Article 6002.  
<https://doi.org/10.3402/aie.v2i1.6000>
- Lioukas, C. S., & Reuer, J. J. (2015). Isolating trust outcomes from exchange relationships: Social exchange and learning benefits of prior ties in alliances.

*Academy of Management Journal*, 58(6), 1826–1847.

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0934>

Lombardo, C. (2021, April 9). *Craft beer production*. IBIS World.

<https://www.ibisworld.com/united-states/market-research-reports/craft-beer-production-industry/>

Malerba, F., & McKelvey, M. (2018). Knowledge-intensive innovative entrepreneurship integrating Schumpeter, evolutionary economics, and innovation systems. *Small Business Economics*, 54, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-018-0060-2>

Mariotto, F. L., Zanni, P. P., & DeMoraes, G. H. S. M. (2014). What is the use of a single-case study in management research? *RAE-Revista de administracao de Empresas*, 54(4), 358–369. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-759020140402>

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Mayr, S., Mitter, C., Kücher, A., & Duller, C. (2020). Entrepreneur characteristics and differences in reason for business failure: Evidence from bankrupt Austrian SMEs. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 33(5), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1786647>

Mazzarol, T., Clark, D. N., & Reboud, S. (2014). Strategy in action case studies of strategy, planning and innovation in Australian SMEs. *Small Enterprise Research*, 21(1), 54–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13215906.2014.11082076>

McAreavey, R., & Das, C. (2013). A delicate balancing act: Negotiating with gatekeepers for ethical research when researching minority communities. *International*

*Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 12(1), 113–131.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691301200102>

McDowell, W. C., Harris, M. L., & Geho, P. R. (2016). Longevity in small business: The effect of maturity on strategic focus and business performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(5), 1904–1908.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.10.077>

McFarland, C., & McConnell, J. K. (2013). Small business growth during a recession: Local policy implications. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 27(2), 102–113.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891242412461174>

McLaughlin, R. H., & Alfaro-Velcamp, T. (2015). The vulnerability of immigrants in research: Enhancing protocol development and ethics review. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 13, 24–43. <https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10805-015-9225-7>

Menkhoff, T., Wah, C. Y., & Loh, B. (2016). Notes from an ‘Intelligent Island’: Towards strategic knowledge management in Singapore’s small business sector.

*International Asienforum*, 35(1–2), 85–99.

<https://doi.org/10.11588/iaf.2004.35.456>

Menter, I., Elliot, D., Hulme, M., Lewin, J. & Lowden, K. (Eds.). (2011). Qualitative data analysis. In *A guide to practitioner research in education* (pp. 214–222). SAGE Publications.

Merriam, S. B. (2014). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Entrepreneur. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved October 26, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/entrepreneur>
- Miettinen, M., & Littunen, H. (2013). Factors contributing to the success of start-up firms using two-point or multiple-point scale models. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 3(4), 449–481. <https://doi.org/10.1515/erj-2012-0012>
- Miller, C. (2017). *Muddy boots and smart suits: Researching Asia-Pacific affairs*. ISEAS Publishing.
- Miskin, V., & Rose, J. (1990). New venture initiation: Factors influencing success. *Journal of Small Business Strategy*, 1(2), 1–9. <https://libjournals.mtsu.edu/index.php/jsbs/article/view/224>
- Mitchelmore, S., & Rowley, J. (2013). Entrepreneurial competencies of women entrepreneurs pursuing growth. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 20(1), 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001311298448>
- Moll, S. (2012). Navigating political minefields: Partnerships in organizational case study research. *Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation*, 43(1), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-2012-1442>
- Moon, K., Brewer, T. D., Januchowski-Hartley, S. R. Adams, V. M., & Blackman, D. A. (2016). A guideline to improve qualitative social science publishing in ecology and conservation journals. *Ecology and Society*, 21(3), 133–152. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-08663-210317>

- Morgan, A. (2015). Competitive strategies: How these are vital for volatile markets' sub-parts. *Scholedge International Journal of Business Policy & Governance*, 2(11), 1–4. <https://thescholedge.org/index.php/sijbpg/article/view/252/357>
- Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In N. K. Denizin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 220–235). SAGE Publications.
- Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(9), 1212–1222. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1049732315588501>
- Morse, J. M., & Coulehan, J. (2015). Maintaining confidentiality in qualitative publication. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(2), 151–152. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732314563489>
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Muchiri, M., & McMurray, A. (2015). Entrepreneurial orientation within small firms: A critical review of why leadership and contextual factors matter. *Small Enterprise Research*, 22(1), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13215906.2015.1017076>
- Muhonen, T., Hirvonen, S., & Laukkanen, T. (2017). SME brand identity: Its components and performance effects. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 26(1), 52–67. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-01-2016-1083>
- Munn, Z., Porritt, K., Lockwood, C., Aromataris, E., & Pearson, A. (2014). Establishing confidence in the output of qualitative research synthesis: The ConQual approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 14, Article 108. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-14-108>

