

AN ANALYSIS OF MARKETING AND MICROENTERPRISE: DOES MARKETING
HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THESE UNIQUE
ORGANIZATIONS?

by

Bruce Morgan

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

August 2019

Abstract

This research study was a qualitative, multiple case study on how the implementation of good marketing techniques impacts the sustainability of microenterprises. This is a replicative extension study of prior research that revealed a theme of “promotional activities” correlating to microenterprise sustainability beyond two years (Haynes, 2017). This research extended the prior study by significantly increasing the number of participants (from six to forty), providing heterogeneity regarding lines of business, expanding to a new geography (the Upstate of South Carolina), focusing exquisitely on marketing techniques (as defined by the classical Marketing Mix), and defining sustainability by using both an accepted theoretical organizational concept (the Organizational Life Cycle) and the participants’ own definitions of success. The final analysis revealed that a healthy understanding and/or implementation of Marketing Mix techniques contributed to sustainability. The majority of the participants had a basic understanding of the classic “4 P’s”; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; but their knowledge was developed through an often costly method of trial and error. Participants with a business education, acquired either informally or formally, were able to avoid the costly process and realize sustainability at a quicker pace. The owners’ definitions of success contributed substantially to the degree to which they pursued education and their implementation of the various elements of the classical Marketing Mix.

Keywords: microenterprise, Marketing Mix, sustainability, microbusiness, product, price, place, promotion, Organizational Life Cycle.

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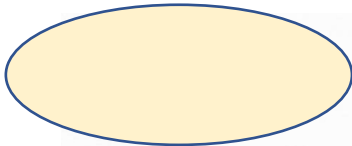
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Dr. Steven Cates



Dr. Mark Ellis

Dr. Edward Moore

Dedication

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this work to God. He provided both the desire and means to accomplish something that I always assumed unachievable. My prayer is that You continue to use the unexpected in ways unimaginable.

I would also like to dedicate this to those who participated in this research and those who might somehow receive the benefits of your collective wisdom and experience. Your willingness to take on the challenges associated with being a microentrepreneur is admirable. For those considering that route, I hope you find mentors who were as considerate, thoughtful, accessible, and imaginative as those exhibited in this paper.

Lastly, I would like to both thank and dedicate this work to my parents, Dewain and Shirley Morgan. My entire life I have watched you face challenges that would have defeated most couples but you have not only overcome, you did so with incredible graciousness. Your example formed the foundation of my learning how to surmount the various challenges that life has a tendency to throw your way. Mom, you always said you wanted a doctor, a lawyer, and a plumber in the family, well, you're a third of the way to your goal. I'll start working on that plumbing apprenticeship as soon as I return from a long delayed vacation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who are part of the Liberty University community who gave guidance, support, and the occasional, although sorely needed at times, rebuke during this five year journey. The students from my original who cohort provided inspiration as I watched them struggle and succeed in spite of all the challenges of taking on such an immense project amidst the reality of building a career, raising children, and living life. The two men that served as Chairman of the DBA program during this grand adventure, your dedication to furthering deeper understanding is greatly appreciated. Dr. Gene Sullivan, for providing the inspiration and encouragement that was particularly important at the beginning of this unlikely quest. Dr. Edward Moore, for your appearance in seventh inning and proving yourself an excellent closer. Thank you for providing excellent feedback and clearing the administrative hurdles that started appearing insurmountable towards the end. Dr. Mark Ellis, your candid feedback during the various reviews contributed significantly to the final product. And finally, to Dr. Steven Cates, Faculty Mentor extraordinaire. I was ready to throw in the towel a couple of times but you somehow managed to keep the flame, although sometimes little more than just a flicker, burning. I say with absolute certainty that this couldn't have been accomplished without you. Thank you.

I would *especially* like to thank my wife, Stacey, and my three children, Lily, Sydney, and Liam. It has been a long five years and your consistent sacrifices in this endeavor have not gone unrecognized. I know it was very difficult on everyone with me needing to disappear for hours on end and the other times when I was present but really absent, consumed with the pressure of yet another Sunday, 11:59 pm deadline. I am so very looking forward to making up for lost time.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

This qualitative study will focus on the impact of Marketing on microenterprise (ME), a subset of small business, sustainability by reviewing approximately forty firms located in the Upstate region of South Carolina within the United States. The particular element of Marketing that will be the focus of this research study are the four constituent elements of the classical Marketing Mix; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Microenterprise, currently considered within the United States as a subset of small business, refers to firms with less than ten employees and launched with a limited amount of start-up capitalization (Doga-Mirzac, 2013; Spivey, 2016; Brawley & Pury, 2017; Jha & Depoo, 2017). Although these tiny organizations can be founded under multiple legal structures (e.g. LLP, LLC, or partnerships), they are most commonly designated as a sole proprietorship (Brawley & Pury, 2017). The economic importance of these small firms has largely been ignored by academics and governments in developed economies thus resulting in an imbalance of research on the topic that favors developing countries (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Jha & Depoo, 2017; Ahmad, 2017). The economic and human value of these unique entities is well understood in the developing world. One example of this is Brazil and its government's active support of over four hundred and eighty ministries focused on assisting over 16 million microenterprises (Silva, Fonseca, & Santos, 2016). Malaysia currently supports over six hundred and fifty programs exclusively focused on the developmental needs of microenterprise (Munoz, Welsh, & Chan, 2015). Although slowly attracting interest in the United States, the Small Business Administration did not officially recognize microenterprise with a distinct definition until 1991 (Jha & Depoo, 2017).

Decades' long structural changes such as globalization, offshoring, outsourcing, and the rise of the "gig" economy have finally increased interest in this area within the United States (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Tempesti, 2016). Although still trailing many countries, the number of programs dedicated to supporting microenterprise development within the United States has greatly increased since its recognition in the early 90s (Servon, 2006). Continuing economic trends such as the increasing loss of wage positions and financial concerns over retirement finances have made the topic even more palpable (Miller, 2015). According to Murray and Ball (2016), 43 million Americans were freelancing in 2014 and that number is estimated to almost quadruple by 2024.

This section of the research project will offer a historical perspective on the background of the problem and reasons why it is an area worthy of study. The United States (US) has a rich history of small business success/failure literature that reaches back decades but does not include microenterprise to any degree of significance (Hutchinson, Hutchinson, & Newcomer, 1938; Beaver, 2003). The developing world has a shorter, although well established, history of research on microenterprise due to its recognized importance as part of its national economies (Bharti, 2014; Nihayah, 2017; Ahmad, 2017). Mattare, Monahan, and Shah (2011) and Servon (2006) have recognized a need for greater research into microenterprise sustainability within the United States. Lussier and Halabi (2011), building upon Lussier's (1996) earlier work designing predictive tests for failure, made note of a future need for qualitative research to explain the variables that have already been associated with small business failure. A lack of marketing skills leading to failure has been acknowledged by both domestic small business researchers and developing economy microenterprise academics (Wichmann, 1983; Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003; Radipere & van Scheers, 2014; Jamak, Ghazali, & Sharif, 2017). Within the developing

economy, practitioners Jayawarna, Jones, Lam, and Phua (2014) and Barreiros Porto, da Rocha Costa, and Alberto de Morais Watanabe (2017) have recognized marketing activities as important to the sustainability of microenterprise. Salam, Inam, and Awan (2015) and Khan (2014) have explored the impact of the Marketing Mix within developing economies but not specifically within the context of microenterprise. In the prior research upon which this study is an extension, Haynes (2017) uncovered within the context of United States based microenterprises, a theme that suggests a correlation between sustainability and “promotional activities”. The small business success/failure research within the United States and the microenterprise sustainability research within the developing world has been slowly coming together over the past several decades as the changing economic situation in the United States has made this unique entity, the microenterprise, more important (Gorg, 2015; Tempesti, 2017; Miller, 2015; Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 201; Torres, 2018). One of the common variables established by numerous prior quantitative studies is marketing (Winchmann, 1983; Lussier, 1996; Radipere & Van Scheers, 2014). Lussier and Halabi (2011) call for future qualitative research to supplement previously determined quantitative variables. This study seeks to fill the gaps that have opened up as the various approaches and methodologies have matured and moved closer together in concert. This will be a qualitative study (Lussier and Halabi, 2011) on a previously established quantitative variable (Wichmann, 1983; Lussier, 1996; Radipere & Van Scheers, 2014) set within the United States (Servon, 2006) that can lead to actionable sustainability for microenterprise (Haynes, 2017).

A qualitative methodology with a multiple case study design was chosen for this study. The reasons for this choice, as well as why other methodologies and designs were dismissed as inappropriate, will be thoroughly addressed later in the appropriate section. The choice was

largely influenced by Lussier and Halabi's (2011) request for further qualitative research on previously uncovered quantitative variables regarding microenterprise sustainability. Since this study is an extension of Haynes' (2017) multiple case study research that uncovered the variable of “promotional activities” influencing microenterprise sustainability, maintaining some degree of replicative integrity appeared warranted (Porte, 2013). A review of the importance of this topic from a Biblical perspective is included as well as the importance of this research to the field of Marketing. A thorough review of the current literature relevant to the topic completes this section of the project.

Background of the Problem

Small businesses have a high rate of discontinuance with some American researchers putting the ten year chance of failure as high as 80% (Lussier, 1996; Dejardins, 2017). The United States has a deep history of research on this topic as personified by Hutchinson, Hutchinson, and Newcomer's 1938 paper where the authors reviewed “business mortality”, a euphemism for discontinuance or failure, specific to manufacturing enterprises located in Poughkeepsie, New York from 1843-1936 (p. 497). This concept of “discontinuance of ownership” was further developed and refined throughout the next several decades by such authors as Churchill (1952), Ganguly (1985), and Everett and Watson (1998).

The majority of the literature on small business discontinuance within the United States has two limitations: 1) it has been performed primarily within the context of a highly industrialized economy focused on smaller companies growing into larger companies and 2) small businesses are really not all that small, being defined as having upwards of five hundred employees (Hutchinson, Hutchinson, & Newcomer, 1938; Anastasia, 2015). Although much can be garnered from this research, the learnings are not directly applicable to the needs of

microenterprise. Although the body of literature has matured over the decades from being largely retrospective aggregations across disciplines looking for generalized correlations or causations to more specific and actionable in its focus, the learnings are not exquisitely applicable to microenterprises (Everett & Watson, 1998; Worku, 2015).

The developing world is producing rich efficacy data on microenterprise largely because their governments have recognized the importance that these unique organizations have in lifting individuals out of poverty (Ahmad, 2017; Nihayah, 2017). This microenterprise literature is following the same trajectory, although at a quicker rate, as the United States small business research. It began with a focus on broad causations and correlations across disciplines and has steadily moved towards specifics within disciplines that are potentially more actionable (Fajnzylber, Maloney, & Rojas, 2006; Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014; Khan, 2017).

The economic situation in developed countries, including the United States, has changed dramatically over the past several decades (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2014; Görg & Görlich, 2015; Church & Oakley, 2018). The importance of microenterprises and their contribution to a nation's economy, as well as their ability to lift individuals out of poverty, is finally being recognized domestically and validates the need for greater research (Jha & Depoo, 2017). These different spheres of research are starting to align. The United States has produced solid research on small, but not micro, businesses that are specific to various business disciplines. An excellent example would be Hult, Morgenson, Morgan, Mithas, and Fornell's work (2017) where the authors collected data from over 70,000 respondents regarding issues contributing to small business discontinuance. The developing world has been producing valuable generalizable research on microenterprise for the past couple of decades (Alom,

Abdullah, Moten, & Azam, 2016; Ahmad, 2017). The call has been made to bring these two spheres, discipline specific and microenterprise, together by studying the importance of these unique organizations in the United States (Brawley & Pury, 2017). This study will focus on a particular area within the discipline of Marketing, the Marketing Mix, and how it leads to sustainability by evaluating a representative sample of microenterprises in the Upstate region of South Carolina in the United States.

Problem Statement

The general problem to be addressed is the issue of sustainability amongst microenterprises based upon their implementation of good marketing practices (SBAOA, 2014; Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014). These tiny organizations have been recognized in the developing world because of their important contribution to both the national economy and their pivotal role of providing jobs and pulling individuals out of poverty (Melese, 2017). Fueled by enormous changes in the structural landscape of developed economies over the past several decades, Western researchers are just beginning to take a serious interest in the value of sustainability within microenterprise (Gray & Jones, 2016). Although some disciplines, e.g. the role of microfinance within the overarching area of Finance, have been highly researched as to their impact on microenterprise, it is not known exactly how and why the implementation of specific marketing practices contributes to microenterprise sustainability since disciplines are often researched as part of an aggregate, multi-disciplinary, study (Rokhim, Sukcoo Sikatan, Wibisono Lubis, & Setyawan, 2016; Radipere & van Scheers, 2014). The specific problem to be addressed is how the classical Marketing Mix; traditionally comprised of the four elements of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Promotion will be given added consideration); impacts the

sustainability of a representative sample of microenterprises within the Upstate region of South Carolina in the United States.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to add to the body of knowledge by expanding on the understanding of how marketing practices, within the context of the classical Marketing Mix, contribute to the sustainability of microenterprise in the United States. Rather than pursuing the historic approach of the small business success/failure literature in the United States, an aggregation across firms of similar size or business lines and enumerating all potential causations or correlations related to the firms' discontinuance, this study will focus on a single topic, the classical Marketing Mix, within a single business discipline, Marketing (Hutchinson, Hutchinson, & Newcomer, 1938; Lussier, 1996; Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003). Instead of performing a retroactive, explanatory analysis of discontinued firms, this study will be prospective in nature and review active firms and the marketing issues that may be contributing to their current circumstances (Jayawarna, Jones, Lam, & Phua, 2014). Sustainability is being considered in the context of the widely accepted Organizational Life Cycle framework which sees firms develop through stages of growth (Haire, 1959; Churchill & Lewis, 1983; Greiner, 1998). This larger problem is explored through an in depth study of forty microenterprises in Upstate region of South Carolina in the United States and their understanding and implementation of the core Marketing Mix principles of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.

Nature of the Study

This is a qualitative, multiple case study research product. The design includes several replicative aspects as well extensions of prior research (Haynes, 2017). The qualitative approach was chosen based upon earlier researchers' recommendations for this type of inquiry to further

illuminate already determined variables of sustainability with microenterprise (Lussier and Halabi, 2011).

Discussion of Method

Park and Park (2016) discuss the benefits of qualitative research when seeking to develop existing theory rather testing the validity of new theory. Quantitative methodologies are generally reserved when researchers seek to test a hypothesis or explore relationships between established variables (Yilmaz, 2013). Lussier, the developer of a commonly utilized fifteen point predictor of small business failure, and Halabi (2011) recommend the implementation of qualitative research in order to gain a deeper understanding of small business failure beyond just predictive variables. Since lapses in general marketing knowledge and implementation have already been established as a factor in the failure of both micro and small businesses, the more pressing need is for expanding upon existing theories, not testing or verifying new ones (Radipere & van Scheer, 2014; Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014). A qualitative approach was chosen for this project since it seeks to develop already established theories and research (Berrone, Gertel, Giuliodori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014; Khan, 2015; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

Discussion of Design

There are multiple study design options available for qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study approach has become increasingly popular with qualitative researchers which further supports providing validation for choosing this particular approach (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014). The choice of design for this research study was guided by definition, exclusion, and direction.

This study is an extension of prior research (Haynes, 2017). Although researchers differ in defining the constituent elements of replicative research, replication of some of the major

elements of the original study is necessary (Porte, 2013). Since there are numerous extensions; sample size, geographic location, business segment, theme; reproducing the multiple case study design maintains replicative integrity.

Approaching the design choice by excluding inappropriate designs further supports the utilization of case study. There are clear reasons why phenomenology, ethnography, narrative, or grounded theory are not appropriate for this research. The focus of phenomenological research is the shared experiences of the participants (Vagle, 2009). Although the shared experiences of the subjects will enhance the qualitative nature of this research, this study is designed to focus on the marketing aspects within the phenomenon of microenterprise and not primarily the shared phenomenon of microenterprise itself (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological design was not chosen for that reason. Performing a thorough ethnographic research project involves extensive fieldwork for which the time constraints of this project would not allow (Higginbottom, Pillay, & Boadu, 2013). For a similar reason as phenomenology, a temptation for the study to drift in its major focus towards the participants rather than the topic of marketing techniques, the narrative approach was also dismissed (Jeppesen, 2016). A grounded theory methodology was not utilized because it relies upon large sample sizes which would not be appropriate for this study since it sought to replicate some of the original study design (Johnson, 2015).

Direction provided the final reason for choosing the case study design. Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift (2014) note the particular interest in the participants, not simply the method of inquiry, that the case study approach brings to research. The direction of this research is to provide actionable findings on an existing variable in order to encourage the sustainability of microenterprise in the United States (Lussier & Halabi, 2011). The majority of the world

recognizes the ability of these unique firms to lift individuals, families, and potentially entire communities out of poverty, if the proper direction is supplied (Ahmad, 2017; Nag & Das, 2014; Nihayah, 2017).

Summary of the Nature of the Study

This project is an extension of Haynes' (2017) prior research on the sustainability of microenterprises within a specific business segment and bounded by tight geographically parameters. That study uncovered a theme that showed a relationship between sustainability and a general concept labeled as “promotional activities” (Haynes, 2017). In order to maintain replicative integrity, several elements were carried over into this project. The methodology (qualitative), design (multiple case study), and one of the conceptual frameworks (Organizational Life Cycle) will be replicated in this research. The various extensions involve changing the geography, expanding the sample base beyond a single business line, increasing the sample size (from six to forty), and elaborating upon the specific marketing related theme, “promotional activities”, illuminated in the original research. In this research, the theme of “promotional activities” will be evaluated within the context of its role within the classical Marketing Mix. Promotional activities is commonly considered a component of Promotion, one of the four elements; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; found within the classical Marketing Mix (Khan, 2014). Once completed, this research will add to the field of study by providing greater insights on how the elements of the classical Marketing mix impact microenterprise sustainability within the United States.

Research Questions

Small businesses, as well as its microenterprise subset, often fail for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons are external to the company such as a deteriorating security environment,

chronic utility shortages, or natural disaster (Hyder & Lussier, 2105; Marshall, Niehm, Sydnor, & Schrank, 2015). External reasons for failure are both difficult to estimate and mitigate (Marshall, Niehm, Sydnor, & Schrank, 2015). Researching common internal reasons for failure, such as poor management or financial misgivings, have provided for learnings that may help others avoid failure (Radipere & van Scheers, 2015; Blanco-Oliver, Pino-Mejias, & Lara-Rubio, 2014). Although marketing lapses are recognized in the literature as a cause of failure for microenterprises, the specifics of those marketing lapses and their impact on sustainability is an area in need of greater research (Jones, Sethna, & Sole, 2013; Khan, 2015). The introductory questions are designed to uncover the baseline understanding of core marketing principles and how these factored into the launch of the business. The first set of questions focus directly on specific marketing techniques and their impact on sustainability. The second set of questions is designed to view how the understanding and implementation of those techniques inform movement through the conceptual framework of the Organizational Life Cycle.

RQ1. How has the understanding and implementation of the classical

Marketing Mix principles of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion supported sustainability within microenterprise?

RQ2. What is the correlation between the understanding and implementation of

Marketing Mix practices and their impact on sustainability and movement through the developmental stages of the Organizational Life Cycle?

Conceptual Framework

The framework underlying this research project is a conceptualization of the Organizational Life Cycle introduced by Haire in 1959 and popularized for small business by Churchill & Lewis in 1983. Although numerous versions of this concept have been presented

since its introduction, they all share the common theme of businesses transition through multiple stages of development, similar to a biological organism, partially dependent upon the lessons learned and decisions made at each point on the continuum (Adizes, 1979; Lipi, 2013; Turner & Endres, 2017). This research project will focus on the early stages of the Organization Life Cycle and how the understanding and implementation of the Marketing Mix impacts sustainability and movement.

Organizational life cycle. Haire introduces the concept of Organizational Life Cycle in 1959 with his chapter contribution, “Biological Models and Empirical Histories of the Growth of Organizations”, to a text on organizational theory. The idea was then popularized for small business through a Harvard Business School publication by Churchill and Lewis in 1983.

Numerous iterations of this concept have since been presented with varying numbers of stages and qualities defining those stages (Adizes, 1979; Lipi, 2013). They all share the common theme that businesses transition through multiple stages of development, similar to a biological organism, partially dependent upon the lessons learned and decisions made at each point on the continuum (Turner & Endres, 2017). This research project will focus on the early stages; Infancy, Adolescence, and Mature; of the commonly discussed four stage cycle. The fourth stage, Decline, is not a focus of this research. This research will review how the understanding and implementation of the Marketing Mix elements impacts developmental transition.

Rise of the microenterprise. A secondary concept addressed by the research is the recent emphasis on microenterprise within the United States as a result of the dramatic cultural and economic changes over the past several decades (Schreiner & Woller, 2003; Torres, 2018). Microenterprise has historically always been a part of the business landscape within the United States but largely as an unresearched subset of “small business” (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah,

2011; Jha & Depoo, 2017). The traditional definition of “small” within the spectrum of business is not particularly inclusive or descriptive of microenterprise. As recently as 2012 the Small Business Administration defined a “small business” as having upwards of five hundred employees ("Frequently Asked Questions About Small Business", 2012). While the United States was rapidly industrializing, the academic success/failure research focused on the needs of larger organizations and assisting smaller, generally manufacturing, ones in becoming larger (Beaver, 2003). The United States' Small Business Administration did not even officially recognize microenterprise with a definition until 1991 (Jha & Depoo, 2017). For reasons that are not clearly enunciated, microenterprise simply did not attract the attention of researchers in the developed world until recently.