- Murray, D. W., & O'Neill, M. A. (2012). Craft beer: Penetrating a niche market. *British Food Journal*, 114(7), 899–909. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00070701211241518>
- Mutoko, W. R. (2014). Challenge of access to markets and opportunities for small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in Botswana. *European Scientific Journal* (Special ed.), 28–38. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2014.v10n10p%25p>
- Nadel, J. (2013, September 10). Entrepreneurs are the playmakers for our economy. *Huffington Post*. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-nade/entrepreneurs-are-the-pla\\_b\\_4117291.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jack-nade/entrepreneurs-are-the-pla_b_4117291.html)
- Ng, L., & Jenkins, A. S. (2018). Motivated but not starting: How fear of failure impacts entrepreneurial intentions. *Small Enterprise Research*, 25(2), 152–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13215906.2018.1480412>
- Njaramba, E. A. A., & Ngugi, J. K. (2014). Factors affecting adoption of financial advisory service in small medium enterprise: A case of water bottling companies. *International Journal of Current Business and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 18–29. [https://businessdocbox.com/Human\\_Resources/73937503-Factors-affecting-adoption-of-financial-advisory-service-in-small-medium-enterprise-a-case-of-water-bottling-companies.html](https://businessdocbox.com/Human_Resources/73937503-Factors-affecting-adoption-of-financial-advisory-service-in-small-medium-enterprise-a-case-of-water-bottling-companies.html)
- Nobile, J. (2018, January, 20). Crowded craft beer field poses challenges. *Crain's Cleveland Business*. <https://www.crainscleveland.com/article/20180119/news/149126/crowded-craft-beer-field-poses-challenges>
- Nobile, J. (2020, April, 15). Brewers Association: Craft beer grew in 2019, but pandemic presents new challenges for 2020. *Crain's Cleveland Business*

<https://www.crainscleveland.com/jeremy-nobile-blog/brewers-association-craft-beer-grew-2019-pandemic-presents-new-challenges-2020>

Omri, A., & Ayadi-Frikha, M. (2014). Constructing a mediational model of small business growth. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 10, 319–342. <https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs11365-012-0223-6>

Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2003). *Expanding the framework of internal and external validity in quantitative research* (ED448205). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED448205.pdf>

Otar, C. (2018, October 25). *What percentage of small business fail – And how can you avoid being one of them?* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesfinancecouncil/2018/10/25/what-percentage-of-small-businesses-fail-and-how-can-you-avoid-being-one-of-them/?sh=8f2f8f543b5f>

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42, 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10488-013-0528-y>

Palupiningrum, A. W., Daryanto, A., & Fahmi, I. (2016). Strategic architecture for school of business, Bogor Agricultural University. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(1), 40–52. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v6n1p40>

Panggabean, T., & Jermias, J. (2020). Mitigating agency problems using the balanced scorecard. *Journal of Theoretical Accounting Research*, 15(2), 72–91.

<http://jtar.org/id4.html>

Parente, R., & Feola, R. (2013). Entrepreneurial intent and entrepreneurial commitment of young researchers. *International Journal of Technology Management & Sustainable Development*, 12(2), 155–166.

[https://doi.org/10.1386/tmsd.12.2.155\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/tmsd.12.2.155_1)

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Pederzini, G. D. A. (2016). Strategic management cultures: Historical connections with science. *Journal of Management History*, 22(2), 214–235.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JMH-12-2015-0212>

Petrova, E. (2015). Historical review of strategy and strategic business management. *Review of General Management*, 22(2), 17–27.

[http://www.managementgeneral.ro/pdf/2\\_2015\\_2.pdf](http://www.managementgeneral.ro/pdf/2_2015_2.pdf)

Petty, N. J., Thomson, O. P., & Stew. G. (2012). Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 2: Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods. *Manual Therapy*,

17(5), 378–384. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.math.2012.03.004>

Polit, D. F. (2014). Getting serious about test-retest reliability: A critique of retest research and some recommendations. *Quality of Life Research*, 23, 1713–1720.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-014-0632-9>

Pollack, J., & Adler, D. (2016). Skills that improve profitability: The relationship between project management, IT skills, and small to medium enterprise



- profitability. *International Journal of Project Management*, 34(5), 831–838.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2016.03.004>
- Porter, M. E. (1980). *Competitive strategies: Techniques for analyzing industries and competitors*. Free Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1986). The strategic role of international marketing. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 3(2), 17–21. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb008159>
- Porter, M. E. (2008). *The five competitive forces that shape strategy*. Harvard Business Review Online.
- Pulaj, E., Kume, V., & Cipi, A. (2015). The impact of generic competitive strategies on organizational performance. The evidence from Albanian context. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(28), 274–284.  
<https://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/view/6389>
- Qu, S. Q., & Dumay, J. (2011). The qualitative research interview. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management*, 8(3), 238–264.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/11766091111162070>
- Quan, L., & Huy, H. (2014). The effect of entrepreneurial human capital and entrepreneurial failure learning on the entrepreneurial restart intention. *Asian Social Science*, 10(16), 99–112. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n16p99>
- Raeon, F. (2013). *The ABC's of site selection: How to pick winners and avoid losers*. Self-Published.
- Rakicevic, Z., Omerbegovic-Bijelovic, J., & Lecic-Cvertkovic, D. (2016). A model for effective planning of SME support services. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 54, 30–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2015.09.004>

- Ramos-Rodriguez, A. R., Martinez-Fierro, S., Medina-Garrido, J. A., & Ruiz-Navarro, J. (2015). Global entrepreneurship monitors versus panel study of entrepreneurial dynamics: Comparing their intellectual structures. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 11, 571–597. <https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs11365-013-0292-1>
- Randall, S., Coast, E., Compaore, N., & Antoine, P. (2013). The power of the interviewer: A qualitative perspective on African survey data collection. *Demographic Research*, 28(27), 763–792. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2013.28.27>
- Reijonen, H., & Komppula, R. (2010). The adoption of market orientation in SMEs: Required capabilities and relation to success. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 18(1), 19–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09652540903511282>
- Rasca, L., & Deaconu, A. (2018). Entrepreneurial motivators and competency – main drivers of entrepreneurial success. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 12(1), 864–874. <https://doi.org/10.2478/picbe-2018-0077>
- Ribeiro-Soriano, D. (2017). Small business and entrepreneurship: Their role in economic and social development. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 29(1–2), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2016.1255438>
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. SAGE Publications.
- Ritthaisong, Y., Johri, L. M., & Speece, M. (2014). Sources of sustainable competitive advantage: The case of rice-milling firms in Thailand. *British Food Journal*, 116(2), 272–291. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-01-2012-0003>

- Robbins, P., & O’Gorman, C. (2016). Innovation processes: Do they help or hinder new product development outcomes in Irish SMEs? *Irish Journal of Management*, 35(1), 88–103. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijm-2016-0006>
- Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2016). *Real world research* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Ropega, J. (2011). The reasons and symptoms of failure in SME. *International Advances in Economic Research*, 17, 476–483. <https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs11294-011-9316-1>
- Rowley, J. (2012). Conducting research interviews. *Management Research Review*, 35(3/4), 260–271. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01409171211210154>
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researcher* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publishers.
- Saleem, M. A. (2012). The impact of socio-economic factors on small business success. *Geografia-Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 8(1), 24–29. <https://ejournal.ukm.my/gmjss/article/view/18161>
- Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency. *The Academy of Management Review* 26(2), 243–263. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259121>
- Scherger, V., Vigier, H. P. & Bagera-Marine, M. G. (2014). Finding business failure reasons through a fuzzy model of diagnosis. *Fuzzy Economic Review*, 19(1), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.25102/fer.2014.01.04>

- Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). *The theory of economic development: An inquiry into profit, capital, credit, interest, and the business cycle*. Harvard University Press.
- Schwekart, L., & Doti, L. P. (2010). *American entrepreneur: The fascinating stories of people who defined business in the United States*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- Sedliacikova, M. Hajduchova, I. Kristofic, P., Viszlai, I., & Gaff, M. (2016). Improving the performance of small and medium wood-processing enterprises. *Bioresources*, 11(1), 439–450. <https://ojs.cnr.ncsu.edu/index.php/BioRes/article/view/8172>
- Senior, A. (2016). *Achieving longevity in business: Determinants of small business success* [Doctoral dissertation, Lynn University]. Lynn SPIRAL.
- Shekhar, S. A. (2014). Conducting case study research in non-profit organisations. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 17(1), 77–84.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-04-2013-0024>
- Shoham, A., & Paun, D. (2015). Small business marketing strategies: A call for customization. In *Academy of marketing science (AMS) annual conference* (pp. 553–557). [https://doi.org/10.1007%2F978-3-319-13159-7\\_120](https://doi.org/10.1007%2F978-3-319-13159-7_120)
- Shwed, U., & Kalev, A. (2014). Are referrals more productive or more likeable? Social networks and the evaluation of merit. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 58(2), 288–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213503330>
- Simeone, M., Marotta, G., & Rotondo, G. (2015). Competitive strategies in the Italian pasta industry. *Agricultural Economics Review*, 16(1), 73–87.  
<https://doi.org/10.22004/ag.econ.253693>