Microenterprise has been heavily researched in the developing world for decades due to their importance to their respective national economies (Nag & Das, 2014; Nihayeh, 2017; Ahmad, 2107). The United States is quite late at discovering their importance. Some earlier researchers have postulated that strong Western social support nets, combined with the abundance of wage paying positions, have inhibited the growth of microenterprise (Schreiner & Woller, 2003). Later researchers have noted that the recent drop in wage and overall financial security in United States have contributed to the resurgence in interest of these tiny enterprises to alleviate poverty (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Tempesti, 2016; Jha & Depoo, 2017). The proven ability of microenterprises to help alleviate financial distress overseas is starting to be evaluated domestically.

The marketing mix. The final concept, the impact of the Marketing Mix, on microenterprise sustainability builds upon the first two concepts and was initially, in a slightly different form, uncovered as a theme in the original study. The original research labeled the

uncovered theme as "promotional activities" (Haynes, 2017). This theme is functionally a component of one of the four elements contained within the classical Marketing Mix. This research extends the prior findings by evaluating all four elements; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; of the Marketing Mix. There does exist within the current United States small business and international microenterprise literature some research on marketing and sustainability. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) developed the concept of Marketing Orientation as a way of measuring a firm's responsiveness to both customers and market events.

Microenterprise and small-medium enterprise (SME) researchers such as Spillan, Kara, King, and McGinnis (2013) and Joensuu-Salo, Sorama, Viljama, and Varamaki, (2018) built upon this concept by studying its impact on firm effectiveness in Ghana and Finland, respectively. Although helpful at gaining perspective concerning a firm's overall market responsiveness, they reveal little about the marketing techniques related to the Marketing Mix.

Numerous authors over the past several years have addressed various topics involving marketing and microenterprise. Au and Tucker (2018) and Church and Oakley (2018) discuss various customer segmentation strategies. Cant, Wiid, and Catherine (2016) explore various pricing strategies utilized by small entrepreneurs. Although Barreiros Porto, da Rocha Costa, Alberto de Moraes Watanabe (2017) and Radipere and van Scheers (2014) specifically uncover "marketing" as an influencer on microenterprise sustainability, neither set of researchers delve into the specifics of the discipline. Haynes (2017) is one of the first researchers to isolate, although in a vague manner, that "promotional activities", a tactical component of one of the four classical Marketing Mix elements, as having a direct impact on microenterprise sustainability. Gaining insight into the awareness and implementation of how microenterprises utilize the four "P's" of the Marketing Mix should provide actionable direction that should assist

in the movement between organizational stages leading to sustainability. With actual people depending upon the success of these unique organizations, it is necessary to start providing research that turns the theoretical into actionable practices.

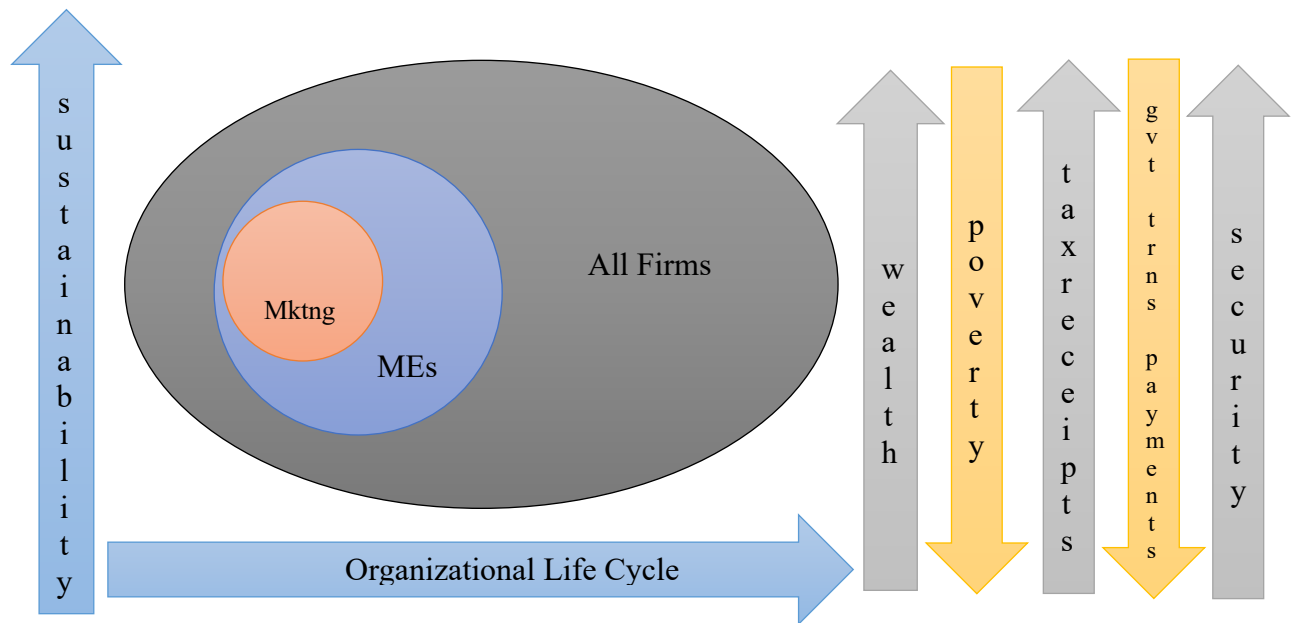


Figure 1. Sustainability and Organizational Life Cycle

Discussion of relationships between concepts. The underlying conceptual frame (the Organizational Life Cycle), environment (microenterprise), and focus of study (the Marketing Mix) all inter-relate in a synergistic fashion. As firms move progressively through the stages of the Organizational Life Cycle, the resultant success creates sustainability for the firm, individuals, and society (Steinmetz, 1969). Poverty is reduced while national finances are stabilized through an increase in tax receipts and a reduction in transfer payments (Bruhn & McKenzie, 2014). Western governments are starting to understand what their counterparts in the developing world have realized for some time, microenterprises are vital to both bringing

individuals out of poverty and solidifying national finances (Ahmad, 2015; Jha & Depoo, 2017). Having a greater understanding of the practical aspects, in this case the Marketing Mix, can help move microenterprises along the continuum of developmental growth and sustainability.

Summary of the conceptual framework. The Organizational Life Cycle theory is based upon the concept of firms going through a series of developmental stages with their advancing maturity dependent upon the decisions made during those stages and at crucial transition points. Although originally conceived for larger organizations, the concept has been applied to small businesses and is potentially applicable to microenterprises as well (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). The importance of microenterprise is well recognized in the developing world and the development of the literature surrounding them mirrors the early small business success/failure literature of developed economies (Nag & Das, 2014; Alom, Abdullah, Moten, & Azam, 2016). It consists primarily of aggregated data across owner characteristics (e.g., education, experience, motivation, age) and different business disciplines seeking causations or correlations related to failure or success (Hyder & Lussier, 2016; Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014). Actionable and replicable specifics are rare. Due to dramatic structural and economic shifts in the developed world, microenterprises are starting to attract the interest of Western researchers (Berner, Gomez, & Knorringa, 2012). The United States is even later to gaining this awareness than her comparative developed economies in Europe (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Servon, Fairlie, Rastello, & Seely, 2010). Just as firms go through stages of life cycle development, so apparently does awareness and literature. The United States is in an awareness stage that is just starting to acknowledge the value of microenterprises (Schreiner, 1999; Schreiner & Woller, 2003). The current need is to learn how to apply effective practices, as

shown in the literature for larger firms, to microenterprises in order to help guide their development (Servon, 2006). Since not only are national economies at stake, but the individual economies of countless people impacted by those before mentioned structural and economic shifts which are well beyond their control, the importance of the literature in assisting these unique organizations into the next stage of growth is of great importance.

Definition of Terms

Microenterprise. Although largely defined by culture, commonly refers to extremely small enterprises; often homebased, partnerships, or sole proprietorships; with fewer than <5 or <10 employees (Servon, Fairlie, Rastello, & Seely, 2010; Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2010). Sometimes considered a subset of small business.

Small Business. Largely defined by culture but generally much larger in number of employees and revenue than a microenterprise. The United States defines a small business as having upwards of five hundred employees (Jha & Depoo, 2017). Moldova considers a business with between ten and forty nine employees as small (Doga-Mirzac, 2013). Many countries use two hundred and fifty as the upwards limit on what it defines as a small business (Ayyagari, Beck, & Demircuc-Kunt, 2007).

Organizational Life Cycle. A theory that finds its roots in biology. It assumes that organizations, just like organisms, develop into maturity by going through a step-wise series of stages (Haire, 1959; Churchill & Lewis, 1983 Greiner, 1998).

Developing economy. Countries largely dependent upon agriculture and the export of raw materials without a corresponding industrial base. These countries often are characterized by lower incomes and standards of living. They commonly exhibit high and fluctuating

unemployment rates and less established legal and governmental institutions ("World economic situation and prospects: Country classification", 2014; Khohkar & Serajuddin, 2015).

Developed economy. Countries that are generally characterized by high standards of living, good infrastructure, and a skilled workforce that produces a stable economy. Other characterizations are strong legal protections, established governmental and educational institutions and, traditionally, a large industrial base ("World economic situation and prospects: Country classification", 2014; Khohkar & Serajuddin, 2015).

Marketing Mix. The traditional term applies to the tactics and actions a company utilizes to promote their product or brand on the open market within the context of the four P's; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Khan, 2014.)

Upstate South Carolina. The ten counties that comprise the Upstate of South Carolina are Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson, Pickens, Oconee, Greenwood, Laurens, Cherokee, Union and Abbeville.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions. The first assumption is that the study upon which this extension is based was well designed, utilized the most appropriate methodology, was properly administered, and the data correctly interpreted. This assumption will be mitigated by a thorough review of the original research by this researcher. This project can only advance with approval from university advisors so, essentially, a second external review. Any concerns are addressed with appropriate alterations in the extension. A second assumption is that the participants will be able to effectively articulate their responses to the interview questions. This assumption will be mitigated by utilizing a snowball approach to sampling that should prequalify participants based upon relationship (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). A

third assumption is that the interview questions will uncover the necessary data from which to draw conclusions between the influence of marketing and microenterprise sustainability. This assumption will be mitigated by a thorough review of the interview questions and their relationship to the research questions in eliciting valuable information (Yin, 2014).

Limitations. Potential weaknesses in either the design or conceptualization can negatively impact the results or interpretation of a research study (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). This study expands the geography of the participants, based upon the prior research, but is still limited in scope and the findings might not necessarily be transferrable to the remainder of the country (Haynes, 2017). This study puts no limits on the type of business in which the participants may operate but will, even with forty subjects, not be completely representative of the all possible microenterprise business segments. Although this study delves deep into the specifics of the classical Marketing Mix and their influence on microenterprise sustainability, the nuances of the Marketing Mix are numerous and this study cannot hope to cover all of them.

Delimitations. Delimitations involve setting restrictions on a study in order to create a better focus (Mitchell & Jolley, 2010). The first delimitation is the choice of extending this research on only one of the three themes uncovered in the prior research (Haynes, 2017). The remaining two themes uncovered in the prior research did not involve marketing related topics. The second delimitation involves restricting this research to the influence of the classical Marketing Mix and its influence on microenterprise sustainability (Salam, Inam, & Awan, 2015). The singular marketing related theme uncovered in the prior research was rather generally labeled as “promotional activities”. Within the discipline of Marketing, “Promotion” is one of the four elements; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; found within the classical

Marketing Mix. This research studies the influence of those four elements on microenterprise sustainability thorough exploration of the theme, “promotional activities”, within a well-defined boundary, the classical Marketing Mix. The third delimitation in largely involves logistics; geography, sample size, and business segment. This research will be restricted only to microenterprises that are located in the ten county, as defined under the “Definitions” section, Upstate region of South Carolina. Business may be performed outside of that geography but the firm must be domiciled within that region. The microenterprises included in the research must have ten or fewer full-time employees. There are no restrictions on the line of business in which the firms operate.

Significance of the Study

Small businesses are significant contributors to most national economies and have correspondingly attracted significant research attention due to their high rate of failure (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2014). Much of the United States' research that has analyzed the causes for success/failure has been performed both retrospectively and in aggregate. This study intends to look at this phenomenon from a couple of different perspectives. It will expand the literature both globally and by segment by focusing on microenterprises within the United States (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2016). Instead of a retrospective analysis of failed entities, this study will observe active firms at various stages within the Organizational Life Cycle as they are examined for sustainability. Instead for quantitatively analyzing for generalizable causes or correlations for success/failure, we will focus qualitatively on actionable concepts found within the discipline of Marketing (Lussier & Halabi, 2011).

Researchers are starting to realize that the microenterprises that typify emerging economies have found a foothold in this new, post-industrial phase for developed countries

(Jennnings, 2014; Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2016). Developed and developing economies are learning to rely on smaller and smaller firms to generate economic prosperity (Houston & Reuschke, 2017; Nag & Das, 2104). It can only be beneficial for all parties to learn as much as possible about what specifically makes microenterprise work.

Reduction in gaps. This study reduces the gaps in the literature on several fronts. Although an abundance of success/failure literature for small business (a distinctly different entity from microenterprise) is available in the United States, the developing world produces the majority of research on microenterprise sustainability. Schreiner (1999) initiated one of the earliest pleas for support and research in microenterprise within the United States. Servon (2006) added to the call for domestic research so as to better understand these unique firms that play such a crucial role at alleviating poverty. Mattare, Monahan, and Shah (2011) produced a geographically bound exploration of generalized causes for sustainability that suggested the need for greater research on the topic while acknowledging the dramatic changes in the economic landscape of the United States that make the sustainability of microenterprise a priority. Spivey (2015), in a doctoral dissertation, further supported Mattare, Monahan, and Shah (2011) by acknowledging the domestic economic changes impacting the United States while producing more data on generalized factors that lead to microenterprise success. Haynes (2017), uncovered specific themes in a domestic research study that supported microenterprise sustainability. This research study fulfills the gap of needed domestic research dedicated to microenterprise that develops a specific topic within a business discipline.

Even worldwide, the data on specific marketing techniques relating to microenterprise sustainability is sparse. Radipere and van Scheers (2014) acknowledge marketing as an important factor regarding sustainability amongst micro, small and, and medium firms.

Jayawarna, Jones, Lam, and Phua (2017) review the specifics of marketing practices within an entrepreneurial environment but not one isolated solely to microenterprise. Salam, Inam, and Awan (2015) target their research specifically on the “5 P's” of the Marketing Mix but once again this study is not isolated to microenterprise. This study fills a worldwide gap on marketing specific research dedicated to the unique needs of microenterprise.

Implications for biblical integration. God is acutely aware of both the spiritual and physical needs of his His creation and pursues an active interest in its affairs. The Levitical laws all full of dictates on how to properly worship and recognize the Creator (Leviticus 23-25, New International Version). They are also full of guidance on practical topics such as health, sanitation, relationships, and finance (Deuteronomy 12:47-59; Deuteronomy 12:12-13; Deuteronomy 22; Deuteronomy 15:1-11). Jesus did not just preach about the coming of Kingdom while teaching theology in the synagogue but personified the entire writings of the Law and teachings of the Prophets by His commands: love God and love your neighbor (Luke 2:41-52; Matthew 22:36-40). As disciples, we are called to constantly grow in our maturity in our adoration of both the Creator and those created in His image.

Scripture does support the life cycle concept when it discusses an expected, progressive, step-wise advance into maturity (Jeremiah 18:1-11; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14). Paul expresses clearly in 1 Corinthians 13:1-11 that maturity is personified by our love, not only for God but for our neighbor. That love is realized in action, not simply through mere words or thoughts (Luke 10:25-31). Many of our neighbors have been left behind by the changes in the economic landscape that the United States has experienced over the past several decades. Public pensions are underfunded and at risk of not being able to live up to their promised commitments (Foltin, Flesher, Previts, & Stone, 2017). Extended low interest rates and poor planning are

forcing retired Americans back into the workforce at unprecedented numbers (Bjerken, 2018). Layoffs and wage stagnation are increasing the need to rethink methods of income production (Crawford & Naar, 2016; Görg & Görlich, 2015). Marxism is once again on the rise (Kenny, 2014).

While in Capernaum, Jesus healed a paralytic who was carried to Him by four friends (Mark 2:1-5). Shortly afterwards, He did the same for a man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5). The religious leaders excoriated Him for these actions (Mark 2:6-11; Mark 3:6). There is no indication throughout the Gospels that Jesus only healed those who were, or would be, committed followers. In fact, the evidence shows quite the contrary (John 5:1-14; Matthew 5:45).

Providing people the opportunity to support their families not only benefits society but creates an opportunity for the Gospel to thrive. Every paralytic healed is one more worker able to adequately keep his family out of poverty. A man with two reliable hands is a potential contributor to society rather than an extractor. Actions such as these produce downstream results. A child who does not grow up in poverty will most likely not gravitate towards thievery or get ensnarled in prostitution (Luke 17:1-2). Minimize destitution and you alleviate suffering. Microenterprise is working in other parts of the world. Given the proper nourishment, it might just work in the United States as well.

Relationship to field of study. This project extends the existing research on the study of sustainability within the specifics of the classical Marketing Mix and how it pertains to microenterprises within the United States. Schreiner (1999), Servon (2006), and Mattare, Monahan, and Shah (2011) have all called for greater sustainability research on these unique firms within the United States. Spivey (2015), Au (2015), Haynes (2017) answered the call with doctoral research evaluating microenterprise but none elaborate on the specifics of the

Marketing Mix. Haynes (2017) uncovers one theme, “promotional activities”, but the limited scope of that research was not designed to delve deeply into those themes it uncovered. This research extends that earlier research and looks specifically at the constituent elements of the classical Marketing Mix, which includes Promotion (“promotional activities”), and how they impact sustainably and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. This research hopes to uncover actionable items and concepts that can be implemented by owners of current and future microenterprises in order to support developmental growth and long-term sustainability.

Summary of the significance of the study. The findings of this study have the potential to assist microenterprise growth through the various stages of the Organizational Life Cycle by providing actionable ideas in an area previously recognized for its impact on sustainability (Haynes, 2017). As more and more microenterprises start to appear within the landscape of the United States, it becomes vital to provide resources that can help these firms be sustainable (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2016). This is important not just because of the impact it will have on the national economy but more personally because of the impact it may have on the individual and spiritual economy by lifting people out of poverty (Jennings, 2014; Miller, 2015).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Literature review research strategy. The sources for this study were the Liberty University online library and various online databases including ProQuest, Emerald, Sage Journals Online, JSTOR, DOAJ.org, ScienceDirect, and ABI/INFORM Global. Some of the key words, phrases, and subject terms used in the research included *brand theory*, *branding*, *case study*, *entrepreneurship*, *entrepreneurial orientation*, *evolution of entrepreneurship*, *marketing*, *marketing mix*, *4 p's*, *marketing four P's*, *microenterprise*, *microbusiness*, *multiple case study*,

organizational life cycle, place, placement, price, price theory, product, promotion, promotional strategy, qualitative research, qualitative methodology, small business, small business administration, social media, and social media strategy. The content of this study is composed primarily from information gleaned from peer reviewed journals and government references (databases and publications). A smaller number of dissertations, conference transcripts, topic or business discipline specific magazines, and newspaper articles were also utilized.

The organization of the literature review begins with information presented on the underlying conceptual framework utilized within the research project, the concept of Organizational Life Cycle (OLC). This information is presented in a chronological fashion in order to gain a greater understanding of the historical context in which the concept was conceived and developed. Some references are made to divergent or contradictory theories presented during the development of the Organization Life Cycle theory but these are not expounded upon since they are not crucial to this particular research project. The development of complementary and conflicting theories supports the robustness of the debate and discussion surrounding the development of the Organization Life Cycle. They are presented to provide a framework to the impact that Organization Life Cycle theory has had on academic thought and research. The presentation then transitions to an exposition of the environment on which the conceptual framework is being applied. That environment is the under researched, at least in developed economies and especially the United States, subset of small businesses referred to as either microbusiness or, more commonly, microenterprise. This environment, the world of microenterprise, is also presented in a historical context from both a geographical and economic perspective since the two are so intertwined. The history of these firms; their economic importance, both to national and individual economies; as well as their importance within the

academic literature, is traced globally in order to give a better perspective as to why these unique entities are just now starting to play such a large role in the economy of the United States.

These extremely small firms have always been a part of the domestic economic landscape but have only recently attracted the attention of researchers in developed economies (da Silva, Amboni, Ortigara, & Costa, 2014; Stan, 2014). The final part of this literature review is dedicated to the objects upon which the research project will be acutely focused. Those objects are that to which the concept and environment are only starting to take notice of in the literature on Organizational Life Cycle and microenterprise; marketing as it relates to sustainability (Spivey, 2015; Au & Tucker, 2018). This study will specifically focus on the four “P’s” of the classical Marketing Mix; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Added attention will be given to the “P” of Promotion due to it being acutely exposed in earlier research (Haynes, 2017).