- Simmons, S. A., Wiklund, J., & Levie, J. (2014). Stigma and business failure: Implications for entrepreneurs' career choices. *Small Business Economics*, 42, 485–505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-013-9519-3>
- Siren, C., & Kohtmaski, M. (2016). Stretching strategic learning to the limit: The interaction between strategic planning and learning. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(2), 653–663. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.08.035>
- Skinner, W. (1974). The focused factory. *Harvard Business Review*, 52(3), 113–121. <https://hbr.org/1974/05/the-focused-factory>
- Small Business Administration. (2012). *Frequently asked questions*. [https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ\\_Sept\\_2012.pdf](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ_Sept_2012.pdf)
- Small Business Administration. (2014). *Table of small business size standards matched to North American industry classification system codes*. [https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Size\\_Standards\\_Table.pdf](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Size_Standards_Table.pdf)
- Small Business Administration. (2016). *Small business finance: Frequently asked questions*. [https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Finance-FAQ-2016\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/Finance-FAQ-2016_WEB.pdf)
- Small Business Administration. (2018). *2018 small business profile*. <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/2018-Small-Business-Profiles-US.pdf>
- Small Business Administration. (2019). *2019 small business profile*. <https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/23142719/2019-Small-Business-Profiles-US.pdf>

- Small Business Administration. (2020a). *Frequently asked questions*.  
<https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/05122043/Small-Business-FAQ-2020.pdf>
- Small Business Administration. (2020b). *2020 small Business Profile*.  
<https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/04144224/2020-Small-Business-Economic-Profile-US.pdf>
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE Publications.
- Snyder, C. (2012). A case study of a case study: Analysis of a robust qualitative research methodology. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(13), 1–21.  
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1791>
- Stadler, R., Reid, S., & Fullagar, S. (2013). An ethnographic exploration of knowledge practices within the Queensland Music Festival. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 4(2), 90–106.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/17582951311325872>
- Stam, E. (2015). Entrepreneurial ecosystem and regional policy: A sympathetic critique. *European Planning Studies*, 23(9), 1759–1769.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2015.1061484>
- Statista. (2020). *Craft beer share of retail beer market in the United States from 2012 to 2019*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1093653/craft-beer-dollar-share-of-us-beer-market/>

- Steurer, R. (2006). Mapping stakeholder theory a new: From the stakeholder theory of the firm to three perspectives on business-society relations. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 15(1), 55–69. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.467>
- Storchevoi, M. A. (2015). The theory of the firm and strategic management. *Problems of Economic Transition*, 57(9), 1–19.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10611991.2014.1088357>
- Stovall, S. A. (2011). Simeon North: A portrait of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century entrepreneur with 21<sup>st</sup> century HRM challenges. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 16(3), 34–43. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Simeon-North%3A-A-Portrait-of-an-Early-19th-Century-Stovall/0f282a0e0f6e6af13d97ba6d9603ced62cf50f00>
- Strakova, J. (2017). Strategic analysis methods and their influence on stability and development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Czech Republic. *Studia Commercialia Bratislavensia*, 10(38), 196–214.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/stcb-2017-0019>
- Street, C. T., & Ward, K. W. (2012). Improving validity and reliability in longitudinal case study timelines. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 21(2), 160–175.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/ejis.2011.53?journalCode=tjis20>
- Stricker, J. (2015). Developing a business plan. *Alaska Business Monthly*, 31, 22–25.  
[https://issuu.com/alaska\\_business\\_monthly/docs/abm\\_sept\\_2015\\_4\\_web](https://issuu.com/alaska_business_monthly/docs/abm_sept_2015_4_web)

- Stump, A. (2020). *Indicators suggest modest growth for craft brewers that evolve, connect and prepare now for post-pandemic re-start*. Hilco Global.  
[https://www.hilcoglobal.com/docs/default-source/perspectives/20200519\\_new-smarter-perspective-craft-brewers.pdf?sfvrsn=557d90a3\\_0](https://www.hilcoglobal.com/docs/default-source/perspectives/20200519_new-smarter-perspective-craft-brewers.pdf?sfvrsn=557d90a3_0)
- Suri, H. (2011). Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 11(2), 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ1102063>
- Suriadi, S., Weib, B., Winkelmann, A., Hofstede, A. H. M., Adams, M., Conforti, R., Fidge, C., Rosa, M. L., Oyuang, C., Pika, A., Rosman, M., & Wyn, M. (2014). Current research in the risk-aware business process management-overview, comparison and gap analysis. *Communication of the Association for Information Systems*, 34(1), 933–984. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.03452>
- Taneja, S., Pryor, M. G., & Hayek, M. (2016). Leaping innovation barriers to small business longevity. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 37(3), 44–51.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-12-2014-0145>
- Tawadros, T. (2015). Developing the theater of leadership: An exploration of practice and the need for research. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 17(3), 337–347. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422315587898>
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Teti, E., Perrinin, F., & Tirapelle, L. (2014). Competitive strategies and value creation: A two-fold perspective analysis. *The Journal of Management Development*, 33(10), 949–976. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-08-2012-0100>



- Thomas, E., & Magilvy, J. (2011). Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing, 16*(2), 151–155.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6155.2011.00283.x>
- Thorne, S. (2000). Data analysis in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing, 3*(3), Article 68. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ebn.3.3.68>
- Toft-Kehler, R., Wennberg, K., & Kim, P. H. (2014). Practice makes perfect: Entrepreneurial-experience curves and venture performance. *Journal of Business Venturing, 29*(4), 453–470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2013.07.001>
- Torabi, S. A., Giahi, R., & Sahebjamnia, N. (2016). An enhanced risk assessment framework for business continuity management systems. *Safety Science, 89*, 201–218. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2016.06.015>
- Tsai, M-T., & Cheng, N-C. (2012). Understanding knowledge sharing between IT professionals: An integration of social cognitive and social exchange theory. *Behavior & Information Technology, 31*(11), 1069–1080.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2010.550320>
- Turner, B. L., Hyunjung, K., & Andersen, D. F. (2014). Improving coding procedures for purposive text data: Researchable questions for qualitative system dynamics modeling. *Systems Dynamics Review, 29*(4), 253–263.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/sdr.1506>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018, April 19). *Business employment dynamics third quarter of 2018* [News release].  
[https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/cewbd\\_04242019.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/cewbd_04242019.pdf)

- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021a). *National business employment dynamics data by firm size class*. <https://www.bls.gov/bdm/bdmfirmssize.htm#SIZE5>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021b, October 27). *Business employment dynamics summary* [News release]. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cewbd.nr0.htm>
- U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. (2019). *Statistical report – beer*. <https://www.ttb.gov/images/pdfs/statistics/2019/201912beer.pdf>
- Urhuogo, I., Addo, A., & Williams, D. (2014). The influence of information systems security on job performance: A proposed research topic. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 6(1), 191–204.  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.653.5508&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Varadarajan, R. (2019). Theoretical underpinnings of research in strategic marketing: A commentary. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 47, 30–36.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-018-0612-7>
- Vargo, J., & Seville, E. (2011). Crisis strategic planning for SMEs: Finding the silver lining. *International Journal of Production Research*, 49(18), 5619–5635.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2011.563902>
- Vohra, V. (2014). Using the multiple case study design to decipher contextual leadership behaviors in Indian organizations. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 12(1), 54–65. <https://academic-publishing.org/index.php/ejbrm/article/view/1314>

van Vugt, M., & Ronay, R. (2014). The revolutionary psychology of leadership: Theory, review, and roadmap. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 4(1), 74–95.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386613493635>

Walker, J. L. (2012). Research column: The use of saturation in qualitative research.

*Canadian Journal of Cardiovascular Nurses*, 22(2), 37–46.

<https://www.cccn.ca/media.php?mid=244>

Wallace, M., & Sheldon, N. (2015). Business research ethics: Participant observer perspectives. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 128, 267–277.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2102-2>

Wallace, V. A. (2017). *Exploring strategies for success in minority owned small businesses. A qualitative case study* [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Theses and Dissertations Global.

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/6e5426c0abba76880a6a730885848d73/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>

Walters, S. J. (2010). Unions and the decline of U.S. cities. *Cato Journal*, 30, 117–135.