The prior research upon which this extension study is based evaluated two year sustainability for microenterprises (Haynes, 2017). One of numerous themes uncovered by that author involved the implementation of promotional activities and their impact on sustainability. As the literature investigating the concept (Organizational Life Cycle) and the environment (microenterprise) has matured over time, it has gradually shifted from the theoretical to the practical (Griener, 1972; Azides, 1979; Gurianova, Gurianov, & Mechtcheriakova, 2014). The prior research uncovered this recurrent theme, implementation of promotional activities, but was not designed to look further into any specifics. This research will take that theme identified within a larger environment (microenterprise) and concept framework (Organization Life Cycle) and attempt to provide some actionable insights for current and future owners of microenterprises.

The specific objects within the research project to be addressed are commonly referred to as the four “P’s” of the Marketing Mix; Product, Place, Price and Promotion (Khan, 2015; Salam, Inam, & Awan, 2015). Once again, more time is dedicated to the component of Promotion since that was one of the major themes uncovered in the prior research (Haynes, 2017). The references utilized in this review of the literature totaled one hundred and three resources of which 80% were within the past five years from the date of initiation of this advanced dissertation project. Ninety-five or 82% were peer reviewed and published journal articles. Seven or 7%, come from government data bases or publications. The remainder, one or 1%, is from a published book.

Organizational life cycle as conceptual framework.

Early development. The concept of the Organizational Life Cycle, as applied to small business, was popularized by business researchers Churchill and Lewis (1983) as a way of helping to better understand the growth stages through which small businesses typically progress. Although their Harvard Business Review publication widely exposed the concept and helped it become part of the common business vernacular, there were numerous precursors that laid the foundation for this widespread acceptance. Originating in the field of biology and gaining much of its definition from the concept of ontogenesis, a part of the science that focuses on the sequential development of organisms through a predictable series of developmental stages, the idea spread to other disciplines, namely history and economics, in the early 20th century (Hamrouni & Akkari, 2012; de Oliveira, Escrivao, Nagano, & Ferraudo, 2015). The first substantial recognition of the biological concept of development in the area of business is attributed to Mason Haire (1959) in a chapter, "Biological Models and Empirical Histories of the Growth of Organizations", written for a book on organizational theory. After the concept was introduced, other business authors joined the conversation and contributed their own

interpretations on the intricacies and numbers of stages involved (Lipi, 2013). Greiner (1972), in a paper predating the popularization of the term Organization Life Cycle, discussed a five stage (Creativity, Direction, Delegation, Coordination, & Collaboration) evolutionary process to which firms must adapt their management styles in order to continue growing. Adizes (1979) contributed tremendously to the growing body of research when he introduced his sequential, but interrelated, ten stage (Courtship, Infant, Go-Go or Toddler, Adolescence, Prime, Maturity, Aristocracy, Early Bureaucracy, Bureaucracy, and Death) lifecycle model comparing the growth of a business to the developmental stages of a human being. Four components; Produce, Administration, Entrepreneurial, and Integration; which are identified by the acronym PAEI, play different roles at different points depending upon the current stage of the firm. This model heavily focused on the managerial decisions that need to be addressed at various stages in order to keep the firm from becoming insolvent. This became a precursor to reviewing strategies that impact movement through the developmental stages rather than simply applying labels. No academic standard exists on the exact number of stages found in the business life cycle. The literature varies quite broadly discussing a range between three and ten. What did hold to a consensus viewpoint at the time was verified years later by Gurianova, Gurianova, and Mechtcheriakova's (2014) study of transactions costs showing the Organization Life Cycle as a series of progressive, sequential steps with critical transitions through which a company progresses.

Focus on early stages. Kimberly recognized an important gap in the growing body of literature with his case study contribution to the discussion published in 1979. Up unto this point, the majority of the literature on the topic had largely been conceptual (Steinmetz, 1969; Greiner, 1972; Azides, 1979). Kimberly decided to research a new medical education facility that was

being opened within the United States in order to gain insight into those early stages of an organization's life cycle. The author recognized the limitations of a singular case study on an atypical subject but it was at least a beginning towards a shift in focus beyond merely conceptualizations.

Concept popularized. Even with Kimberly's (1979) case study publication, the corporate-biological life cycle model was well established in the literature but was still largely conceptual in nature. Miller and Friesen (1984) were not the first, but probably the most noteworthy, to attempt to go beyond the purely theoretical and add a significant degree of quantification to this burgeoning area of study. Their thirty-six firm meta-analysis reviewed one hundred and sixty-one distinct time periods and fifty-four variables. The authors identified five distinct phases; Birth, Growth, Maturity, Revival, and Decline; within their subject base and distinct attributes common to each phase. Like much of the organizational success/failure literature of its time, the vast majority of their subjects were established, older companies or, in the case of the success failure literature, firms which were already defunct (Fredland & Morris, 1976; Massel, 1976). With the Organization Life Cycle gaining wider acceptance and research attempting to stretch beyond the purely theoretical, it was time for the next stage of development.

Although applying a lifecycle developmental lens to small business existed before 1983, Churchill and Lewis' application of the idea to small businesses seem to align with the *zeitgeist* of an era enduring high unemployment and factory closings, an early harbinger of the wave of off-shoring and outsourcing just beyond the horizon (Tempesti, 2016). Using different terminology from Miller and Friesen (1984), Churchill and Lewis coined their five stages as Existence, Survival, Success, Take-Off, and Resource Maturity. A company in the Existence stage is focused almost purely on survival. The owner *is* essentially the company and provides

the bulk of the energy, focus, direction, and funding (Churchill & Lewis, 1983; de Oliveira, Filho, Nagano, & Ferraudo, 2015). The Survival stage is exemplified by a workable business model that has both a proven product and customer base. Many companies can exist at this level for quite some time, even to the point of some owners maintaining this level of performance until retirement or discontinuance through heredity or sale. Depending upon the desire of the owner, this could be considered a successful business (Schoar, 2010; Toledo-Lopez, Diaz-Pichardo, Jimenez-Castaneda, & Sanchez-Medina, 2102). The new wave of lifestyle and encore entrepreneurs discussed in a future section brings validity to this idea whereas before, when only focusing on traditional business models, this stage would hardly be equated with success (Siemens, 2015). The third phase has been labeled the Success stage and consists of two substages: these are the Disengage (III-D) or Grow (III-G) (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). The company is both stable and profitable and allows the owner the choice to either Disengage and pursue other unrelated activities or take the necessary steps to grow the business to the next level. The choice to grow to the next level, either by selling or bringing in professional help, would clearly take the firm out of the realm of microenterprise. The final two stages of development, Take-Off and Resource Maturity, are generally outside the realm of a microenterprise and thus this project.

Complement and refinement. During the time the Organizational Life Cycle was undergoing refinement, multiple other models were introduced that either enhanced or competed with it. Numerous authors produced research with different numbers of stages in the life cycle and with different names (Lipi, 2013). Some authors introduced evidence of firms' ability to move back and forth between stages rather than in a solely sequential progression (Lester & Pernell, 2008). Later authors presented the idea that failure or success is more dependent upon

external influences rather than strategic decisions made while progressing through a stepwise series of developmental stages (Inzlicht & Berkman, 2015). As the field progressed, the concept has been studied in greater detail in regard to specific business disciplines and business activities (Gurianova, Gurianov, & Mechtcheriakova, 2014). These are interesting extensions of the subject but not relevant enough to this particular project as to warrant significant discussion.

The themes of sequential growth and critical transition periods are common to much of the life cycle literature (Lipi, 2013). Several authors have recognized a thread running through several of the life cycle models that connects a few common areas, often exposed at those critical transition points, that, depending upon the response of the owner, will lead to either discontinuance or progression; these areas are planning, marketing, management, and finance (Bodlaj & Rojsek, 2014; de Oliveria et al., 2015). It is this recognition of marketing as a potential problem area that led to the decision to further pursue this idea with additional research.

Microenterprise as a focus of importance. The literature has recently taken an interesting turn regarding microenterprise within the United States with a flurry of doctoral presentations (Spivey, 2015; Au, 2015; Premo-Hurt, 2016; Haynes, 2017). The preponderance of the research on this unique subset of small business has traditionally been performed in developing economies (Houston & Reuschke, 2017). There has been a growing upwards adjustment in interest worldwide regarding microfinance (Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014; Bourles, & Cozarenco, 2017; Edusah, 2017). The topic has only recently come to the attention of developed economy researchers within the last decade (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Jha & Depoo, 2017). On the other hand, business success/failure literature has a rich history in developed countries especially within the United States. Even small business,

firms with upwards of two hundred and fifty to five hundred employees depending on the definition at the time of publication, success/failure literature has a substantial history within developed economies (Jha & Depoo, 2017). A large proportion of the research has been retrospective and in aggregation across business disciplines in the search for quantifiable causations or correlations (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2014). It has also been primarily through the lens of rapid growth. The research matched the rapid growth and industrialization of the surrounding national environment, a focus on becoming a big corporation or at least being acquired by one. It wasn't until the corporate landscape changed so dramatically in developed countries that the importance of microenterprises to both national and individual economies became evident (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2016).

Influence on national economies. Evaluating the reasons for small business failure has been a focus of the academic literature for numerous decades and for good reason; small businesses are a significant driver of economic activity (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2014). Governments and intragovernmental organizations have recognized this economic importance and have responded in kind through both policy and direct intervention. Between 2003 and 2012, one hundred and forty-nine national economies reported to the World Bank the activation of three hundred and sixty-eight advantageous regulatory reforms directed at this market segment for the purpose of encouraging growth (Bruhn & McKenzie, 2014). The growing importance of the success for this particular segment of the economy became so palpable that in 2004 the World Bank Group recognized it with \$2.8 billion in grant support (Ayygari, Beck, & Demircuc-Kunt, 2007). Malaysia, according to research published by Munoz, Welsh, Chan, and Raven (2014), has twelve ministries and over forty governmental agencies devoted in varying capacities to assisting the development of small firms. This positive impact

influencing national economies has not been lost on the United States. A recent publication states that 20% of gross US job creation is attributable to small businesses while upwards of 50% of new jobs are the result of high growth industries which, although not limited to “small” by the traditional definition of number of employees, are often younger entities (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2014).

Influence on individual economies. These small firms are not only drivers of national economies but also individual economies as well. With the World Bank estimating that 75% of the world's economy originates from microenterprise, the importance of these unique entities to eradicating poverty has made them a focus of a growing amount of intervention and research (Jamak, Ghazali, & Sharif, 2017; Bharti, 2014). Microenterprise is a subset of small business that is commonly defined as firms with ten or fewer employees and commonly organized as sole proprietorships (Jha & Depp, 2017). The influence of this particular subset has become an important area of study and has mirrored the development of the original small business success/failure literature that started with Hutchinson, Hutchinson, and Newcomer's 1938 publication examining small manufacturing entities in Poughkeepsie, New York. The subject of small business success has gone through multiple developments and refinements along the way but has been primarily focused on developed, or industrialized, economies. Although always present in developed economies, the study of microenterprises initiated in developing economies because of their structural importance to those national economies (Munoz, Welsh, & Chan, 2015; Kulb, Hennink, Kiiti, & Mutinda, 2016). Whereas developed economies have traditionally been more dependent upon larger industrial firms, developing economies have traditionally relied on subsistence entrepreneurs and microenterprises. Due to both significant financial challenges (e.g., the 2008 Financial Crisis, legacy healthcare and pension costs) and structural

changes (e.g., decreased manufacturing and increased outsourcing) in the United States economy over the past several decades, microenterprise has enjoyed a resurgence of influence in both governmental and academic thinking (Contreras & Rupasingha, 2014). The Aspen Institute's Fund for Innovation, Effectiveness, Learning, and Dissemination (FIELD) started collecting domestic data on microenterprise organizational activity in 1991, a surrogate for interest in the segment. The first compilation of this information was published the following year and had one hundred and eight organizations listed; by 2002 the number had ballooned to six hundred and fifty and subsequently increased to eight hundred by 2010 (Jha & Depp, 2017). It is this high degree of growth and recognition of economic impact that has recently awoken developed economies, including the United States, to the importance of studying the economic contribution of microenterprise to national economies and the nuances that encourage their sustainability.

Regional impact of microenterprise. The concept of microenterprise is not restricted to one country or region of the world. It is truly a worldwide phenomenon, one that has strong roots and is still growing (Bharti, 2014; Gray & Jones, 2015). Just as the vast majority of success/failure small business research has been done in the developed, particularly the United States, world, the majority of microenterprise research has been performed in the developing world (Ahmad, 2017). The relevance of this important subset of small business has only been recently acknowledged by the United States and other developed economies as worthy of attracting academic interest (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011). A brief, global acknowledgment of this subset has relevance due the breadth of research performed outside of the United States and due to its origin as a topic within academia.

Developing economies. Developing countries are acutely aware of the importance of both small and micro business to their national economies. Mexican government statistics reveal that

95% of all registered, unregistered would certainly drive the numbers even higher, companies fall into the categories of either micro or small business and generate 52% of that country's Gross Domestic Product (Toledo-Lopez, Diaz-Pichardo, Jimenez-Castaneda, & Sanchez-Medina, 2012). According to Nag and Das (2014), micro, small, and medium enterprises account for 80% of the Indian Gross Domestic Product and contribute 40% of its exports. Small to medium enterprises in Malaysia account for 99.2 % (or 543,880) of the 548,267 registered businesses; microenterprises make up 80% (or 435,104) of those registered entities (Jamak, Ghazali, & Sharif, 2017). Alom, Abdullah, Moten, and Azam (2016) make a strong argument for the importance of these formal micro/small/medium enterprises when they enumerate the estimated jobs, 125 million worldwide of which 89 million are found in emerging economies, which these sectors contribute to the worldwide economy. De Mel, McKenzie, and Woodruff (2013) only expand the argument of their importance when they show evidence that one fifth of single employee firms remain informal, unregistered for taxation purposes, in Sri Lanka. It is estimated that in the single state of Minas Geras in Brazil, according to Andrade, Bruhn, and McKenzie (2013), 72% of businesses are informal and could be categorized as a microenterprise. The evidence, regardless of taking the formal or informal perspective, reveals the enormous importance that these smaller entities have on both national and individual economies. Ironically, the research trajectory in this arena mirrors the early small business success/failure research prevalent in developed economies. It is largely quantitative aggregations across business disciplines designed to compile statistics and examine them for generalizable causations and correlations.

Developed economies. The interest in microenterprise expanded to developed economies, specifically the European Union, as the practices within former Soviet Bloc nations became more

viewable due to European integration and increased immigration from the developing world introduced new perspectives on what constitutes a business (Delalic, & Oruc, 2014). Stan (2014) shows that in 2012, across the entire twenty-seven country European Union, small and micro businesses accounted for 49.2% of all employment. In 2012, small to medium sized firms contributed over €6 trillion to the trading blocks' economy ("Eurostat. Statistics Explained", 2018). Gray and Jones, two authors based out of the United Kingdom, estimated in a recent 2015 publication that small and microenterprises in the European Union accounted for approximately 87 million jobs. A further breakdown of the same data reveals that within the six northern European countries of Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Norway, microenterprise contributes between 19.7% (Latvia on the lower end) and 34.9% (Norway on the upper end) of the Gross Value Added (GVA) to each respective national economy ("Eurostat. Statistics Explained", 2018). These firms also contribute between 17% (Denmark-lower end) and 34% (Latvia-upper end) of all fulltime employment ("Eurostat. Statistics Explained", 2018).

The importance of small business to national economies is not a phenomenon isolated only to European democracies. Tee, Dumay, and Kokubu (2015) present government data in their research that reveals small to medium enterprises playing a substantial role in the economies of Hong Kong and Japan where they provide 1.2 million jobs, equating to 47% of private sector employment and 99.7% of all business entities. This data equates small to medium business contributing to 70% of total employment (Tee, Dumay, & Kokuku, 2015). Korea, a country dependent upon heavy manufacturing, has begun to recognize the importance of small to medium enterprises and is beginning to direct government assets to assist their development (Choi & Lim, 2017). It is extremely difficult to completely separate the statistics on micro, small,

and medium businesses due to the varying definitions and foci of the different entities involved in preparing the research.

United states. A 2010 document provided by the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) and based upon the most current census data reports that small businesses are responsible for 99.7% of employer firms and 42.9% of all private sector jobs. Memili, Hanqing, Chrisman, and de Massis (2015) reviewed American state level data collected from 2006 to 2010 which revealed the importance of how having a healthy mix of small to medium sized firms within an economy, specifically family owned firms which are often microenterprises, contributes to economic growth by providing a stimulus for innovation and competition. A 2014 article authored by Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, and Miranda on the dynamic role that entrepreneurs play in the United States economy provides even more granular support by stating that "startups and high-growth firms account for about 70 percent of firm-level gross job creation in a typical year" (p.8). The proposition that innovative startups, which happen to be dominated by smaller firms, have a positive impact on an economy is well accepted. Although always present, microenterprise as a subset of small business has only recently attracted attention due to various reasons that will be discussed at length later in this paper.

Relevant definitions. As the literature on this topic has developed over the decades, the terminology has gone through multiple changes and refinements. Culture, business, and government have influenced these changes. Size and sustainability are the areas most commonly impacted.

Size of firm. Although the definitions on size change from region to region, micro too small to medium sized businesses provide tremendous value to their respective national economies. Developing common definitions for this area of research has been difficult. Earlier

researchers, predominately located in developed economies, recognized the importance of evaluating the success factors of small to medium sized business due to their significant contribution to the economy (Beaver, 2003). As the Western world industrialized, the research interest focused on those entities; large, fast growing corporations; which garnered the most attention and excitement. This left little room for microenterprise as an area of study. Most of the literature of that time utilized the SME acronym for Small Medium Enterprise, although Small Manufacturing Enterprise has been commonly interchanged depending upon the circumstances. Since the Western economies were industrializing, manufacturing became the focus of research into smaller firms. As manufacturing decreased in the United States, the emphasis of research shifted to the next exciting and fast growing area, technology. The facets that determine whether a firm is small or medium is bit more complicated. The United States Small Business Administration typical classifies a small business as one with five hundred or less employees ("Frequently Asked Questions About Small Business", 2012). The Republic of South Africa, which additionally differentiates by industry as well as size, codified in their 2003 National Small Business Amendment Act that a retail small business may have up to fifty employees and still be considered small (Strydom, 2015). Moldova uses three determinants to categorize its small to medium enterprises: number of employees, annual sales volume, and value of financial assets (Doga-Mirzac, 2013). Ivani (2012) states that Japan places the employee count for a small business between thirty and three hundred depending on industry. The European Union provides a more specific classification by observing headcount, turnover, and balance sheet attributes (Commission, European, 2015). The following table was taken from Stan's 2014 paper on small business and economic development (Table 1).

Table 1

European Union Criteria for Micro, Small, & Medium Business table - Sefania Anca Stan
available at <http://sceco.ub.ro/index.php/SCECO/article/view/238/241>

As shown above, microenterprises, also referred to as microbusinesses, are most commonly classified in developed economies by multiple criteria with the number of employees set at ten or fewer. In an early analysis of Appalachian microenterprises in Maryland and Virginia, Mattare, Monahan, and Shaw (2011) only included firms with five or fewer employees. No start-up capitalization requirements were recognized in that research. The United States Small Business Administration, through a recent decision, officially classifies a microenterprise as one having five or fewer employees and initiating operations with <\$35,000 in starting capitalization (Jha & Depoo, 2017). The term MSME, for Micro/Small/Medium Enterprise, has started to appear in the more recent literature as microenterprises have begun to garner greater interest (Alom, Abdullah, Moten, & Azam, 2016). The definition for microenterprise appears to be somewhat fluid depending largely upon time of the publication, nation of origin, economic conditions, and the interests of the researchers but often is composed of an employee count of <5 or <10, and a limit on startup capitalization.

Sustainability. One of the first obstacles to describing sustainability within this particular subset of business is developing an acceptable definition. Schoar (2010) divides entrepreneurs into two classes: “subsistence entrepreneurs” are those who largely seek to provide income for themselves and family members and “transformational entrepreneurs” who “aim to create large, vibrant businesses that grow much beyond the scope of an individual's subsistence needs and

provide jobs and income for others" (pg. 58). Either can be an example of success depending upon the intentions of the owner (Toledo-Lopez, Diaz-Pichardo, Jimenez-Castaneda, & Sanchez-Medina, (2012; Wennberg & Detinne, 2015).