<https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/cato-journal/2010/1/cj30n1-6.pdf>

- Wang, Q., Dou, J., & Jia, S. (2015). A meta-analytic review of corporate social responsibility and corporate financial performance: The moderating effect of contextual factors. *Business & Society*, 55(8), 1083–1121.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650315584317>
- Warfield, T., & Glover, H. (2011). Five costly mistakes that cause smaller enterprises to fail: Solutions for success. *Journal of Corporate Accounting & Finance*, 22(6), 79–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcaf.20725>
- Washington State Craft Beer. (n.d.). *The breweries*. Retrieved October 26, 2020, from <https://washingtonbeer.com/breweries>
- Watson, B. (2014, September 25). *Closings signal competition, not problem*. Brewer's Association. <https://www.brewersassociation.org/insights/closings-signal-competition-not-problems/>
- Watson, B. (2016, March 2016). *2015 craft brewing growth by the numbers*. Brewers Association. <https://www.brewersassociation.org/insights/2015-craft-brewing-growth-by-the-numbers/>
- Watson, B. (2020, December 16). *2020 points and 2021 predictions*. Brewers Association. <https://www.brewersassociation.org/insights/2020-points-and-2021-predictions/>
- Wei-Hin, C., Kadzrina, A. K. & Abdul, M. B. (2014). The strategic planning of SMEs in Malaysia: A view of external environmental scanning. *International Journal of Business & Society*, 15(3), 437–446.  
<http://www.ijbs.unimas.my/repository/pdf/Vol15-no3-paper4.pdf>

- Welter, F., Baker, T., Audretsch, D. B., & Fartner, W. B. (2017). Everyday entrepreneurship: A call for entrepreneurship research to embrace entrepreneurial diversity. *Entrepreneurship, Theory, and Practice*, 41(3), 311–321.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12258>
- Willgens, A. M., Cooper, R., Jadotte, D., Lilyea, B., Langtiw, C., & Obenchain-Leeson, A. (2016). How to enhance qualitative research appraisal: Development of the methodological congruence instrument. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(12), 2380–2395. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2361>
- Williams, D. A. (2014). Resources and failure of SMEs: Another look. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 19(1), Article 1450007.  
<https://doi.org/10.1142/S1084946714500071>
- Williams, T. (2015). *Think agile: How smart entrepreneurs adapt in order to succeed*. American Management Association.
- Wolf, C., & Floyd, S. W. (2017). Strategic planning research: Toward a theory-driven agenda. *Journal of Management*, 43(6), 1754–1788.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206313478185>
- World Bank Group. (2016). *Doing business 2016: Measuring regulatory quality and efficiency*. World Bank Group.
- Wynn, M., & Jones, P. (2018). Context and entrepreneurship in knowledge transfer partnerships with small business enterprises. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 20(1), 8–20.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1465750318771319>

- Yallapragada, R. R., & Bhuiyan, M. (2011). Small business entrepreneurship in the United States. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 27(6), 117–122.  
<https://doi.org/10.19030/jabr.v27i6.6470>
- Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(2), 134–152.  
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2102>
- Yun, H., Han, D., & Lee, C. C. (2013). Understanding the use of location-based service application: Do privacy concerns matter? *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 14(3), 215–230. [http://www.jecr.org/sites/default/files/14\\_03\\_p2.pdf](http://www.jecr.org/sites/default/files/14_03_p2.pdf)
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Zarif, T. (2012). Grounded theory method: An overview. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4(5), 969–979. <https://journal-archieves23.webs.com/969-979.pdf>
- Zeriti, A., Robson, M. J., Sypryropoulou, S., & Leonidou, C. N. (2014). Sustainable export marketing strategy fit and performance. *Journal of International Marketing*, 22(4), 44–66. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jim.14.0063>
- Zhang, Y., Huang, K., Yu, Y., & Yang, B. (2017). Mapping of water footprint research: A bibliometric analysis during 2006–2015. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 149(1), 70–79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.02.067>

## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol



Interview Date:

Time:

Researcher:

Interview Participant Code:

Greet participants and express appreciation for his/her participation.

Interview Starts:

Today's interview will take about 45 minutes, and the topic of this study is to explore the application and implementation of business strategies.

May I start recording?

Now I am going to start the recorder

Today is \_\_\_\_\_ and the code number of the participant is \_\_\_\_\_

I am going to ask you open-ended interview questions. There is no right or wrong answer to any of these questions. What I require is simply your honest answer. During the interview process, if you feel confused or need further clarification about a specific question, you are free to ask me to explain or clarify at any time. Do you have any questions before we go over each interview question?

## APPENDIX B



**Title of Study:**

Sustaining Microbreweries Beyond 5 Years

**Name and Title of Researcher(s):**

Marco U Yanez

***For Student Researcher(s):***

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Susan Cathcart

**Department:** School of Business & Management

**Telephone:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**City U E-mail:** xxxxx@cityuniversity.edu

This phenomenological study explores the phenomenon of the lived experiences of microbreweries business owners located in the Washington state Puget Sound to analyze if the findings contributed to future sustainable businesses. The researcher will select business owners implementing criterion sampling. Telephone or virtual Interviews are the main instruments for collecting data from microbrewery business owners. The interview instrument consists of 17 open-ended interview questions aligned with the three research questions. Data analysis will involve using the transcripts of the recorded interviews, and the researcher will create codes to find significant statements and related themes from the transcripts. The themes will be generated to answer each research question for this phenomenological study based on meaningful statements.

### INTERVIEW AND DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:



RQ1

What strategies do business owners use to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

1. Why did you start your business?
2. Describe the role of any professional advisors that you used for the business?
3. How did you select a business strategy?
4. What strategies do you use to help your business survive during the initial phases of beginning your business?
5. What were the barriers incurred while implementing your strategies to sustain your business?
6. What strategies do you have in place to sustain your business?

RQ2

How do business owners implement business strategies to keep microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

1. Describe the business development methods you use for the business during the first 5 years?
2. What do you think are the characteristics of a well-managed small business?
3. What did you learn about implementing business strategies for staying in business for at least 5 years?
4. What barriers do you encounter when implementing your small business strategies?
5. How frequently do you review and make changes to your business strategies?
6. What advice would you give to new or struggling small businesses to stay in business for at least 5 years?

RQ3

What has impacted the strategies business owners use to keep the microbreweries open for 5 or more years?

1. Describe the critical factors that you believe contribute to your success?
2. Can you describe what types of failures you have encountered in staying in business for 5 or more years?
3. What do the most important characteristics business owners possess to operate a sustainable business?
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies to achieve business sustainability?
5. Is there anything else you want to share concerning the sustainability of your business?

Demographic Questions:

1. How many years have you worked as a small business owner?
2. What are the average numbers of employees in your business?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your highest level of education?
6. What is your ethnicity?
7. How would you describe your current involvement in the operation of the business?
8. How many small businesses have you started?
9. What is the location of the small business?

## APPENDIX C

### Participant Informed Consent



**Title of Study:**

Sustaining Microbreweries Beyond 5 years

**Name and Title of Researcher(s):**

Marco U Yanez

***For Student Researcher(s):***

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Susan Cathcart

**Department:** School of Business & Management

**Telephone:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**City U E-mail:** xxxxx@cityuniversity.edu

**You are being invited to participate in a research study.**

#### **Key Information about this Research Study**

The researcher will explain this research study to you before being asked to participate in the study and before you sign this consent form.

- Your participation is voluntary, and you can decide not to participate or withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or negative consequences.
- It is your choice whether or not you want to participate in this research.
- The purpose of the research is to explore the application and implementation of business strategies that microbrewery business owners used to stay operational for 5 or more years.
- If you choose to participate, you will be asked to attend a 60-minute telephone or virtual interview session to obtain demographic data and responses to semistructured interviews with open-ended questions about applying and implementing business strategies during the first 5 years of business. A follow-up telephone or virtual interview with a duration of 20-minute to review the recorded

information interpretation, confirm, clarify and build on the information given in the previous interview

- The risks or discomforts from this research include minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as becoming tired or fatigued while sitting for 60 minutes, and COVID-19 related risks.
- The direct benefits of your participation are the positive change in society by increasing the number of new businesses that survive and provide jobs.

You should talk to the researcher(s) about the study and ask them as many questions as you need to help you make your decision.

### **What should I know about being a participant in this research study?**

This form contains important information that will help you decide whether to join the study. Take the time to carefully review this information.

- You are eligible to participate in this study because you are Microbrewery Business Owner.
- You will be in this research study for approximately 60 minutes telephone or virtual interview and follow-up telephone or virtual interview for 20 minutes.
- About twelve individuals will participate in this study.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of the study is to explore the application and implementation of business strategies that microbrewery business owners used to stay operational for 5 or more years.

### **Research Participation.**

**You will be asked to participate in the following procedures:**

I understand I am being asked to participate in this study in one or more of the following ways (initial options below that apply):

☐ Respond to in-person; and/or, ☒ telephone Interview questions; Approximate time 60-minutes and follow up interview for 20 minutes

☐ Answer written questionnaire(s); Approximate time \_\_\_\_\_

☒ Or participate in a virtual video interview using this video program/app ZOOM;

Approximate time 60-minutes and follow up interview for 20 minutes

☐ Other, specifically, \_\_\_\_\_. Approximate time \_\_\_\_\_

You may refuse to answer any question or any item in verbal interviews, written questionnaires or surveys, and, you can stop or withdraw from any audio or visual recording at any time without any penalty or negative consequences.