Subsistence entrepreneur. The potential of microenterprise to lift individuals out of poverty has captured the interests of governments, researchers, and philanthropists because of the overwhelming need that envelopes most developing nations or resides within resistant pockets of those that are wealthier. Research reveals that within emerging economies, 60% of the Gross Domestic Product is produced by subsistence entrepreneurs operating outside of the formal marketplace (Venugopal, Viswanathan, & Jung, (2015). Hallam, Zanelli, and Liseran (2017), in a recent presentation at a forum on entrepreneurship, place the rate at 70%. Webb, Bruton, Tihanyi, and Ireland (2013) estimate that the informal market contributes to the Gross Domestic Product of the following countries at the following rates: 39.8% in Brazil, 46.1% in Malaysia, 23.1% in India, and 57.9% in Nigeria. Developed economies have taken increasing interest in microenterprise over the years as their economic landscapes have changed and produced their own versions of the subsistence entrepreneur. Immigrants tend towards entrepreneurship because of the obstacles that are inherent to migrating across borders: gaps in language, education, skills, and certifications (Lofstrom, 2017). Many of these endeavors initiate as a microbusiness. Negative forces responsible for encouraging micro entrepreneurship in Western economies include such things as disruption in employment caused by outsourcing, offshoring, and the rise of the “gig” economy (Görg & Görlich, 2015). Although the benefits and consequences of globalization and offshoring can be argued, their impact on wage stagnation in developed economies through competition for labor or market restructuring is difficult to ignore in the rustbelt states of the Midwest. Tempesti (2016), in his review of wage disparities between high

and low skilled workers in the United States, reveals a precipitous drop in wages for low skilled workers that correlates with the increased outsourcing of low skilled production. Necessity often provides fuel for innovation. Displaced or struggling current employees have ample incentives to look for new ways to either replace lost income or supplement current ones that are either stagnant or tenuous (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011). Microenterprise offers that opportunity.

Lifestyle entrepreneur. Subsistence entrepreneurs are not just a staple of the developing world. Houston and Reuschke (2017) discuss the European “lifestyle” micro entrepreneur in their discussion on urban microenterprise. The authors link it to the “process of 'downshifting' out of pressured jobs into ways of making a living better matched to personal preferences and values, which often involves a well-educated professional moving from a city to a rural areas for lifestyle reasons and to run a business" (Houston & Reuschke, 2017, p. 3202). Hefer, Cant, and Wiid (2015) in a survey of small business owners on motivation recorded that the desire to live a preferred lifestyle as one of the top four reasons for starting a business. According to Siemens (2107), geographic constraints that limit profits and growth allow for financially marginal businesses to subsist for extended periods.

Encore entrepreneur. Often, displaced older workers or individuals who simply desire more control over personal financial situations will become entrepreneurs in their 50's or 60's. The SBA has labeled these individuals “encore entrepreneurs” and note that they currently represent the fastest growing segment of entrepreneurship (SBA, 2013; Crawford & Naar, 2017). The fastest growing segment of workers within the hospitality arena (e.g. Uber, Lyft, and AirBnB) of the new gig economy are those fifty years and older (Miller, 2015). The motivation for this subset is not the same as for the one about to be discussed so the determinations of success, failure, and sustainability need to be managed accordingly.

Transformational entrepreneur. Hurst and Pugsley (2011) noted in their work that many young entrepreneurs do not seek to create businesses for the purpose of transformational growth but rather to achieve some personal goal or to support a desired lifestyle. The transformational entrepreneur's intent is to create something follows the classic small to large or buyout trajectory. Owner intent appears to play a vital role in defining both what sustainability looks like and to what degree it informs the decisions of the business owners (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2014). Some general measurements of sustainability are well accepted because they validate the viability of the enterprise. As the preceding paragraph mentions some non-financial measurements of success such as flexibility and personal satisfaction, common financial measurements of success are, e.g. profitability and job creation, are increasingly focused on in the literature (Khosa & Kalitanyi, 2016). A tremendous amount of the definition of success or sustainability depends upon culture and that can differ not just between countries but even within them.

Reasons for small business failure. The potential reasons for the failure of a small business are plentiful. A deeper understanding of these phenomena spurred the early success/failure literature within the United States. Not only plentiful, they are also difficult to summarize for a variety of reasons. As mentioned above, the definition of failure is not as clear as one might think (Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Bujisic, 2015; Houston & Reuschke, 2017; Crawford & Naar, 2017). If an owner has dreams of becoming a transformational entrepreneur and building a multi-billion dollar global franchise but plateaus at \$ 250 million in revenue and a strong domestic presence, is that considered a failure (Wennberg & DeTienne, 2014)? Would an individual who prefers not to relocate from her traditional home, and who also desires flexibility in combination with a reasonable secondary income, be considered a failure

with an artisanal sourdough bread startup that provides respectable employment for extended family members and comfortable lifestyle (Siemens, 2017)? Perspective on the concept of failure and owner's intent can dramatically change a definition.

The substantial portion of the literature on the topic of microenterprise or small business sustainability utilizes some measure of discontinuance of operations or insolvency/bankruptcy as a surrogate marker for failure (Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Bujisic, 2015). Invariably, as soon as definitions in the research are given, exceptions begin to emerge. Wennberg and DeTienne (2015) make special note that in the world of high-tech startups, discontinuance of ownership through a buyout from a larger entity is often the goal of a transformational entrepreneur and a marker of success, not failure. Watson and Everett (1998) offer an excellent approach to categorizing the reasons for small business failure by starting with the concepts of exogenous versus endogenous.

Exogenous. Marshall, Niehm, Sydnor and Schrank (2015) state it well when they say "exogenous reasons include factors beyond the control of the owner and stem from 'outside sources' such as competition, unexpected demand, adverse economic conditions, and disasters" (p. 332). These are acts that are so unexpected and extreme that is almost impossible to have risk mitigation plans in place in case of their advent. For every uplifting VIP Men's Suits story, a Manhattan business almost destroyed by the 9/11 terrorist attack now rising out of the ashes, there are others who could not weather the disaster. According to Schrank, Marshall, Hall-Philips, Wiatt, and Jones (2013), 19% of businesses in the impacted area ceased operations after Hurricane Katrina.

Endogenous. An endogenous cause for failure is something over which the owner has a greater sphere of control (Marshall, Niehm, Sydnor & Schrank, 2015). This is where the body of

literature starts to take shape providing in-depth analysis and potential causation (Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Bujisic, 2015). Endogenous reasons for failure generally bifurcate into two areas: financial or management (Lussier, 1996).

Financial. Insolvency, or bankruptcy, is the primary reason that most firms fail when considering a financial reason but even that definition can be quite broad considering the myriad of potential underlying economic causes. Tascon and Castano (2017) in their meta-analysis of twenty-three papers revealed (Table 2) the following specific reasons for financial failure for smaller firms. Hyder and Lussier's (2015) analysis of one hundred and forty-three small businesses and microenterprises showed that a lack of capital accounted for the majority of firm failures. Worku (2015) confirms lack of capital as the most significant financial related cause for failure in his analysis of three hundred and eleven tourism based micro, small, and medium sized firms. Where earlier research of financial failure tends to focus the specifics of accounting (Wichmann, 1983), recent literature specific to microenterprises reveals that lack or access to capital appears the greatest obstacle.

Table 2

Variables in Small Business Failure

Economic features	Items	%	Num. ratios
Indebtedness	44	16.36	26
Asset structure	43	15.99	21
Profitability	41	15.24	22
Asset turnover	34	12.64	21
Equilibrium assets-liabilities	33	12.27	18
Profit margin	28	10.41	16
Other ratios	38	14.13	23
Variables (other than ratios)	8	2.97	8
Total	269	100.00	155

Note: Reproduced and adapted with permission (See Appendix C) (Tascon & Castano, Table 1, p. 57, 2017).

A lack of credit availability was one of the first recognized variables in the quest to understand failure and microenterprise (Hyder & Lussier, 2015). Governments and intergovernmental agencies have allocated billions in various currencies to encourage growth in this area but the findings are unclear as to the ability of microcredit to turn the tide on poverty (Mamun, 2016). In a survey of three hundred and ninety-eight clients of microcredit endeavors performed by Rokhim, Sukoco Sikatan, Wibison Lubis, and Setyawan (2106), results revealed a reduction in poverty rates that were linear. This led researchers to believe that other factors beyond that just of microcredit availability was important to the success of the recipient firms.

Despite 2005 being declared the International Year of Microcredit and Muhammad Yunus winning the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in founding the Grameen Bank, a microcredit institution, studies such as Guerin, D'Espallier, and Venkatasubramanian's (2016) ten year review of one thousand nine hundred and twenty-nine individuals in rural India show little change in the alleviation of poverty or generation of employment. Although some successes have been logged, researchers have expanded their reach to include co-variables to microcredit such as gender, religion, motivation, and training (Kulb, Hennink, Kiiti, & Mutinda, 2016; Ashta & Hannam, 2017; Bourles & Cozarenco, 2017; Bharti, 2104)

Management. One of the challenges in discussing the topic of management is similar to earlier discussions about size and entrepreneurial intent, defining the topic. The concepts of Management and Marketing are often combined in the current literature (Wagner, 2013; Radipere, & van Scheers, 2014). The Management concepts studied are often a mix of the practical and personal. Character and personality traits are measured just as often as skillsets (Spillan, Kara, King, & McGinnis, 2013; da Silva, Amboni, Ortigara, & Costa, 2014; Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014).

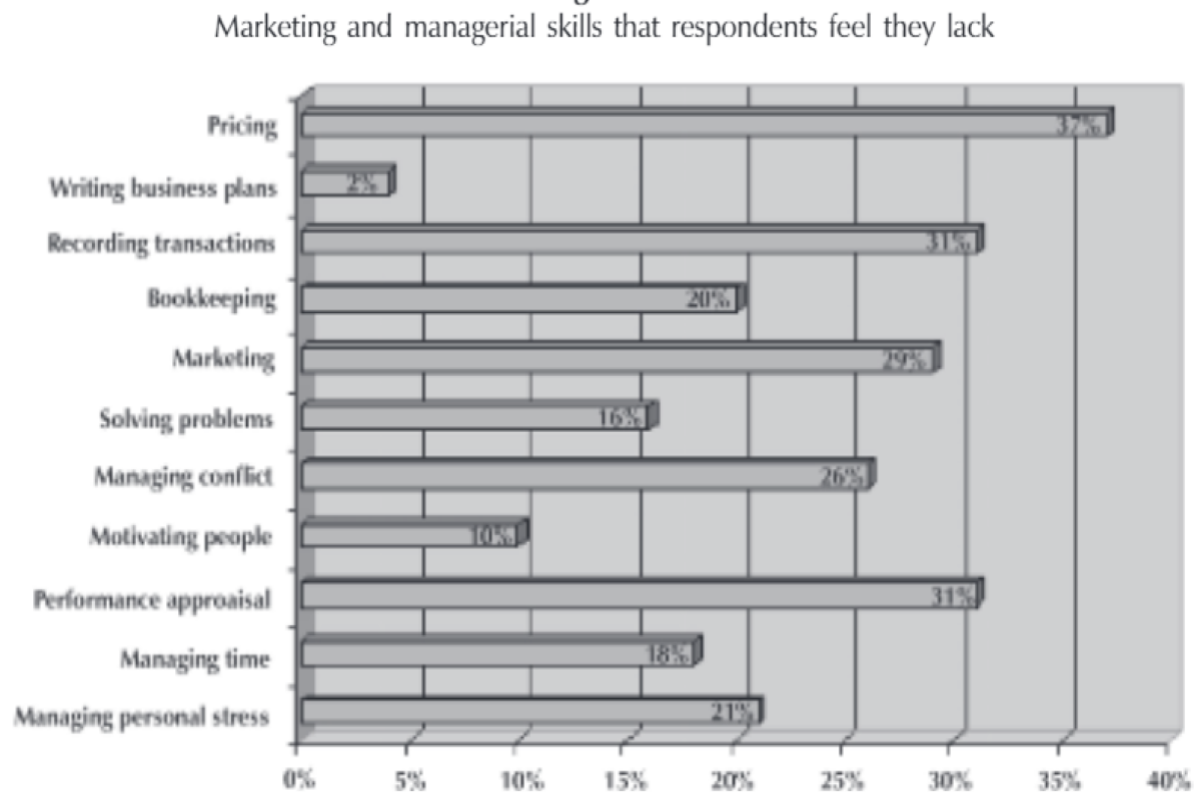
Although part of a multi-armed study of one hundred and fifty-one microenterprises, Munoz, Welsh, Chan, and Raven (2015) showed that an understanding of key management activities correlated with performance. The following chart shows the ten indicators utilized by the researchers. Several of the concepts delineated are commonly assigned within the sphere of Marketing such as pricing, develop products, advertising, promotion, and customer service.

Table 3

Key Management Activities in 151 Microenterprises Table – Munoz, Welsh, Chan, & Raven available at <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1698157632/9973DA9A53D04093PQ/11?accountid=12085>

Radipere and van Scheers (2014), in a one thousand subject study of microenterprise, break down Management into four categories: human relations, competitiveness and control, innovativeness, and entrepreneurial ability. The results show a direct correlation between the level of management ability, as self-described by the participants, and business success or failure. The following chart is taken from Radipere and van Scheers (2014) study which shows the level of generalization utilized in the approach.

Table 4

Specific Skills that Respondents Feel They Lack

Note: Reproduced and adapted with permission (See Appendix D) (Radipere & van Scheers, Figure 3, p. 407, 2005).

There has been discussion in the literature over the concept of Entrepreneurial Orientation for several decades and its role in the success/failure dichotomy of small entities (Aguilar Valenzuela, Nuno de la Parra, Montiel-Campos, & Alvarado Acuna, 2013). The aforementioned authors, in their three hundred and two subject analysis of microenterprise used the measurements of "innovation, risk taking, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy" in their research (p. 14). Other authors have taken a slightly different approach and started reviewing those concepts associated with Entrepreneurial Orientation through the lens of class, education, gender, and tribe. Villanger (2015) researched social position and its impact on microenterprise entrepreneurialism. Zafar and Khan (2014) reviewed the impact of education and

gender, amongst other variables, on entrepreneurial success. Kulb, Hennink, Kiiti, and Mutinda (2016) evaluated microenterprise through the lens of a specific people group. The search of commonalities of management characteristics upon which to predict success shows some similarities but has localized influencing attributes.

Marketing. The genesis of the research into the Marketing specific impact on microenterprises initiates from a very broad perspective. Radipere and van Scheers' (2016) research reveals that 29% of their survey respondents admit to a lack of marketing skills. The specific elements, except for pricing which was addressed separately, of Marketing were not defined. Since this research was more wide-ranging in focus, combining Management and Marketing together is helpful only for providing general guidance. With a positive correlation drawn between entrepreneurial success and marketing execution, understanding the nuances of the discipline grow in importance (Jayawarna, Jones, Lam, & Phua, 2014; Solé, 2013).

The marketing mix. The concept of the Marketing Mix can be traced back to Harvard Professor Neil H. Borden who taught and wrote on the twelve elements contained within Marketing: advertising, branding, channels of distribution, display, fact-finding analysis, personal selling, promotions, packaging, product planning, pricing servicing, and physical handling (Riggs, 2015). Multiple versions of the Marketing Mix have been and are still being produced (Salam, Inam, & Awan, 2015). These concepts have been studied and debated over the years but have generally been categorized, each with their own mix of variables, into what has commonly been referred to as the “Four P's” of the classical Marketing Mix: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Kavanagh, 2014).

Product. Several authors have made attempts to provide some illumination of Product in the context of microenterprise. One of the variables evaluated by Munoz, Welsh, Chan, and

Raven's (2015) one hundred and fifty-one subject study on microenterprise is stated as “Develop Products”. Unfortunately, the authors go into little detail as to how that term translates into actual practice. The specific business foci of the one hundred and fifty-one microenterprises is not discussed. Are these businesses food carts, handcrafted baskets, or involved in eco-tourism? The product for one can be quite different from the product of another. Some definition of “Develop Products” is provided when the authors reference a failure of market research in an opening passage but the mention is only in passing. This type of research is excellent at providing an overarching perspective, especially since it was combined with research on Entrepreneurial Orientation and Management tactics, of microenterprise but is almost a clarion call for more specific research into specific marketing principles and practices regarding Product (Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014). Khan (2015), in his survey of forty-two street food vendors operating as microenterprises and their fifty-two customers uncovered some interesting insights into the concept of Product and how it impacted their particular market. Customers were primarily concerned with specialty of the food, convenience of location, and cheap price. This data was collected from entrepreneurs focusing on consumers at the lower end of the market and it is interesting to note that the concept of Product, in this case the specialty of food, resonates equally with Price. Church and Oakely (2018) have explored the role of Product and microenterprise in regard to a hyper-differentiation strategy utilizing the internet.

Two other subcomponents of Product, Features and Services, also resonated in this study. Although not labeled as such, Khan (2015) discusses, from the vendors' perspective, the importance of locating near to both customers and suppliers. As these were fresh foods sold in a quick turnover fashion due to spoilage, the vendors were revealing a remarkable sense of street-smart understanding of the concept of supply chain management. Although the focus of their

study was on “Business DNA”, what other authors have coined Entrepreneurial Orientation, da Silva, Amboni, Ortigara, and Costa (2014) show in their research that one of the most relevant determinants of success was having a clear understanding of the focus of the business. This was further defined as having a knowledge of both product and market. Even though research has demonstrated the need for a business to understand the needs of their customers (Hult, Morgenson, Morgan, Mithas, & Fornell, 2017) microbusinesses, smaller and often closer to the consumer, show the same weakness as larger firms. It is interesting that in a study largely focused on motivational factors for success that one of the core Marketing Mix elements, Product, takes such a prominent role.

Price. Often considered the most important “P” of the Marketing Mix, Price is essentially what a customer is willing to pay or depart with in order to acquire a good or service (Kahn, 2014). Pricing takes into account the overall strategy which, amongst other features, includes the components of list price, discounts, allowances, credits, and terms of payment (Bijakšić, Markić, & Bevanda, 2015). Much has been written in business literature on the concept of Price but little specifics are to be found when discussing microenterprises. Cant, Wiid, and Catherine (2016) provide a solid review of pricing methodology with eighty-eight small businesses. The authors do not define small in the study and utilize the problematic acronym of SME but the concepts revealed are useful when reviewing the generalized literature surrounding microenterprise and marketing.

Figure 2. External and Internal Influences on the Pricing Strategy – Brassington & Pettitt
available at <https://catalogue.pearsoned.co.uk/educator/product/Essentials-of-Marketing/97802737276434.page>

Subsistence microenterprises, which are the predominate form, are highly impacted by the basic factors involving consumers, competitors, and costs (Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Bujisic, 2015). Khan (2015) makes note of the importance of both low cost and low price, as compared to the competition, in relation to success amongst his work with food vendors. Cant, Wiid, and Catherine (2016), through an in-depth questionnaire solely on pricing, uncover that 55.8% of entrepreneurs use competitors' prices as benchmarks, 50% and 49.4%, respectively, monitor and change prices based upon fuel costs and inflation, and only 32.9% will match a lower priced competitor. This reveals a high degree of responsiveness regarding Price amongst small businesses that is environmentally appropriate since fuel costs and inflation are geographically dependent.

Bodlaj and Rojsek (2014) reveal a different pricing savviness in their study of twenty-five small firms that shows a flexibility that bases pricing on "how much the customer is willing to pay" rather than directly on volatile inputs (p.110). Price elasticity was listed as the most

important generator of sales in a twenty-six month, five thousand eight hundred product study of microenterprises published in 2017 by Barreiros Porto, da Rocha Costa, & Alberto de Morais Watanabe. Radipere and van Scheers (2104), in their one thousand subject study of micro firms do something similar to what Munoz, Welsh, Chan, and Raven did in their 2015 research. They are attempting to take such an overarching look at the sustainability of microenterprises that they produce results which beg for greater research into the uncovered details. A good outcome of this study was the recognition of Pricing as a specific category with which subjects felt they lacked competency.

Place. Place generally refers to product distribution, how to get the product to the customer. The complexity of this process is largely dependent on the context. According to Cant, Wiid, and Catherine (2106), price is partially a product of distribution and the number of channel members, and their required profit margin, through which a product must pass to reach the consumer. Subsistence microenterprises, such as Khan's (2015) food cart vendors have very short distribution chains but his research show that Place, as in the strategic location of the cart between suppliers and customers, is a significant variable to success. Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, and Bujisic (2015) confirm the significance of location with their brick and mortar restaurant research. According to Radipere & van Scheers' (2014) survey of microenterprise owners, 80% respondents denote “market locality” as having a significant impact on whether a firm fails or succeeds (p.406). In that same study, 84% of owners complained about ineffectively marketing their products but oddly enough the two concepts, market locality and marketing as conceptualized through Place, are never associated and researched together (p. 406). Church and Oakley (2018) discuss the importance of virtual placement of products when evaluating artisan products and a hyper-differentiation customer strategy. Like many of the other specifics of the

Marketing Mix within the context of microenterprise, the research findings are often tangential to the main focus of the study.

Promotion. Promotion is usually viewed through the lens of each of its constituent components: advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing. Khan (2014) goes to the next level when he puts these concepts into practice and comments "a successful product or service means nothing unless the benefit of such a service can be communicated clearly to the target market" (p.101). Although these components can be approached individually for design and implementation, integrating these already interconnected elements can lead to both greater efficiency and effectiveness (Matovic, Knezevic, & Brankov, 2015). The research into the Promotion element of the classical Marketing Mix in the area of microenterprise is similar to the research with the other three elements, generally a small part of an overall package. Revisiting Khan's (2017) study of food vendors reveals hints of Promotion even though the practitioner might not recognize it as such. Whereas a strategic location can be viewed through the lens of Place, it also falls under advertising as the only signage a food street vendor may possess is the actual food cart or truck. Khan's study reveals that strategic location choice is one of the strongest measurements to predict marketing understanding of the vendor and business success.

One of the greatest boons to microenterprise growth in the United States has been the rapid adoption and commercialization of the Internet. The Small Business Administration estimates that microenterprises account for 88% of the United States twenty eight million firms (Viek, 2014). The ability to reach a national, or even global, market without the capitalization required to build a brick and mortar footprint has allowed microentrepreneurs to proliferate (Stan, 2014). Ironically, these microenterprises fueled by the reach of the Internet have made this

segment of business the sole job creator over the past decade. Vieck (2016) notes that from 2004 to 2010, businesses with between one and four employees created 5.5 million jobs while the largest companies, those with five hundred or more employees, lost a net 1.8 million jobs. Etsy, an online market for specialty handicrafts, facilitated \$2.6 billion in transitions in 2015 (Church & Oakley, 2018).

Advertising and customer service. Munoz, Welsh, and Chan (2015), in their review of factors related to the success of microenterprises reveal that “advertising and promotion” and “customer service”, as possible surrogates for personal selling and public relations, were the number one and four, respectively, statistically significant key management activities that contributed to firm success. Online advertising generally falls in to one of three categories: search advertising, classified advertising or display advertising (Goldfarb, 2014). Although many microbusinesses are largely local and not hugely reliant on the Internet for generating revenue, it is this electronic medium that has allowed the explosion in this subset of firms and shows tremendous future opportunity for the business segment (Osakwe, Chovancova, & Agu, 2016). The few companies not using this medium will soon need to consider it as an option because as a sign of the future, Yellow Pages will stop printing a hard copy as of January 2019 (Tooth, 2017).

Two forms of advertising, display advertising and social media, are relatively new approaches available to microenterprises. Display advertising is of tremendous interest to microenterprises because it has a tremendous ability to reach a highly targeted audience. This form of advertising takes advantage of the unique identifiers assigned to both computers and advertisements. Where early internet technology allowed for generalizations of target customer segments (middle aged upper income), the technology has become more sophisticated thus

allowing for highly exquisite targeting ("...married women living in Iowa aged 60–64") (Golfarb, 2014, p. 117). Richmond, Rader, and Lanier (2107) credit the Internet with being responsible for 21% of GDP growth between 2005 and 2011. The medium has become an imperative for microenterprise success. Social media is another important element of online advertising that has become crucial to the success of microenterprise. Rambe and Retumetse (2017) note that 80% of college aged individuals prefer peer referrals for products over direct approaches from marketers. Through this peer-to-peer social media activity, brand awareness, a precursor of brand loyalty, microenterprises have a tremendous ability to influence consumer purchasing decisions (Rambe & Retumetse, 2017).

Sales force and personal selling. As the research migrates to developed markets, this element of Promotion begins to take a prominent role. A study on rural, agricultural, small business development has as one of its salient points the promotional component of personal selling when it discusses shortening the supply chain by introducing direct sales to customers through farm shops and roadside stands (Delalic & Oruc, 2014). In one of the rare studies on promotional techniques involving microenterprises within the United States, Mattare, Monahan, and Shah (2016) compare the utilization of a sales force with one thousand firms in the state of Maryland. Not surprising to the authors, the majority of firms that replied mentioned that the lack of sales help impacted revenues negatively. Many firms did not reply to that questionnaire which led the authors to conclude that those owners were single employee entities and not in a position to hire additional salespeople. Church and Oakley (2018) note that the high degree of customization required with the online hyper-differentiation customer strategy is similar to having salesforce involvement in the purchasing process.

Due to the small size of microenterprises, sales and sales force structure can take on numerous appearances. Small Wisconsin vintners have found success by joining forces through a co-operative that shares services, one of which is reaping benefits through a common wholesaling network (Coren & Clamp, 2014). The rise of the “gig” or “sharing economy”, personified by such names as Uber, Lyft, AirBnB, Freelancer and Peopleperhour, has created an entire population of entrepreneurs, hundreds of millions potentially globally, who lie somewhere on the continuum between contract employee and sole proprietor (Kassi & Lehdonvirta, 2018). Recent data collected in the United States reveals 53 million Americans are currently freelancing and trend data estimates that number will reach 75 million in ten years (Murray & Ball, 2016). In Every interaction in this new economy, either through a twenty minute car sharing service or via an email from a customer to an artisan on Etsy.com, becomes a potential sales call. Just as the internet has changed the landscape for what is possible with microenterprise, it has also changed the definition of what is an interaction with a customer. The traditional word-of-mouth approach for building a business has transitioned to an electronic word-of-mouth where satisfied customers become salespeople with exponential reach. New metrics are being developed to help discern the impact of this virtual sales approach. Moe and Trusov (2011) identified volume, as measured by the sheer number of postings, and valence, measured by the degree of positivity ratings, as two primary metrics in helping to determine success with electronic mediums. Unfortunately, neither volume nor valence can close a sale so more metrics were created to measure the efficacy of previous metrics. Entropy measures the dispersion of postings (volume) across different user groups while variance looks to find statistical relevance between the measures of valence (Caderio, 2015).

Public relations. The owners of microenterprises wear numerous hats and thus the literature, at least in the United States, is very weak on the role of this particular element of the Marketing Mix. This dearth of domestic literature does reveal the overall public relations problem that accompanies microenterprise in the developed, specifically the United States, world. Although well recognized in the developing world for its importance at alleviating poverty and creating jobs, the United States has only recently started to recognize the value of microenterprise. It was not until as recently as 1991 that the Small Business Administration carved out a category for businesses with ten or fewer employees (Jha & Depoo, 2017). Before this time microenterprises were simply lumped in with Small Business which ranged upwards to a maximum five hundred employees. Jha and Depoo (2017) also note the exponential growth of microenterprise development organizations (MDOs), an eight fold increase from 1992 to 2010, and associated microfinancing, a trebling of loan recipients from 2008 to 2013. Many of these MDOs are localized to areas that have been largely affected by corporate restructuring, offshoring, and outsourcing (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Jennings, 2014). Microenterprise itself is starting to gain attention and in need of developing a public relations strategy such has already occurred in the developing world.

Retirement, by necessity, and lifestyle, by choice, are becoming driving forces for the resurgent interest in microenterprise. The Great Recession saw unemployment rates for workers fifty-five and older reach levels not seen since the late 1940s and long-term unemployment reaching 60% (Rix, 2016). Miller (2015), in his review of work and retirement, sees an uptick in older workers looking for secondary employment to supplement existing incomes. Siemens (2015) notes that some entrepreneurs start microenterprises for lifestyle purposes and will continue to operate even though the financial benefit is marginal. Due to these influencers,

microenterprise is beginning to gain adoption as a viable option within the framework of small business.

Direct marketing. Although the classic approach to direct marketing, targeted mailers, is still a vital component of the Promotion element of the Marketing Mix, a significant portion has moved to the Internet along with many other businesses. A recent survey of AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International) accredited colleges and universities show a 13% drop in the number of courses offered on direct marketing (Roxas & Roxas, 2016). Pick (2013) shows that 93% of marketers utilize social media as part of their overall strategy and 75% say that number will only increase. Artisan products purchase websites such as Etsy.com command an average of a 38% price advantage than similarly mass manufactured items (Church & Oakley, 2018). Direct marketing has not disappeared so much as it has evolved in its method of delivery.

Conclusion. The literature on marketing within the context of microenterprises is far more reticulated than linear in its development (Servon, 2006). It finds its genesis with the small business success/failure literature of the middle 20th century. The context of that research was the rapidly developing industrial nations of Western democracies (Jha & Depoo, 2017). According to the United States Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy, small is still defined as upwards of five hundred employees (2012). Even though small businesses and, especially, microenterprises have always existed, they were lost in the rush of rapid growth and size largely being the main measures of success.

The literature of that era was quite valuable and took on different orientations as the research matured. There was research into general reasons for failure that were largely retrospective in nature. Definitions developed attempting to define failure and success. The

specifics that came out of the research were then studied in greater detail. Factors that were once thought tangential, topics such as gender, race, and ethnicity grew in importance and focus (Rosa, Carter, & Hamilton, 1996; Samuels, Joshi, & Demory, 2008). Subsistence entrepreneurialism, and thus microenterprise, was something for the developing world. The term is generally credited to Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, the founder of the microcredit Grameen Bank (Khan, 2015). Just as with the success/failure literature of the developed nations before it, the circumstances created the opportunity. The developing world was suffering from extreme poverty and subsistence entrepreneurship was the organic result of that desperation.

The literature on the subject initiated by aggregating reasons for failure across all business disciplines and looking for generalized causations. At first, microcredit appeared to be an answer to many of the underlying financial challenges associated with microenterprise sustainability. Much research and effort was expended on solving problems in that area but firms still failed and individuals were left both poor and in debt (Viswanath, 2018). New research was spawned that started evaluating the concept of Entrepreneurial Orientation; the “it” factor of what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur. Researchers began getting more specific regarding countries, industries, people groups within countries, and specifics within industries and it was at that point the world changed (Zafar & Khan, 2014; Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Bujisic, 2015) .

Developed economies started offshoring and outsourcing jobs (Tempesti, 2017). Conglomerates decided to shed divisions and focus on core competencies (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011). Some managers decided to step back from all the stress and complexities of modern life and become lifestyle entrepreneurs (Siemens, 2017). Others started home businesses because they finally got laid off from the last mill still operating in town and there were no other

available options but landlord still required payment. It was during this upheaval that the ubiquity of the Internet opened doors to entrepreneurship that had never before existed (Balteanu, Marcu, & Seitan, 2013). Microenterprise, ignored and left to the developing world, became a topic of interest in developed economies.

The body of literature on the specific elements of the Marketing Mix within microenterprises in the developing world is sparse but slowly expanding. Some learning can be gleaned from the research into small and medium sized businesses. The small size of the firms combined with reach and capabilities of the Internet has a tendency to blend the elements. Now that microenterprise is circling back to the developed world's shores, there is a great opportunity to blend the depth of marketing knowledge and research with an age old design, that of microenterprise, which can truly benefit both worlds.

Microenterprise literature needs to be more actionable. The current literature found in the developing world on the subject of microenterprise has developed along similar lines as the older success/failure literature of the developed world on small and medium sized businesses. Both are long on retrospective analysis and aggregation looking for causation across disciplines. With variables to causation firmly established, now might be the time to uncover actionable solutions to those answers (Servon, 2006).

Theories are sound, time for qualitative analysis. The available literature is largely quantitative in its approach to the topic (Lussier & Halabi, 2011). This is helpful when verifying earlier studies, attempting to propose a theory, or determining a level of causation/correlation but not as helpful when attempting to dig deeper into the particulars of a specific business discipline looking for tactical examples. Due to the limitations that are inherent with surveys and

questionnaires, this approach limits the actionable by not exploring deeper reasons and meaning behind the results.

Merge the two strengths. The developed world is deep in literature understanding the positive impact of good marketing principles employed by larger businesses but shallow on microenterprise. The United States is particularly sparse in its research on microenterprise. This is not a criticism but rather a reflection on the fact that microenterprises have only recently become a concern in Western academic thought (Scheiner, 1999). Until recently, researching microenterprise has always been someone else's concern. The current quandary is how to merge the deep understanding of one mature concept with a new avenue of focus.

Potential themes and perceptions. The literature is repeating itself, to some degree, in the sense of aggregation and retrospection (Radipere & van Scheers, 2014; Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Bujisic, 2015). It does appear that the newer microenterprise research is doing a better job avoiding this and analyzing active entrepreneurs (Au, 2015; Spivey, 2015; Haynes, 2017). The lack of a deep marketing focus most likely has to do with the subsistence nature of many of those microenterprises. As businesses grow, they can afford the luxury of investing more into marketing resources. Since developed economies are starting at a high baseline regarding poverty, microenterprises in these economies may be able to move more quickly into investing into such resources.

Support for the Organizational Life Cycle concept is evident in multiple areas (Haire, 1959; Greiner, 1972). Economies obviously move through various developmental stages. Firms also move through stages on their way to growth (Churchill & Lewis, 1983). The Organizational Life Cycle concept itself moves through firms as it started with larger entities, was subsequently applied to smaller businesses, and is now having its influence on microenterprises. The

supporting literature moves through a similar development stage by starting broad and quantitative and ending specific and qualitative.

Summary of the literature review. Developed economies have traditionally focused on larger firms because these have most often supplied the engines of growth. Even the small business literature is tilted towards the larger end of the spectrum with the SBA definition extending upwards to five hundred employees. It also is heavy in its focus on manufacturing and turning a smaller business into a larger one which is in itself an example of the Organizational Life Cycle. The literature has also progressed through a series of developmental stages in its maturity. It started with general causations and gradually became more specific. It started with a quantitative approach and moved towards a qualitative one once theories had been established. The developing world's literature on microenterprise is currently mimicking the early stages of the developed world's small business success/failure literature.

Developing economics have traditionally focused on microenterprises for their financial sustainability and growth. Their literature on the topic of microenterprise is much further along the stages of development than in the West, where these firms have been often overlooked, but not as far as the Western small business success/failure literature. It is still largely quantitative in nature seeking correlations and causations to develop theory (Lussier & Halabi, 2011).

Well, the world has changed. Developing economies are rapidly industrializing and developed economies are beginning to understand the value, wisdom, and necessity of microenterprise (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Jha & Depoo, 2017). Each camp could learn from the other and advance through the difficult transitional stages if they are able to effectively learn how to adopt the strengths of the other's literature.

Marketing has been revealed as a problem related to microenterprise sustainability (Haynes, 2017; Radipere & van Scheers, 2014). Other generalizations, from the earlier developed economy literature, were able to develop through stages and grow in its helpful specificity. A general reason for failure once attributed to “financial” can now be analyzed from a tax, accounting, finance, or risk management perspective (Hutchinson, Hutchinson, & Newcomer, 1938; Wichmann, 1983; Marshall, Niehm, Sydnor, & Schrank, 2015). The marketing literature on microenterprise can develop along the same series of steps and become a wealth of actionable information for those dependent upon these small firms.

The literature on the subject of microenterprise is constantly growing and continually taking on new variables of interest but is predominantly found in the context of the developing world (Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014). The concept of marketing, and its constituent elements, is well researched and understood in the literature of the developed world. Although microenterprise, often under a different name, has always been part of the fabric of developed economies, it is only now generating interest by governments and academics in those countries (Schriener, 1999; Servon, 2006; Brawley, 2017). Applying the depth of the established literature and understanding of marketing to this new opportunity, microenterprise, can hopefully stimulate greater success, in both worlds.

Transition and Summary of Section 1

This qualitative exploration of the influence of the Marketing Mix on the sustainability of microenterprise will add depth to the existing literature on the topic. Lussier and Halabi (2011) have encouraged future qualitative research to further enhance previously uncovered theories. This research falls directly in line with the recommendations of these two researchers. Earlier research has uncovered a correlation between marketing and microenterprise sustainability

(Radipere & van Scheers, 2014; Hyder & Lussier, 2015). The prior research by Haynes (2017), upon which this study is an extension, expanded upon that concept and noted a correlation between “promotional activities” and microenterprise sustainability. This study expands that research by exploring the concept of “promotional activities” within the full mantle of the classical Marketing Mix.

The importance of the sustainability of microenterprise is a deeply appreciated concept in the developing world (Ahmad, 2017). Sustainable microenterprises elevate individuals, and families, out of poverty (Nihayeh, 2017; Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014). Dramatic changes in the domestic economic landscape have awakened an interest in the importance of these unique organizations to researchers and governments within the United States (Schreiner, 1999). The knowledge gained from this research not only adds to the growing body of domestic research on this topic but should provide actionable steps that can be duplicated in practice by microenterprises.

Section 2: The Project

The topic of microenterprise sustainability has been gaining increased interest over the past decade amongst researchers based in the United States (Servon, 2010; Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011). Recent doctoral research on the subject has gotten more specific and has started to focus on issues of marketing and microenterprise (Au, 2015; Premo-Hurt, 2016). This research was built upon the prior research of Haynes (2017) through extension of the study design and further exploration of one thematic finding directly related to the classical Marketing Mix. Based upon the earlier work, this was a qualitative, multiple case study that addressed the influence of marketing techniques upon microenterprise sustainability.

The necessity of research concerning the sustainability of microenterprise to both national and individual economies has been well established in the academic literature (Ahmad, 2017; Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Nihayeh, 2017). The majority of the discipline specific literature within the United States on sustainability does not however address microenterprise. The majority of the research on microenterprise has been performed in developing economies and has been largely quantified across disciplines (Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014). This study merged the depth of discipline specific research found in developed countries with the importance of microenterprise research currently dominated by developing economies.

The data collection process replicated the prior research (Haynes, 2017) in that it was in the form of semi-structured live interviews, observation notes, and audio recordings. The conceptual framework, the Organizational Life Cycle, underlying the research was also similar to that utilized in the prior research but focused on the early stages of Infancy, Adolescence, and Maturity (Greiner, 1972; Churchill & Lewis, 1983). This section of the project will discuss all

the necessary activities required in the research, e.g. identification of participants, sampling techniques, data collection, data analysis, and a review of validity and reliability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to add to the body of knowledge by expanding on the understanding of how marketing practices, within the context of the classical Marketing Mix, contribute to the sustainability microenterprise. Rather than pursuing the historic approach of an aggregation across firms of similar size or business lines and enumerating all potential causations or correlations related to the firms' discontinuance, this study focused on a single element, the classical Marketing Mix, within a single business discipline, Marketing (Everett & Watson, 1999). Instead of performing a retroactive, explanatory analysis of discontinued firms, this study was prospective in nature and reviewed active companies and the marketing issues that were contributing to their current circumstances (Hutchinson, Hutchinson, & Newcomer, 1938).

Sustainability was considered in the context of the widely accepted Organizational Life Cycle framework which views a firm's development through progressive stages of growth. This larger problem was explored through an in depth study of forty microenterprises in the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina, within the United States. This research explored their understanding and implementation of the classical Marketing Mix principles of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher within the qualitative context was to serve as the primary collection instrument of data (Baškarada, 2014). As well as being an instrument for data collection, the researcher also ensured the reliability and validity of the data which was collected

(Yilmaz, 2013). The data gathered in this study was in the form of answers to questions during audiotaped semi-structured interviews. Since this was a qualitative study, there were significant face-to-face interactions with the participants in the data collection process. These interactions provided a challenge for the researcher to maintain observer status and not move beyond that role into one of a participant. Strong role awareness was maintained in order to ensure an unbiased collection of data (Bloomer, Cross, Endacott, O'Conner, & Moss, 2012).

The researcher was acutely aware of the design extension (elements of the classical Marketing Mix) and methodology specifics (multiple case study) unique to this project (Dasgupta, 2017). Extensive personal interactions that could have influenced the study by causing the interpretation to drift towards either Narrative or Phenomenology and this potential for bias were mitigated (Wrona & Gunnesch, 2016). Although these real-life elements added depth to qualitative research, the focus of this research was primarily on the phenomena pertaining to understanding the activities associated with the classical Marketing Mix; not on the shared experience of the microenterprise owners themselves (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014).

The final responsibility of the researcher was to properly identify participants that fell within the category of microenterprise owners and ensure the accuracy of their responses (Gaus, 2017). A multistage identification process was implemented in order to properly qualify appropriate candidates (Marshall, 1996). An interview protocol was utilized to mitigate bias and provide thoughtful consistency to the data being collected (Appendix A) (Rossetto, 2014). Scripted questions, designed with room for explanation, were utilized. In conclusion, since this was an extension of prior research, the integrity of the original study was maintained while appropriately exploring new avenues for understanding.

Participants

Developing good working relationships with study participants is vital to uncovering reliable information in a research environment (Kelly, Harrison, Schaughency, & Green, 2014). The purposeful strategies for acquiring participants involved contacting several local affiliates of the Chamber of Commerce for possible references combined with a traditional word-of-mouth (snowball sampling) referral approach. This approach was taken since articulate, expressive, accessible, and willing participants are essential to the qualitative process (Marshall, 1996; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). The prior research had four requirements for participation: 1) located in Houston 2) owner of an event management microenterprise 3) successful for more than two years and 4) at least eighteen years of age (Haynes, 2017). These four requirements, with some modifications, were maintained in this research.

The first two requirements involved logistical alterations. This research was extended to participants located in the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina in order to uncover whether the prior findings were applicable beyond a single geographic area. A second modification allowed for participants to operate any type of microenterprise rather than limiting participation to just a single line of business. Two definitional changes were implemented in regard to the original third requirement. Since the Organizational Life Cycle evaluates developmental stages and is not bound by specific time frames, this study included participants that were currently residing within the first three stages; Infancy, Adolescence, and Mature; regardless of the length of time the microenterprise had been in operation (Lipi, 2013). Success was defined by the participant according to their desired intent for the business (Toledo-Lopez, Diaz-Pichardo, Jimenez-Castaneda, & Sanchez-Medina, 2102; Wennberg, 2013; Siemens, 2014).

There were no changes to the original fourth requirement. All participants were over eighteen years of age.

The limited geography permitted the opportunity to initially approach potential participants in person rather than through indirect methods. An in-person initial interaction allowed for prescreening individuals for their ability to communicate and supports the referral nature of snowball sampling (Marshall, 1996; Palinkas et al, 2015). The potential participants, if interested, were given a consent form to review at the initial meeting in order to ensure the utmost from an ethical perspective (Appendix B) (Check, Wolf, Dame, & Beskow, 2014).