**Are there any risks, stress or discomforts that I will experience as a result of being a participant in this study?**

Taking part in this research involves certain risks: These could include: becoming tired or fatigued while sitting for 60 minutes.

COVID-19 refers to the Coronavirus that is being spread across people in our communities. We need to provide you with important information about COVID-19 (direct individuals to local Department of Health information on Covid-19), and to review your study participation because of COVID-19 related risks. To minimize risk, contact with the researcher will only be conducted by telephone and/or video interviews. You will not be asked to meet with the researcher in person.

**Will being a participant in this study benefit me in any way?**

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your participation in this research. However, possible benefits may include The positive change in society by increasing the number of new businesses that survive and provide jobs.

☐ You will receive \_\_\_\_\_ for your participation in this research.

✓ You will not receive any payment for participation in this study.

## **Confidentiality**

I understand that participation is confidential to the limits of applicable privacy laws. No one except the faculty researcher or student researcher, his/her supervisor and Program Coordinator (or Program Director) will be allowed to view any information or data collected whether by questionnaire, interview and/or other means.

If the student researcher's cooperating classroom teacher will also have access to raw data, the following box will be initialed by the researcher. ☐

Steps will be taken to protect your identity, however, information collected about you can never be 100% secure. Your name and any other identifying information that can directly identify you will be stored separately from data collected as part of the research study. The results of this study will be published as a thesis and potentially published in an academic book or journal, or presented at an academic conference. To protect your privacy no information that could directly identify you will be included.

All data (the questionnaires, audio/video tapes, typed records of the interview, interview notes, informed consent forms, computer discs, any backup of computer discs and any other storage devices) are kept locked and computer files will be encrypted and password protected by the researcher. The research data will be stored for 5 years. At the end of that time all data of whatever nature will be permanently destroyed. The published results of the study will contain data from which no individual participant can be identified.

## **Signatures**

I have carefully reviewed and understand this consent form. I understand the description of the research protocol and consent process provided to me by the researcher. My signature on this form indicates that I understand to my satisfaction the information provided to me about my participation in this research project. My signature also indicates that I have been apprised of the potential risks involved in my participation. Lastly, my signature indicates that I agree to participate as a research subject.

My consent to participate does not waive my legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, and/or City University of Seattle from their legal and professional responsibilities with respect to this research. I understand I am free to withdraw from this research study at any time. I further understand that I may ask for clarification or new information throughout my participation at any time during this research.

I have been advised that I may request a copy of the final research study report. Should I request a copy, I understand that I will be asked to pay the costs of photocopy and mailing.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If I have any questions about this research, I have been advised to contact the researcher and/or his/her supervisor, as listed on page one of this consent form.

Should I have any concerns about the way I have been treated or think that I have been harmed as a research participant, I may contact the following individual(s):

Dr. Susan Cathcart, Dissertation Chair, City University of Seattle, at  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX  
xxxxx@cityu.edu

This study has been reviewed and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of City University of Seattle. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact the IRB at xxxxx@Cityu.edu.



## APPENDIX D

### Participant Withdrawal Form



By signing this withdrawal form, I hereby remove myself from the qualitative phenomenological study. I understand that my identity will be protected, information collected as a result of my participation will be kept confidential, and all information tapes or transcripts will be destroyed.

My signature below acknowledges my intentions to withdraw from the study.

Signature of participant

Date

## APPENDIX E

### Recruitment Script



**Title of Study:**

Sustaining Microbreweries Beyond 5 years

**Name and Title of Researcher(s):**

Marco U Yanez

***For Student Researcher(s):***

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Susan Cathcart

**Department:** School of Business & Management

**Telephone:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**City U E-mail:** xxxxx@cityuniversity.edu

Hello, my name is Marco Yanez. I am a doctoral student at the City University of Seattle. I am inviting you to participate in a 60-minute telephone or virtual interview session to obtain demographic data and responses to semistructured interview with open-ended questions about applying and implementing business strategies during the first 5 years of business for microbrewery business owners. There will be a follow-up interview with a duration of 20-minute to review the recorded information interpretation, confirm, clarify and build on the information given in the previous interview.

The participants for the study consist of microbrewery business owners who set the strategy for their business. The microbrewery business owners have been in business for 5 or more years. The microbreweries have less than 100 employees, and produces 15,00 barrels of beer annually in the Washington State Puget Sound Area.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or xxxxx@cityuniversity.edu.

By replying to this e-mail with the words "I consent," you agree to participate in the research study.