Research Method and Design

The choices offered researchers regarding methodologies and designs have deep roots and often reflect how researchers view the world (Lach, 2014). This qualitative multiple case study seeks to expand upon prior research concerning microenterprise sustainability. The methodology and design of this study were chosen to further develop a generalized theme already uncovered by an earlier researcher rather than seeking to establish new variables as is common with quantitative approaches (Lussier & Halabi, 2010). The intent of this research was to develop something practical out of the theoretical so as to provide actionable assistance regarding sustainability for current or future owners of microenterprises (Jamak, Ghazali, & Sharif, 2017). This approach supported the worldview of the author, the creation of actionable research on microenterprise sustainability that provides support for individual economies and attempts to alleviate poverty at the foundational level.

Discussion of method. A qualitative approach towards research is generally chosen when seeking to further develop already established theories and research (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Numerous studies have provided variables linked to microenterprise

sustainability (Berrone, Gertel, Giuliadori, Bernard, & Meiners, 2014; Radipere & van Scheers, 2014; Hyder & Lussier, 2016). In prior research, Haynes (2017) uncovered that Promotional Activities had a positive impact on the sustainability of microenterprises beyond 2 years. Lussier and Halabi (2011) argue for increased qualitative approaches in research to augment previous findings that focused on establishing predictive variables in the area of small business sustainability. Haynes (2017) established the predictive variable of “promotional activities” upon which this research expanded in order to further add to the knowledge base surrounding microenterprise sustainability. A qualitative methodology was chosen in order to provide greater depth to an already established variable (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Lussier & Halabi, 2011).

Discussion of design. Once the direction of the study leads the researcher to a qualitative methodology, a decision on appropriate design is required (Dasgupta, 2015). Gaus (2017) discusses that the case study approach is useful when attempting to understand a phenomenon, in this context “a case”, within its contemporary context when the boundaries between the two are not clearly drawn. The phenomena in this research was the influence of Marketing Mix techniques on microenterprise sustainability. The contemporary context involved navigating several indistinct boundaries. The changes in the domestic economic landscape revealing a dearth of research on this topic (microenterprises in general and specifically regarding marketing influence) was the first boundary (Mattare, Monahan, & Shah, 2011; Jha & Depoo, 2017). A second indistinct boundary involved understanding the microenterprise owners' conceptualizations of success which directly informed their overall approach to marketing (Toledo-Lopez, Diaz-Pichardo, Jimenez-Castaneda, & Sanchez-Medina, 2102; Wennberg, 2013; Siemens, 2014). The impact of the interactions between the

Organizational Life Cycle, success definitions, and Marketing Mix decisions were a third ill-defined boundary. Utilizing a case study approach allowed for the research to provide greater understanding and richer descriptions of the phenomena, especially since the fuzzy boundaries of the real-world context informed and breathed meaning into that phenomena (Hyett, Kenny, & Dickson-Swift, 2014; Gaus, 2017).

Summary of research method and design. This extension of prior research (Haynes, 2017) was a qualitative, multiple case study. This study replicated the earlier study in both method and design. This study extended the prior research by expanding on a previously uncovered theme, the relationship between sustainability and “promotional activity”, that included all elements of the classical Marketing Mix. Lussier and Halabi (2011) have encouraged further qualitative research on previously uncovered variables. Other extensions involved adding a different geography, an increased number of participants, and no limitations on the business line of the microenterprise.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study included microenterprise owners located in the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina. There were no restrictions on the specific line of business in which the microenterprises was permitted to operate. All microenterprises were required to be classified as falling in one of the first three stages; Infancy, Adolescence, or Mature; of the Organizational Life Cycle. Owners were able to adequately articulate their definition of success. All participants were required to be eighteen years of age or older.

Discussion of population. Researchers involved in qualitative research needed to be concerned with achieving saturation in their data analysis, the point where no new information is gleaned by adding to the sample population (Trotter, 2012). The appropriate number of

participants required to reach this point of saturation is disputable amongst researchers. Boddy (2016) suggests that saturation can be achieved with twelve interviews when attempting to uncover emerging themes. Other authors suggest that saturation can be achieved with as little as four participants (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Extending on the prior research, the sample size for this study was set at forty in order to add rigor to the findings. A significantly larger sampling population was pre-determined for this study since limitations on the line of business were removed. This added additional rigor to the findings. A manageable sample size was selected in order to provide depth to the research questions rather than simply breadth (Palinkas et al, 2015).

This study had four eligibility requirements: 1) microenterprise operating in the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina 2) owner must be able to effectively articulate personal definition of success 3) the microenterprise must be currently sustained within one the first three stages of the Organizational Life Cycle and 4) at least 18 years of age. Though an extension of prior research, this research is technically considered a narrow replicative design and as such some replicative integrity were maintained (Bettis, Helfat, & Shaver, 2016). No extensions of eligibility were be made in this study although the original design allowed for such when advantageous to furthering the research.

The first (1st) requirement was that all participants were to be located in the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina. This was a geographic extension designed to create heterogeneity. The prior research was restricted to the Houston, TX metropolitan area. Haynes (2017) had as an additional eligibility requirement limiting the microenterprises to a single line of business. This requirement was removed from this research in order to create further heterogeneity in understanding the findings beyond such a narrow subset (Bettis, Helfat, &

Shaver, 2016). The second (2nd) requirement was an extension on the definition of “success” from the prior research and was targeted to directly address the second research question. The third (3rd) eligibility requirement addressed both research questions. The fourth (4th) eligibility requirement was replicated exactly. Retaining the minimum age requirement made sense from both an ethical, (potential concerns over reliability and susceptibility), and practical, (avoiding a second layer of parental approval for participation), perspective (Schelbe, Chanmugam, Moses, Saltzburg, Williams, & Letendre, 2015).

Discussion of sampling. The sampling was purposive, a multistage strategy was initiated with maximum variation which then progressed to snowball sampling (Marshall, 1996; Palinkas et al, 2015). As qualitative research has continued to develop, the value of combining different sampling strategies has become more recognized and accepted (Palinkas et al, 2015).

The first stage of the sampling procedure utilized a maximum variation strategy in order to evaluate "shared patterns across cases that derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity" (Palinkas et al, p. 537, 2015). The prior research (Haynes, 2017) had a homogeneous participant base in both business line and geography. The one requirement in which heterogeneity was permitted, the length of time beyond two years of maintained sustainability, is the area where the “shared pattern” for this current research, the influence of “promotional activities”, was uncovered as an emergent theme. This study had no restrictions on the microenterprises' lines of business thus extending the heterogeneity internally within the study by expanding the participant base. By changing the geographic locus of the participants, this study expanded the geographic heterogeneity of the overall domestic microenterprise sustainability research. Initial potential participants were to be referred by representatives from local chapters of the Chamber of Commerce. The concept supporting the utilization of a referral

process was based upon the premise that members of a local chamber are more likely to be engaged with both the community and other like-minded small businesses (Lacho, & Brockmann, 2011).

The snowball sampling strategy both quickened and refined the selection of participants. Patton (2002) noted that resource constraints; in this case, time, geography, and finances; make finding information rich participants an important consideration. Spradley (1979) and Bernard (2002) emphasized the importance of a participant's availability, willingness, and strong communication skills as important to providing deep content. Once a willing participant was identified who qualified within the eligibility requirements, including the ability to articulate ideas effectively, referrals (the snowball effect) were requested for other microenterprise owners with similar strengths in communication (Marshall, 1996).

Summary of population and sampling. The population included microenterprise owners in the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina who met the inclusion requirements as specified. As the method and design were being replicated, numerous extensions; e.g., geography, sample size, themes, business lines; were added to the population. The sampling was purposive, utilizing a multistage strategy starting with maximum variation and then progressing to snowball sampling (Marshall, 1996; Palinkas et al, 2015). Eliminating the previous restriction on the microenterprise business line, the study population increased variation and contributed to heterogeneity (Palinkas et al, 2015). The snowball strategy

quicken the accumulation of participants (Spradley, 1979; Bernard, 2002).

Data Collection

Multiple devices were utilized during interview sessions. An interview guide was utilized to guide the discussion and mitigate bias. Collection processes for the data followed previously determined IRB protocols.

Instruments. Quantitative approaches to research often rely upon seasoned instruments that have been rigorously tested for validity and reliability whereas the primary instrument for a qualitative study is the actual researcher (Collins & Cooper, 2014). A common qualitative research technique, the semi-structured interview, is excellent at furthering the understanding of a particular focus of study but can be influenced by an interviewer's preconceived notions and biases (Cridland, Jones, Caputi, & Magee, 2015). With the primary instrument, the researcher, being prone to bias and thus potentially communicating that bias through a common tool, e.g. the semi-structured interview, it is imperative that measures be enacted that help provide validity and reliability to the primary instrument. Researcher self-awareness and an interview guide are two approaches that have been shown to help with providing rigor to the qualitative researcher (Cooper & Collins, 2014; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016).

Since the personality of the researcher plays a significant role in the data collection within the qualitative context, it is important that the researcher be aware of the possibility that potential biases, both positive and negative, might have on both the collection and interpretation of data (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). Reflexivity, sometimes referred to as emotional reflexivity, was defined by Schwandt (2001) as and involves critical self-reflection of any personal biases and preferences. As the primary collection instrument, a reflexive journal was

completed prior to any interviews. A journal assisted in evaluating any potential areas of bias that might unintentionally influence the interview or analysis processes. An obvious example of an area for potential bias is my lengthy career background as a sales representative. Sales force/personal selling is one of the components within the Marketing Mix elements of Promotion. It would be tempting to bring a positive bias for this element to both the interview and data collection based upon my close personal involvement with this activity.

An interview guide is another tool that can add an unbiased rigor to the data collection process. According to Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander, (1995), an interview guide forms a foundation for the entire interview process and sets the stage for the remainder of the research. It is more than just a list of questions. It is a framework for presentation that includes commentary and directions of approach while also providing organization and structural variation to questions. This is done in order to glean the most valuable information from the interview session as possible.

Interview guide. The interview guide began with an introductory statement that provided a brief description of the study and the problem statement it was attempting to address (Dasgupta, 2015). The following is an example from the interview guide. There are two research questions governing this study. The first research question addressed the Problem Statement regarding the issue of sustainability amongst microenterprises based upon their implementation of good marketing practices. Marketing practices were viewed through the lens of the classical Marketing Mix defined as Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Khan, 2014). Following are a few examples of warmup questions related to the first research question.

1. Describe your general understanding of how marketing applies to your business?

2. Through what methods; e.g. formal education, experience, SCORE, personal study; did you come to that understanding?
3. What is your understanding of the classical Marketing Mix concept?
4. How do you insert the Marketing Mix components of Product, Price, Place, and Product into your marketing plan?

These initial questions set the stage for the interview in three very important ways. They served as an introductory warmup so the conversation could be more productive as it progressed (Cridland, Jones, Caputi, & Magee, 2015). They provided important information that formed the backdrop of knowledge of the participant regarding marketing. Understanding this knowledge base assisted the researcher in adjusting the level of jargon and explanation that was required when the next level of questions that involved greater Marketing Mix specifics were asked.

Examples of some of the specific Marketing Mix questions were as follows:

- 1) Promotion

- a) Advertising & Customer Service

- i) What is your current advertising strategy?

- (1) Do you have any current advertising pieces available for review that are part of that strategy?

- 'Yes'... Review pieces. How did you go about developing this piece?

- 'No'... Explore concept of what exactly is an advertising piece.

- (2) Does your advertising strategy involve an online presence?

- 'Yes'...seek explanation.

- (a) How did you develop this online strategy?

- (i) How has it changed over time?

(ii) What metrics do you utilize in monitoring this strategy?

(iii) What have been the results of this strategy?

(b) Describe your social media strategy.

'Yes' ... Please describe your social media strategy?

(i) How did you develop this social media strategy?

(ii) What metrics do you utilize in monitoring this strategy?

(iii) What have been the results of this strategy?

'No'... seek explanation.

The second research question addressed the problem statement from a conceptual framework. It focused on asking about each participant's understanding of the developmental stages that microenterprises transition through and how the implementation of core Marketing Mix principles applied? Some of the questions were as follows:

1. Has your company gone through different stages?
2. What characteristics defined those different stages?
3. What occurred that caused a transition from one stage to the next?
4. How did your Marketing strategy evolve with those transitions?
5. Paint a picture of what 'success' looks like for your company?
6. Are you familiar with the concept of Organizational Life Cycle?

If 'yes', where does your company fit within that concept?

If 'no', are you familiar with the concept of biological life cycles?

Data collection techniques. The majority of the data were collected during semi-structured interviews utilizing an interview guide (Appendix A). Fortunately, the research questions were handled collectively during sixty to ninety minute sessions (Dasgupta, 2015).

The site was negotiated between the two parties but with an emphasis on a location that provided the necessary privacy to be efficacious. A single longer session covering both research questions often sufficed. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed for further analysis. Two recording devices were utilized in order to ensure the interactions were captured in the event of the technical malfunction of one device (Ranney, Meisel, Choo, Garro, Sasson, Morrow, Guthrie, & Newgard, 2015). The transcripts were given to each participant in order to ensure accuracy before data analysis. This form of member checking supported greater reliability of the data since any errors were corrected and not included in data analysis (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In order to ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym; i.e. microbusiness 1 = MB1, microbusiness 2 = MB2, microbusiness 3 = MB3, etc.

A discussion of any relevant marketing pieces was also to be performed if pertinent to the study. This rare occurrence included both physical and virtual pieces. An observation journal was kept on each participant in order to record aspects of the interview; gestures, expressions, body language; that were insightful but out of the reach of audio recording (Ranney et al, 2105). The same pseudonym assigned at the interview was utilized throughout the data collection process. The observation journal was for the researcher's review only.

Data organization techniques. Physical copies of the reflexive and observation journals will be kept for as long as the IRB possession requirements mandate. This same procedure will hold for all transcripts and reviewed marketing pieces. Using multiple resources for data analysis will assist in providing validity through methodological triangulation (Korstjens, & Moser, 2018). A password protected computer and removable storage device were utilized for maintaining all electronic copies of materials. At the completion of the study,

all electronic versions of documents were wiped from the computer and maintained solely on a removable storage device. All materials will then be held in a lockbox for the mandated IRB possession requirements. All materials are being identified by the same pseudonym as utilized at the interview(s).

Summary of data collection. The data was collected during sixty to ninety minutes interview sessions utilizing an interview guide and dual audio collection instruments (Ranney et al, 2015). The accuracy of the data collected was be verified by providing participants transcripts for approval (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Pseudonyms were utilized to ensure confidentiality. A journal, viewed only by the researcher, was kept for observation notes. All data was saved on a password encrypted computer during collection and will be kept in a lockbox for the IRB recommended time after completion of the study.

Data Analysis

This research was an extension of prior research addressing microenterprise sustainability (Haynes, 2017). Since that research established a theoretical base upon which to build, this research followed the general strategy for data analysis described by Yin (2014) that relied upon a preexisting theoretical proposition. The prior research uncovered a theme that showed a relationship between “promotional activities” and microenterprise sustainability. It is this theoretical proposition upon which this research sought to expand. The extensions included “promotional activities” as a component of the classical Marketing Mix element of Promotion. Other extensions in this research also included geography, number of participants, and business lines permitted.

Qualitative data analysis. This research study utilized the general strategy of relying on theoretical propositions. As stated before, the prior research upon which this extension research

was based noted a relationship between “promotional activities” and microenterprise sustainability. The premise being that marketing influences sustainability guided the analysis of the data. The distillation of the data followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) concept of the Data Analysis Spiral where each round of review further developed and refined the information gained from the prior round.

The analytic technique that was utilized is Pattern Matching. This technique "compares an empirically based pattern . . . with a predicted one made before you collected the data" (Yin, 2014, p. 143). The prior research provided an empirical base that stated there is a relationship between “promotional activities” and sustainability. The predictions, upon which the results of data analysis was compared, is that a proper understanding of the classical Marketing Mix informs better tactical execution. This execution then enhances sustainability, in the absence of some exogenous factor, and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle.

As part of the spiral analysis, the participants were broken into four cohorts of ten each which were analyzed in tranches. This assisted in the process of data immersion so that the researcher developed a sense of the entire interaction before subsequently dividing thematically (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As an inexperienced researcher, all data analysis was performed manually in order to build a skillset for data analysis. Lean coding, limiting the collection to five or six categories, was utilized initially with an expansion to more codes as the researcher became more familiar with the data and comfortable with the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A codebook was developed that included the code names, the defining boundaries, and descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative reliability and validity. Qualitative research has searched for methods that equate with the traditional quantitative approaches towards validation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Triangulation is one such method for ensuring validation of results of a research study. This research utilized data triangulation; collecting data from multiple sources such as the semi-structured interviews, observations, and data review; in order to improve validity of the findings.

Greater internal validity was encouraged through the general strategy, relying on theoretical propositions, analytic technique, and pattern matching that were utilized. The theoretical proposition established by the prior research is that there is a relationship between “promotional activities” and microenterprise sustainability. This research expanded “promotional activities” to the entire classical Marketing Mix within the theoretical concept of the Organizational Life Cycle. Internal validity was confirmed if data analysis revealed a relationship between the Marketing Mix and sustainable movement through the Organizational Life Cycle.

Coding process. The goal of reliability is to ensure that a researcher can conduct a similar study at a future date and achieve similar results (Yin, 2014). Having both an interview guide and a codebook is helpful for assuring reliability if such a study is ever performed. An interview guide allowed for both internal reliability, all interviews were conducted exactly the same, and external reliability, a future researcher will have access to the exact list of questions. One of the larger issues plaguing reliability is the problem with intercoder congruence. This research had only one coder thus eliminating that problem completely.

Originating with Glaser and Straus (1967) in their work on grounded theory, saturation is essentially the point at which the researcher can gain no additional content value by adding more data points (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, & Jinks, 2018). The same codes keep emerging over and over again. This is data saturation. Theoretical saturation refers to sampling, the number of interviews required to achieve data saturation. Arbitrary cut points were

established in this research so as to determine when theoretical saturation is reached so as to avoid counterproductive efforts (Saunders et al, 2018).

Summary of data analysis. Data collection followed the Data Analysis Spiral where each round of data collection refined the subsequent round. Pattern Matching against the presupposition that a better understanding of classical Marketing Mix principle leads to sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle provided a foundation for data analysis. An interview guide and a single researcher were utilized to provide intercoder congruence. Data saturation was determined by evaluating collective information at arbitrary cut points.

Qualitative Reliability and Validity

Qualitative research has searched for methods that equate with the traditional quantitative approaches towards validation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reliability and validity are two commonly accepted measures for verification found in research studies (Munn, Porritt, Lockwood, Aromataris, & Pearson, 2014). This qualitative study focused on the concepts of saturation, triangulation and consistency to support these important tools of research measurement.

Reliability. The goal of reliability is to ensure that a researcher can conduct a similar study at a future date and achieve similar results (Yin, 2014). Having both an interview guide and a codebook should prove helpful at assuring reliability if such a study is ever performed. An interview guide was allowed for both internal reliability, all interviews were conducted exactly the same, and external reliability, a future researcher will have access to the exact list of questions. One of the larger issues plaguing reliability is the problem with intercoder

congruence. This research had only one coder thus eliminating that problem completely.

Originating with Glaser and Straus (1967) in their work on grounded theory, saturation is essentially the point at which the researcher can gain no additional content value by adding more data points (as cited by Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, & Jinks, 2018, p. 1895). The same codes keep emerging over and over again. This is data saturation. Theoretical saturation refers to sampling, the number of interviews required to achieve data saturation. Arbitrary cut points were assigned and the data evaluated in order to avoid collecting data past the point of saturation (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, & Jinks, 2018).

Validity. Validity is used to determine the trustworthiness of qualitative research by confirming its dependability, transferability, credibility and confirmability (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Farokhzadian, Nayeri, & Borhani, 2015). Face validity was buttressed by content validity in this research. The interview guide and interview protocols were reviewed by an expert panel to ensure that the questions are appropriate to providing insight to the research questions (Bannigan & Watson, 2009). Triangulation is another method for ensuring validation of results of a research study. This research utilized data triangulation; collecting data from multiple sources such as open interviews, observations, and documents; in order to improve validity of the findings.

Greater internal validity was encouraged through the general strategy, relying on theoretical propositions, and analytic technique, pattern matching, that were utilized. The theoretical proposition established by the prior research is that there is a relationship between Promotional Activities and microenterprise sustainability. This research expanded “promotional activities” to the entire classical Marketing Mix within the theoretical concept of the

Organizational Life Cycle (OLC). Internal validity was confirmed by data analysis revealing a relationship between the Marketing Mix and sustainable movement through the OLC.

Summary of reliability and validity. Data collection followed the Data Analysis Spiral where each round of data collection refined the subsequent round. Pattern Matching against the presupposition that a better understanding of classical Marketing Mix principle leads to sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle provided a foundation for data analysis. An interview guide and a single researcher were utilized to provide intercoder congruence. Data saturation was determined by evaluating collective information at arbitrary cut points.

Transition and Summary of Section 2

The purpose of this study was to better understand the impact of good marketing techniques on the sustainability of microenterprise. The specifics of the marketing techniques discussed involved the four elements; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; of the classical Marketing Mix. Section 2 goes through lengthy descriptions to explain the various elements of the study such as the methodology, design, participants, role of researcher, data collection, analysis techniques, reliability, and validity.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

This study involved interviewing forty microenterprise owners within the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina. All of the microenterprises fell within the first three stages; Infancy, Adolescence, or Maturity; of the Organizational Life Cycle. Owners were required to be eighteen years of age or older.

This research on microenterprise had several unique characteristics. The number of participants, forty, is significantly higher than similar studies. There were no limitations on lines of business. This research was specific to sustainable marketing techniques as defined by the implementation of the classical Marketing Mix and its impact on movement through the Organizational Life Cycle.

For reasons stated earlier in this paper, microenterprise is becoming increasingly important to the economy of the United States. Marketing techniques have been targeted by prior research (Haynes, 2017) as an influencer of sustainability with these organizations. Gaining a better understanding of how to help microenterprises to succeed will have synergistic ripple effects, both economically and socially, on national and individual scales.

The majority of microenterprise owners lack a thorough understanding of the components found within the classical Marketing Mix from academic and professional perspectives. Their understanding of Marketing concepts and practices are largely developed through a mixture of informal education and which leads to extensive-the job-experience. This translates into an often costly and time delaying version of trial and error.

The majority of the microenterprise owners interviewed were extremely resilient and showed a strong intentionality to better educate themselves on matters pertaining to the operation of their businesses. Many were able to articulate the concepts of Product, Price, Place, and

Promotion (the classic 4 P's of the Marketing Mix) through extensive inquiry but only those with either strong education, self-taught or traditionally acquired, prior business experience, or both were able to combine the terminology with implemented practice. The ability to better understand the Marketing Mix, just like a better understanding of business finance or customer/product dynamics, can offer microenterprise owners the opportunity to truncate the painful trial and error process which should lead to growth as evidenced by movement through the Organizational Life Cycle (Munoz, Welsh, Chan, & Raven, 2015; Radipere & van Scheers, 2014).

Overview of the Study

This study took a qualitative, multiple case study approach to the subject and included forty participants in a geographically bound region. Research on microenterprises, common in the developing world, is uncommon in the United States. This study is an extension of prior US research (Haynes, 2017) involving six participants that uncovered a theme suggesting a correlation between sustainability and promotional activities. Forty participants is an unusually large sampling for a domestic microenterprise study. The prior research that informed this study in microenterprises confirmed what domestic small business (small business is defined distinctly different from microenterprise within the United States) and developing economy microenterprise researchers have determined through multiple studies; the lack of marketing skills and activities has a negative impact on sustainability (Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003; Radipere & van Scheers, 2014; Jamak, Ghazali, & Sharif, 2017; Jayawqarna, Jones, Lam, & Phua, 2014; Barreiros Porto, da Rocha Costa, & Alberto de Morais Watanabe, 2017).

This study sought to expand upon the accumulated knowledge by defining “marketing activities” or “marketing skills” by the commonly accepted 4 P's of the classical Marketing Mix.

The first research question was as follows: How has the understanding and implementation of the Marketing Mix principles, of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion supported sustainability within microenterprise? This study was also unique in that sought to evaluate active microenterprises against an accepted measurement of sustainability, the Organizational Life Cycle. Most of the published research has been performed retroactively on insolvent firms. The second research question addressed this issue by asking: What is the correlation between the understanding and implementation of Marketing Mix practice and their impact on sustainability and movement through the developmental stages of the Organizational Life Cycle?

The study utilized a purposive, snowball technique for sampling. Of the forty participants, labeled MB (Microbusiness) 001 – 040, 20, or 50% were 1st generation initiations. The term “Microbusiness” was chosen because of its simplicity and commonality in domestic literature. For practical purposes regarding this study, microenterprise and microbusiness (MB), should be considered synonymous as referring to entities with nine or fewer employees. The referral process reached up to four (4) generations at its apogee. A large number of participants provided only a singular lead, some of which failed to elicit a response. The researcher failed to request referrals from four participants due to time constraints involving the interview. Two participants declined to offer referrals. Four initial participants were exceptionally rich, resulting in thirteen referrals. It was these four initial interviews that snowballed into third and fourth generation of participants.

Table 5

Microbusiness Snowball Referral Pattern with SBA Classification (c)

MB 001 (c811) →	MB 012 (c811) → MB 026 (c811) →	MB 023 (c811)	
MB 002 (c541) →	MB 011 (c541)		
MB 003 (c611) → →	MB 005 (c238) → MB 022 (c541) →	MB 028 (c238) → MB 032 (c531) →	MB 035 (c524) MB 040 (c541)
MB 004 (c722)			
MB 006 (c811)			
MB 007 (c811) →	MB 025 (c713)		
MB 008 (c541)			
MB 009 (c611) →	MB 030 (c722) →	MB 034 (c713)	
MB 010 (c611)			
MB 013 (c531) →	MB 016 (c541) →	MB 018 (c541) →	MB 031 (c541)
MB 014 (c812)			
MB 015 (c524) →	MB 021 (c541)		
MB 017 (c621)			
MB 019 (c811)			
MB 020 (c812)			
MB 024 (c238)			
MB 027 (c524) →	MB 039 (c722)		
MB 029 (c541)			
MB 033 (c531) →	MB 037 (c451)		
MB 038 (c453)			

The various types of industries represented were quite diverse. According to the Small Business Guideline for classification, 13 distinct industries were represented in the research. Two specific classifications were more heavily represented. Classification c541 (Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services) was heavily represented with 11 participants (27.5%) and classification c811 (Repair & Maintenance) had 6 (15%) participants. Two participants (MB 037 & MB 038) could have been easily dual classified into c611 (Educational Services), along with their primary classification (c451 & c453, respectively), but were not for the sake of clarity since definitions requiring that level of granularity was not relevant for this research as their marketing techniques are intimately intertwined. The high representation of c541 and c811 is most likely representative of our marketing and service orientated economy. It is interesting to note that c541

was dominated by microenterprises in various fields of Advertising and Marketing, occupations accustomed to utilizing referrals.

Table 6

Small Business Classification

238	3	Specialty Trade Contractors
451	1	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument and Book Stores
453	1	Office Supply, Stationary & Gift Stores
524	3	Insurance Carriers & Related Activities
531	3	Real Estate
541	11	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services
611	3	Educational Services
621	1	Ambulatory Health Care Services
711	2	Performing Arts, Spectator Sports & Related Industries
713	1	Amusements, Gambling & Recreation Industries
722	3	Food Services & Drinking Places
811	6	Repair & Maintenance
812	1	Personal & Laundry Services

The snowball technique often resulted in referrals that were technically classified within the same categories by the Small Business Administration. An example of this type of referral pattern started with MB 001, classified as c811 “Repair & Maintenance”. This initial participant resulted in three referrals; MB 012, MB 023, and MB 026; and stretched to three generations. Although all the participants were in the c811 classification, they were significantly different as to not be considered similar upon subclassification. Since classification and subsequent subclassifications were not considered within the bounding of the study’s parameters, it was not a limiting factor.

A second example of this type of referral pattern was found in the four-generation line that started with MB 013 and went through MB 016 and MB 018 before finalizing with MB 031. The classification chain was as follows: c531 to c541 to c541 to c541. The “Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services” classification is extremely broad, and the three of the microenterprises are quite dis-similar in specialization within that broad categorization. A more

typical chain was the three generation MB 009 to MB 030 to MB 034 which resulted in a chain that started with “Educational Services” and moved to “Food Services & Drinking Places” before ending in “Amusements, Gambling, & Recreation Industries”. Although no pre-determination of participant classification was required, a variety of industries were sought in order to provide a rich context to the data.

The study revealed a weak academic knowledge of the classical Marketing Mix but a strong, although fragmented, implementational understanding of the concepts. Effective movement through the Organizational Life Cycle could be determined by a microentrepreneur’s knowledge of sustainable marketing practices either gained from education, experience, or more commonly, a mixture of both. Finally, an owner’s definition of success influenced the movement through the Organizational Life Cycle by the determining the rate of adoption and implementation of sustainable marketing practices as defined by Product, Price, Place and Promotion.

Anticipated Themes/Perceptions

It is anticipated that there will be a correlation between the understanding of the four element classical Marketing Mix and microenterprise sustainability. It is also anticipated that implementation of these four elements will impact movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. It is not specifically understood what form that understanding will take. It is also unclear how implementation will present itself.

Presentation of the Findings

The first research question sought to answer how an understanding and implementation of the Marketing Mix principles of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion supported sustainability within microenterprises. Implementation of the above mentioned four principles had a definite

impact on the sustainability of the microenterprises interviewed. Although the term “classical Marketing Mix” was almost universally unrecognized, the majority of microenterprise owners understood the constituent elements and intuitively implemented those elements in their operations. The concept of marketing was generally used interchangeably with advertising or sales. Many of the owners had a thorough understanding of how the internet advertising functioned and what was efficient. Traditional advertising; billboard, radio, television, and direct mail; was utilized successfully in specific circumstances. Price held a strong place of importance with microenterprise owners but was considered something outside of marketing. The majority of microenterprise owners had a solid understanding of their Product, although some failed to visualize separate product lines within their offerings. Place, as expected, had the least impact as the majority of microenterprises reviewed had a local reach. Distribution channels and logistics were not a necessity. In a few circumstances; eateries, services that involved intensive one on one interactions, and internet reach beyond local market; Place was vital although rarely described as a component of the Marketing Mix.

As for implementation, trial and error was the most common method of implementation of the Marketing Mix. In situations where a microenterprise owner had a formal business education, previous start-up experience, experience in the field of their microenterprise, or part of a significant mentoring program, the time spent discovering what was efficacious through a trial and error methodology was significantly truncated. Education and experience, however gained, was valuable in creating sustainability.

The second research question sought to determine if understanding and implementation of Marketing Mix principles had an impact on sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. There were no quantitative components considered in a

microenterprise owners self-identification of Organizational Life Cycle staging. This made classification difficult but also supported the qualitative design of the study. The semi-structured interview questions gave microenterprise owners significant latitude to fully describe their experiences. As the number of participants kept growing; five, then ten, then twenty, then thirty; consistent themes kept expressing themselves as to what created sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle stages. As one microenterprise owner (MB 018) commented on how he learned business skills through asking questions of numerous other successful businessman: “It’s simply in that, if you hear, if you sit in front of ten people and they all say the same eight of ten things, well, that’s pretty easy”. This constant expression was evident in the time frame associated with movement between stages. The extremely large number of participants, compared to recent similar studies of this nature, add validity to these findings. Business education, either formally or informally gained, contributed to sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. Prior start-up or in field experience, although this can easily be considered informal education, also encourage sustainability and movement through the various life cycle stages.

The microenterprise owner’s definition of success is the final factor that draws the two research questions together. Although this was not the pre-determined intent of the question, the responses from the interviews linked the two together. For several owners, success was defined in terms that relegated financial considerations secondary to family or lifestyle. The need to grow was simply not that pressing. These businesses could be in the Mature stage, not because they were sustaining a family, but because they were meeting the need, providing secondary income, a learning opportunity, or the requisite time off to pursue personal interests.

The most significant research that impacted this study is Haynes' work presented in 2017. This study is an extension of that effort which saw a correlation between promotional activities and microenterprise sustainability. This research refines both concepts, promotional activities and sustainability by providing definition. Promotional activities are defined by the constituent elements of advertising (traditional and online), customer service, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing. This study further clarifies the concept of "microenterprise sustainability" by using movement through stages of the commonly accepted theory of Organizational Life Cycle as evidence. The majority of research on microenterprise is performed in the developing world so this study robustly adds to the depth the literature in the United States (Ahmad, 2017).

This study focused primarily on subsistence entrepreneurs, individuals who focused on providing income for themselves and their families, but had several that considered themselves transformational, plans beyond simple subsistence, entrepreneurs and one lifestyle entrepreneur (Schoar, 2010). This study expanded the data on microenterprises by going beyond the common post-mortem analysis of reasons for discontinuance or insolvency to evaluating active microenterprises and their specific Marketing Mix activities (Parsa, van der Rest, Smith, Parsa, & Bujisic, 2015). With Radipere and van Scheer (2016) uncovering that 29% of their respondents admitted to a lack of marketing skills, a deeper dive designed to understand those specific skills was warranted. The qualitative approach that was chosen, encouraged by Lussier and Halabi (2011), was part of that deeper desire to provide actionable behavioral examples to existing and future microentrepreneurs an area of study dominated by unactionable qualitative data.

The importance of microenterprise to Western economies has been a recent development (Scheiner, 1999). Due to decades of corporate and financial restructuring in the United States, smaller firms are being recognized for their contribution to the economy (Decker, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, & Miranda, 2014). Recent graduate level research on microenterprise has seen some growth but they are generally small studies and/or focused on a single line of business. Au (2015) researched the social media strategies of five artisan bicycle frame manufacturers in the Southwest. Spivey (2016), sampled ten microenterprise owners in the greater Atlanta area. Premo-Hurt, in 2016, interviewed four retail microenterprise owners in Delaware about how the collection of market data translated into marketing activities. Six participants, all in the event management business in Houston, formed the basis of Haynes' (2017) research on factors resulting in success beyond two years. With forty participants across numerous lines of business, this study pushes the envelope on both size and specificity regarding marketing activities.

All forty of the microenterprises, as predetermined, were classified as in one of the first three (Infancy, Adolescence, or Mature) stages of the Organizational Life Cycle. All microenterprise owners were both over eighteen and domiciled their businesses within the ten county Upstate region of South Carolina. One microenterprise had an international reach, and several had a customer reach that was regional. Neither of these factors were disallowed by the study inclusion criteria. The years in business ranged from one to thirty-two. Five of the microenterprises were purchased from prior owners while the remaining thirty-five were start-ups. There were two franchisees included in the data. Interview questions regarding marketing activities were restricted to the local level. Thirty-five percent were initiated as side-gigs (ancillary to primary employment) and twelve (thirty percent) were still being operated in that fashion. Interestingly, one microenterprise was started as a fulltime firm but transitioned to a

side-gig over time. The majority of the microenterprises were owned by a single owner but there were some examples of partnerships. Four microenterprises operated in Price regulated (insurance and medicine) industries. None of these unique situations were disallowed by any inclusion or exclusion predeterminations; they simply added interesting color to the qualitative analysis. There are no true outliers in the presentation of the data since all participants fell within the parameters set out in the study design.

First research question themes.

Undeveloped understanding of the marketing mix. Intro Statement 1. Describe your general understanding of how marketing applies to your business.

The majority of the answers equated marketing directly with advertising or personal selling, although worded in different forms, with a few references to either a product or a service (if the product was a service).

MB 004 (c722, Food Services & Drinking Places in business 4 years). How it applies? Everything. The thing about being a small business owner is you always have it always on the forefront of your mind. It never ends. You have a good idea, you run it and then go on to the next one. Without being part of a chain, you don't have instant marketing and advertising. It's not the way my mind thought all the time.... I need to explore the social media platform a lot more. I do other things; newspaper ads, coupons, some publications.

MB 023 (c811, Repair & Maintenance in business for 7 years). Social media is our biggest outlet. We love the fact that we can go on there and post pictures of our work and people will go and follow it.

MB 005 (c238, Specialty Trade Contractors in business for 15 years). I'd say, my marketing is word of mouth, referral based and from that I've seen substantial growth without pursuing external marketing so how would I say my understanding of marketing is? Do what it is you are going to do, build a relationship of trust and integrity on the front end and reap the rewards over time through that process.

MB 003 (c611, Educational Services in business for 12 years). Our major marketing centers on word of mouth. Like parents telling other parents and teachers and Guidance, telling the world that we are the best. That has started to pick up.

Occasionally, two concepts would be linked together as did MB 001 when he linked Promotion with Price.

MB 001 (c811, Repair & Maintenance in business for 20 years). How Marketing applies to my business? My marketing is a personal, one on one marketing. It's basically relational. I don't have to do any education for my business for my clients, they know what is out there. What I have to sell on is my ability, my integrity, my availability, and my competitive pricing.

Two of the best overall descriptions of Marketing came from two microenterprises in two very dissimilar industries; one (MB 012) involved in Repair & Maintenance and the other (MB 014) involved in Personal & Laundry Services.

MB 012 (c811, Repair & Maintenance in business for 8 years). Bottom line is getting the information out to your targeted group in order to be successful with the money you're putting into your marketing.

MB 014 (c812, Personal & Laundry Services in business for 5 years). When we started the business, everything was about getting the name out and what the service is, what she provides and reach customers. So, to market ourselves, market the company, the service is what people may or may not know about in general or may not know in particular.

Education contributes to sustainability. Intro Question 2. Through what methods; e.g. formal education, experience, SCORE, personal study: did you come to that understanding? This second question revealed that that the most common methodology for acquiring an understanding of marketing was trial and error through a prior business experience or with the current enterprise. Personal study, mentoring, and formal education were of secondary value.

MB 011 (Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services in business for 9 years). It was 100% my personal experience. I had no blue print so to speak. I didn't talk to any other lawyers. It was basically just figure out what works and what doesn't.

MB 003. Probably stumbled upon it. I often look at what draws my attention, what draws my wife's attention, what draws other people's attention. I will do a lot of dry runs.

MB 006 (Repair & Maintenance in business for four years). A lot of it has to do with how I operate as a person. How do I know what companies to but from? How do I know what to buy? What resonates with me? How do I like to be dealt with? I wouldn't say I ever studied Marketing, either informal or formal, but thinking what has been effective with me. How did I buy this car? How did I determine what car to buy?

Reading more motivational than educational. Many of the participants commented on reading various genres of business literature to gain education on marketing. Most often, specific titles could not be remembered. When they were remembered, they rarely fell under the genre of marketing although it did happen upon occasion. The titles or authors mentioned by name were Positioning: The Battle for the Mind, Guerilla Marketing (2x), Think & Grow Rich (2x), Rich Dad, Poor Dad, (2x), Story Brand, The Business of Expertise, Linchpin, books for Dummies, “The Wall Street Journal”, Dave Ramsey, and Dale Carnegie. Websites, blogs, and Twitter also garnered some recognition but apart from one specific Twitter reference (Elon Musk), no specific names were mentioned. Self-education appears to be mostly sparse and fragmented. For a highly motivated select few, personal study is educational and efficacious.

Mentorships effective but uncommon. Learning about marketing through mentorship was mentioned on several occasions but almost always in a less than formal or regular basis. The one exception for this was MB 039 (Food Services & Drinking Places). This microenterprise owner moved across the country in order to enroll in a six-month school that taught specifically how to operate a coffee house. She referred to it as “barista school”. With no prior business education or business experience beyond “barista school”, and a tremendous amount of research done prior to initiating the start-up, this microenterprise owner has been in business for seven years and is currently considering a product expansion. This would be the second of such expansions. Another example of mentorship was MB 018 (18 years) and his relationship with MB 031 (5 years). Each individual mentioned the other favorably in their respective interviews. MB 018 expressed as part of his definition of success as the ability to be in a position of mentoring younger entrepreneurs. MB 031 expressed his gratitude for MB 018’s insight that had proven vital to their growth

Value of formal education verified. The value of formal education was best revealed by comments from MB 014 and MB 031. MB 014 has been in operation for five years and has successfully moved into the premium market in regard to its pricing strategy within a very short time frame. It has been so successful that the partners operating the microenterprise are in the enviable position of being able to turn away clients, even with premium pricing, so that the enterprise better matched their current personal needs. When asked a later question about their understanding regarding the classical Marketing Mix, the partner with a Master's in Business Administration and twenty-five years in corporate finance answered, "Well, there's four elements; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion". MB 031, a Digital Branding Strategist with no formal business education was, with a little encouragement from the researcher, able to name the four elements. When asked how he came about the definition, he responded, "I don't know, just picked it up over the years. I can't really tell you; I didn't take any Marketing in college. We use (*local university*) interns and one of them was in Marketing and I think that is where it really came from".

Intro Question 3. What is your understanding of the classical Marketing Mix?

This third introductory question sought to evaluate the owners definitional understanding of the basic Marketing Mix elements. The responses were surprising. The vast majority of responses ranged from a vague recollection to no understanding whatsoever. The value of a formal business education was proven with this question. Some of the response from those without such a formal background.

MB 021 (Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; Advertising Agency in the Mature stage of the Organizational Life Cycle). I play by it, isn't that the same thing but with a different marketing channel?

MB 040 (Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; boutique Marketing firm that specializes in SEO (Search Engine Optimization). I've heard of it but you're going to have to refresh me.

MB 010 (Educational Services; owner is completing her second master's degree in Education). I've never heard of it.

MB 037 (Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument and Book Stores; having graduated from one of the best Jazz performance university programs in the nation and has just recently purchased a music instrument and instruction retail store). No.

MB 012 (Repair & Maintenance Services). Classical to me would be print, billboard, radio.

Although often not able to articulate the "4 P's" as basic elements of the classical Marketing Mix, many microenterprise owners were able to intuitively discuss the concepts. This was particularly true with Price and Promotion. Initial pricing was largely determined by either previous experience or competitive market research. This price was then either adjusted upwards through simple market dynamics (inflation) or through a desire to move into a different margin segment, adjusted up, or downwards, to remain competitive.

MB 037 (music store owner discussing lessons). What the market will tolerate. I started here in (*giving lessons, not as the owner*) 2006 at \$22.50 per half hour, moved it to \$25, probably around 2009, 2008, just about a year and a half ago moved to \$30 per half hour.

Researcher: What's your general understanding of pricing strategy?

MB 001 (specialized autobody repair): I do a comparative market analysis. So, I check to see what other vendors are charging for my services. I offer a volume discount and an incentive for volume. Reduced prices for volume.

Researcher: Has it changed over time?

MB 001: A little. Not a whole lot. Inflation, demographics, where you live in the country is gonna make a difference, cost of living.

Several owners in the advertising/marketing fields intentionally opted for an entry level Price strategy in order to gain clients and experience before eventually moving to a premium pricing strategy once a portfolio, vital to drawing new clients, was established. MB 031, which bills itself as a digital branding strategist, had a target of ten customers who received lower prices in order to build a portfolio upon which to draw in other clients at a higher rate. Several other businesses appear to purposely keep prices low as a means of maintaining current clients. MB 009, a marketing agency, has multiple pricing strategies that range from an hourly based project rate to a retainer model for larger clients. He has different price structures for B2B versus B2C and large businesses versus smaller ones. He knowingly underprices what he estimates to be 30% less than his competitors

MB 009. So, it is really based of whatever value they see my services being. If there is consensus amongst a certain number of people as to what that value is, that's how I adjust my prices. I don't say 'Hey, I'm worth \$200 an hour' because to one customer I may be worth that, to another customer I may not be. I don't want to risk losing their business. It's a matter of how much value I bring to your business, how much you think you should pay me. I want to always feel like their cheating me.

MB 014, a pet care business where one of the partners possessed substantial (M.B.A) business education and experience, revealed one of the healthiest understandings of pricing strategy in both setting initial prices and targeting different a different segment of the market as opportunity allowed.

Researcher: What's your understanding of pricing strategy?

MB 014: I think we did a lot of research on what the going rates were. You can look at other pet sitters' sites and see what they're charging. I think we came in probably mid to a little bit above mid and then moved to premium pricing.

Researcher: So, why'd you move it from mid to premium?

MB 014: Demand.

Researcher: Demand? There were more people who wanted premium pricing?

MB 014: More than she could handle with her employees, so in order to discourage some of the business and be more selective.

A majority of microenterprises discussed quality of work or service, or both, as being vitally important to their success. Microenterprises involved in the trades (c238, Specialty Trade Contractors) saw this as the main means of promotion and a valuable tool for implementing a premium pricing strategy. One contractor, who stumbled into the high-end remodeling market and then built a fifteen-year old business purely on referrals from that extraordinarily content initial customer, discusses his pricing strategy as follows.

MB 005: You got to price your clientele. Even though we prefer to stay in million-dollar homes, every once in a while, you have to do three hundred thousand or less. The person that pays the seventy thousand kitchen remodel at

this level, that same kitchen could be just sixty. Just a margin depending on the clientele. You get a feel for that and how it fluctuates and kind of aim for that.

Even in business lines that involve semi-regulated prices, such as a chiropractors (c621, Ambulatory Health Care Services) and attorney (c541; Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services), where either insurance or commonly accepted fee schedules largely inform pricing, microentrepreneurs have room to navigate when determining a pricing strategy. In both of these cases the strategy leaned towards a higher end model.

MB 017. We are probably, other than what is known as the ten-dollar chiropractor that's over at the barnyard flea market, hhhmmmm, I'm not saying anything about that but it's not the way I'm going to practice. The main thing about the price, we are, you don't want to be the most expensive and you don't want to be the least expensive but what we don't offer here are free services because once you say "free" you have lowered your standards, so okay, I'd rather be, don't do that "oh it's free if you just come in and try it" because you're spending a lot of time on a patient that is never going to come back.

An Attorney (MB 011), in practice for nine years and at the Mature stage of the Organizational Life Cycle, offered a succinct eloquence in the description of his premium pricing strategy: "...in the past couple of years I have realized that people want rich lawyers and busy doctors".

Although considered an important part of each microenterprises' business strategy, Price was overwhelmingly considered distinctly separate from marketing. Most owners performed some comparative market research on competitors' pricing before setting their own, which often fell in the middle to upper middle range. Some microenterprises moved to a premium strategy

over time as information or opportunities availed themselves. Other developed retainer (smaller monthly payments rather than one large sticker shock) models in order to smooth out their income streams while simultaneously securing clients. Several owners discussed how gaining a better understanding of Price over time was instrumental in moving from one stage of the Organizational Life Cycle to the next.

The fourth Introductory Question, in its most direct form, provided very little useful data. The question was stated as: How do you insert the Marketing Mix components of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion into your marketing plan? Since so few owners were able to define the four elemental components of the Marketing Mix, the question could only be answered as part of the Interview Guide which discussed each “P” in detail. The strongest understanding of the four P’s was in the area of Promotion. The majority of the owners directly equated Promotion with advertising and, although worded differently, the personal sales. The least understood element was Place.

Three customers, MB 016 and 019, defined their Place within the market as specific “niches”, or customer segments. MB 019, in the business of home disaster restoration and having difficulty penetrating the traditional water damage and mold market dominated by national players, utilized a specific certification and focused on damage caused by hoarders and bio-hazards (suicides, murders, and natural deaths). An independent insurance broker, 016, was in the process of attempting to develop a niche in commercial agriculture after a medium sized client was referred to him.

Many participants equated Place with either location or Price. An innovative microenterprise (033) that rents sound proof practice space to bands, saw its Place as vital to its success. The facility was located near downtown and thus easily accessible for local musicians.

The business also benefitted from falling within city limits and all the applicable noise ordinances that made practicing in your apartment or basement untenable. MB 003, a provider of Educational Services, saw a tremendous advantage to the location of his enterprise.

MB 003: Let the record show that I am pointing across the street.

Researcher: Riverside High School?

MB 003: Riverside High School. Riverside Middle is exactly one mile from front door to front door.

A discussion of Price often developed when asked about Place since the question was understood from a perception of market or customer segmentation. To be fair, the majority of the participants interviewed were providers of services so decisions regarding inventory, distribution, warehousing, and channel relationships were not relevant to their business model.

Several microenterprises did have to consider Place, and quite creatively, in the distribution of their products. MB 038 could have been classified in multiple categories. This microenterprise teaches ceramic technique (611, Educational Services) and rents artist space and equipment to burgeoning artisans (531, Real Estate). It was classified under Office Supply, Stationary, & Gift Store (453) since its physical product line has the greatest potential for growth and forms the bedrock for future growth. They distribute their finished products synergistically, along with the teaching services and rental space, through three channels; physical retail store, online, and through local and regional art shows. The partners, one (m18) with a degree in Marketing and eighteen years working in corporate retail management, discusses this synergistic distribution strategy below with input from the creative partner (cp).

MB 038: (m18) Not depending on a location to drive their footsteps. To not just hope that you open your doors and people come but learn things we can

proactively do, diversifying our income, to get people to come. Having multiple streams of income is very important to us. We just don't do one thing and that's it.... (cp) (referring to brick and mortar retail site) I think being in a public space reminds people that they have always wanted to do this. When they see us, they come out for other reasons, they see our location and there's always this, "Oh, I have always wanted to do that". (m18) You kind of have to capitalize on that... (cp) Physical location has always been very important to us....(m18) Classes is the biggest part of what we sell, highest income lowest cost....Our classes lead people who want to take a four week class. Then we have a second four-week class that takes them to the next step; Pottery Basics I and Pottery Basics II. Then, at that point they're independent enough where they become a studio member. (cp) Then they pay us monthly to come here and be around our community, it's kind of that cycle... (m18) We have a studio manger that helps them grow that pottery dream....(*the conversation drifted to the artisanal side of the enterprise*) I would say 25% of our product line would be logo mugs (*sold online*) and the now that we have help here and help teaching and now that I'm not working fulltime, it frees us to travel to shows and farmers' markets. (cp) So I'm able to produce more and we have the time to go out and show it.

The three microenterprises that operate in the classification of Food Services and Drinking Places; MB 004, 030, and 039; operated with multiple channels for distribution. All three utilized catering in conjunction with their brick and mortar physical presence. MB 039 also offered delivery through app based, third party delivery services for smaller orders. This particular microenterprise just implemented an online ordering system with a reward, not yet

fully implemented, systems for frequent customers. Similar to MB 004, this owner had no business education or prior start up experience. Unlike MB 004, MB 039 invested in informal education by attending a six-month “barista school” before opening her facility in a well thought out location. She is currently on the brink of a second major product line expansion while MB 004 has not seen growth for two years and is considering selling. Another anecdotal example of the value of education, however garnered.

A unique example of Place that was evident in this research was MB 009, another multi-classification candidate. This microenterprise started as a religious counseling service but evolved over time into publishing and providing educational services. Live speaking engagements fuel the online distribution of counseling, webinars, publishing, and educational services. Although there is physical distribution component, actual printed books and live speaking engagements, the bulk of the material is distributed through the internet. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) analytics have revealed a worldwide distribution to over thirty-five countries. The importance of viewing the internet as a multi-channel form of distribution, especially when the product is more of a digital or intellectual nature, can be easily seen from the following interaction.

MB 009. It’s not creating “new” to be “new” or create “new” to be “different”, it’s creating “new” to stay on course with where the culture is so I spend, I spend as much time studying marketing as studying the Bible because I have to follow trends. And so, when Snapchat comes along, I have to study that, see where it’s going. When new website innovations come along, I have to study that.

Researcher: It’s delivery mechanisms that you’re doing, same product but different ways to deliver it?

MB 009: Yeah, if you don't you become VHS and you're done.

Place, from an awareness perspective, is the weakest Marketing Mix concept gathered from microenterprise owners interviewed. This is understandable as the distribution logistics of the majority of microenterprise products or services are local. This "P" grows in importance as the customer reach expand, even for a service. MB 035, a provider of insurance products targeted towards the Hispanic community, uses the internet to provide consultation for clients hundreds of miles away.

Business education and experience proved valuable in achieving sustainability and moving through the stages of the Organizational Life Cycle. The trial and error process of learning about marketing appeared costly to those microenterprises in both money and time. During our interview process, most of the owners without either a formal education or experience appeared almost inquisitively illuminated in regard to our discussions surrounding the classical Marketing Mix and its elements. All of these microenterprises were solvent and some even self-identified as Mature in regard to placement on the Organizational Life Cycle, you just wonder if the waste of resources, both time and money, could have been avoided with a little education.

Trial and error both common and wasteful. The next two Introductory Questions (which asked, 'have your understandings changed over time?' and 'What has driven those changes?') were better understood through answers from the Interview Guide involving Product and Promotion. Product, although occasionally misunderstood, was something that was constantly developing. Promotion was often a pure experiment in trial and error.

One of the clearest definitions of Product was provided by MB 025 (c713; Amusements, Gambling, & Recreation Industries). A humble individual with no formal business education or

industry experience, has created a Mature (regarding the Organizational Life Cycle), seasonally focused B2C enterprise that has become an expected staple of his community. It has also turned a profit every season of its nineteen-year existence. When directly asked, “What is your product?”, he provided a clear and concise response, “Halloween entertainment”. Another individual, quite different from the one mentioned above, was also clear when asked about their product. This individual, MB 016, has a formal business education, multiple start-up experience, and over a decade in the field in which he is launching a new technology; a “a realtor app, one-stop shop for realtors...free download for consumer...agent has access to more confidential info”. The difference in education and experience is largely evident in the lack of trial and error on the realtor technology developer’s part. Whereas the Halloween entertainment microenterprise has gone through a litany for Promotion experiences; hand painted signs to t-shirts to flyers to newspaper ads to magazine ads to radio to billboards and now to Facebook; with no clear understanding of what exactly is working, the app developer had exquisite knowledge of his target customers and has wasted no resources on unnecessary promotional activities.

The concept of Product was often found tied to specific elements of Promotion. MB 001, a mobile specialty autobody repair service, linked the two together in the following form.

Researcher: What is your product?

MB001: My product is my service. My product is my restoration ability

Researcher: What is your advertising strategy?

MB 001: My advertising strategy? It’s cold calling.

When asked earlier about his “understanding of how marketing” applied to his business, the response generated, “My marketing is a personal one on one marketing, it’s basically

relational”. Compared to a similar participant, MB 026, in a similar industry, mobile auto mechanic, then difference in perspective is illuminating.

Researcher: What is your product?

MB 026: Mobile auto repair.

Researcher: What is your advertising strategy

MB 026: Word of mouth...postcards...website...Google search “mobile mechanic”.

Neither of these microentrepreneurs have a formal business education. MB 026 had a few years of prior experience in a stationary auto repair business before going on his own. Both firms were at pivotal stages in their OC development. MB 001, although self-identified as Mature was still a one-man operation after 20 years and struggling with solvency. MB 026 had recently hired its second employee and was struggling with how to break out of the Adolescence stage by better penetrating the more lucrative B2B market. Although there appears to be, as gathered from the interview, motivational factors influencing the current status of each microenterprise, maybe a clear understanding of the differences between the “P’s” is revealing.

In one case, MB 003 who provides various educational services, a less than clear understanding of Product and Promotion may have had a negative influence on Organizational Life Cycle development .

Researcher: What is your product?

MB 003: We exist to reignite a passion for learning within the hearts and minds of local students. We trademarked the ‘we exist to reignite a passion for learning’.

When asked an earlier question about his “general understanding of how Marketing applied to this business”, the response was, “our major marketing centers on word of

mouth...parents telling other parents and teachers and Guidance telling the world that we are the best...that has really started to pick up...I have really *started to focus* on that”. This microenterprise has been in business for twelve years and was self-described as still in the Adolescence phase. When asked about any obstacles with regards to advancing to the next developmental stage, the owner replied, “we keep coming to a bottleneck over and over and over again and can’t seem to quite make it through”. They had recently spent over \$800 on t-shirts emblazoned with a confusing slogan that did not sell and were now being given away. Over \$1,000 dollars of door hangers, a method that yielded no customers the first time it was tried seven years ago, were just ordered. The educational summer camps had three distinctly different flyers, all for the same camp, sitting in boxes ready to distribute. It was only through researcher questions that he was able to visualize a product portfolio that contained three distinct lines. It is interesting to note that the owner had only recently, after twelve years in business, recognized that word of mouth (personal selling) was his best form of advertisement. The owner had no formal business education or prior start-up experience and although he commented that his understanding of marketing was fueled by reading business books, when questioned further, could only name a couple of “business gurus” followed on Twitter.

Second research question themes. The second research question sought to examine if any correlations could be found between understanding and implementing Marketing Mix practices and movement through the stages of development through the Organizational Life Cycle. The question was worded as follows: What is the correlation between the understanding and implementation of Marketing Mix practices and impact on sustainability and movement through the developmental stages of the Organizational Life Cycle? As introduced in the prior paragraphs evaluating Product and Promotion, there was a definite correlation between

movement between Organizational Life Cycle stages and implementation of good marketing practices.

Formal education substantiated, again. Understanding Price was instrumental to advancing through Organizational Life Cycle stages. Even though the majority of microenterprises did not identify Price as a component of the classical Marketing Mix, its importance to growth was obvious in their responses. Microenterprises that researched and established target Price levels at the beginning appeared to move through stages at a quicker pace. MB 014, the Pet Care company, was in the Mature stage at five years and is currently in the position to choose clients. MB 022, a buyer's/owner's building quality assurance contractor, started at a premium level from its genesis and recently transitioned, after seven years, into a true, more on this later, lifestyle entrepreneur. Others established an unashamed approach to a premium model, such as the pottery business labeled MB 038, and have not self-classified as Mature due to the immense growth potential. All of these businesses have either experience, formal education, or both in common.

Trial and error substantiated , again. Other entities learned how establish Price through trial and error and this was noted as an important learning step that helped to transition from one stage of the Organizational Life Cycle to another. The specialty trades; MB 005, MB 024, and MB 028; learned over time how to penetrate the higher end of Price segment. MB 005 reveals this transition through the following two sets of comments on Price and Product.

Researcher: How do you determine your prices?

MB 005: It took me years to claw myself out of being the cheapest to being the most expensive. You have no clue when you first start out. Then I would have charged \$2,000, now \$15,000 today.

Researcher: ...what is your product?

MB 005: Expensive remodeling. High end, attention to detail. Transforming spaces into something different at exorbitant price

Finding the right marketing mix influences life cycle growth. Transition from one stage to the next in the Organizational Life Cycle often was multifactorial but microentrepreneurs could often describe one factor that more heavily than the others. Fourteen participants recognized changes in Promotion as having the largest influence on transitioning through various stages. Considering the various elements of Promotion, personal selling was recognized as having the greatest impact. The majority of personal selling was often initiated by the microenterprise owner in the form of cold-calling or requesting referrals from existing customers but customer to customer, word-of-mouth, personal selling was also recognized. The form of advertising that had the most significant impact on Organizational Life Cycle stage transition was internet related. Some companies started seeing growth once SEO (Search Engine Optimization) was maximized. Others saw success after practicing a trial and error approach with finding the appropriate social media platform.

Ten participants recognized Product as having the most significant influence on organizational growth. Five recognized finding a proper niche customer segment to which to best market their Product. The remaining five mentioned the addition of a Product, or product line, as providing the necessary transitional push.

Price was recognized by five participants. Two discussed the changing prices and moving into a premium market provided the leverage that allowed for adding the requisite personnel that in turn help increase productivity. Two owners spoke about the importance of educating themselves on Price and subsequently realizing the degree to which their services were being

undervalued. One microenterprise, a renter of workspace, had to introduce variable pricing models in order to keep clients with expanding personnel needs from leaving the rental market altogether.

Only one microenterprise mentioned Place as being the most important factor. A relocation found this entity in a more visible location for the desired client base. Place was recognized by several other participants but not as the primary reason for Organizational Life Cycle stage transition.

Three participants mentioned adding additional employees as the most important element responsible for moving through stages. Specialization of skills was mentioned by two of the microenterprises. Growth had been evident for all three, gained through Promotional Activities, but it was the additional manpower that, at least in their assessment, caused growth through stages. People have often been considered the fifth “P”.

One microenterprise recognized an existential cause as the most important factor responsible for growth. An autobody repair company, MB 012 credited a series of severe hail storms as making their services better known in the community. This firm moved to a more recognizable location about the same time as the storms and added a complementary business to its facilities. Growth can most likely be attributed to multiple reasons.

One participant, MB 022, was essentially founded in the Mature stage. This microenterprise has a unique product, a skill honed through years of experience, desired by a small circle of high-end customers. Overhead for this business is incredibly low. The lifestyle of the owner makes this the only lifestyle entrepreneur interviewed for the research. When asked how he defined “success” for his enterprise, he responded in the following fashion. “I race

sailboats. So, I'm going to Toronto in June. I'm going to DC in July. I'm going to Nova Scotia in August for an international championship".

Defining success influences implementation and movement. The microenterprises interviewed for this research were on a wide continuum of owner economic importance. Some were started as side-gigs and graduated to full time entities once a critical point of sustainability was reached. Others were initiated with no other intention of ever being the major stream of income for the owner.

MB 006 (gunsmith). Bringing in enough money to be worthwhile without taking me away from family to an inordinate degree and dominating my free time and making enough to be worthwhile.

MB 020 (pet sitting). Success for us is mostly measurable by the supplemental income.

MB 029 (photographer). If I can bring the amount of extra money to help my family without being a stressed-out wife and mom, that is success.... I know this sounds crazy but I want to work the least and make the most money, not in a lazy way but in a really productive way so I can be at home with my kids and bless our family.

Two of these microenterprises, the gunsmith and photographer, saw their businesses as in the Mature stage because they had been built to the point where they were providing exactly what they desired. The photographer, after more analysis regarding her various product lines (she didn't realize she actually had three until deeply questioned), reevaluated and labeled her most time intensive line as in intentional Decline and her other two, more lucrative and least time-consuming lines, as in Adolescence. The pet sitters only placed their firm in the Infancy stage

because of the potential for growth once certain family circumstances would evolve over the next few years. Success, especially when as a supplemental income, was in the eye of the beholder.

Individuals with business backgrounds, education, or experience, and often under the pressure of providing the majority source of income, generally had more quantitative metrics assigned to success. This first owner currently runs two other microenterprises and has both a business education and significant corporate experience. The second has a business education and two prior start-up experiences.

MB 019. Right now, a million dollars in gross revenue would be the measure that I'm aiming for right now. That's sort of my level one. And the other thing is pulling back that margin because, so, with more money made your margin increases automatically because your fixed income, fixed expenses are pretty much the same. I'll give you an example, any given month, if I do twenty to twenty-five thousand, my margin between fifty-two and fifty-four. The minute I go up to sixty thousand, in that same month, my margin now is actually seventy-one.

MB 027. I don't know exactly. I don't know what it will look like. The way I'm building the agency so that I can sell it for multiple seven figures in ten years. Doesn't mean I will but I want to be able to have this thing where it is such a hot object so that any of the larger agencies are knocking at the door saying, "hey we'd love to buy"...I have some particular revenue sizes in mind, premium sizes, in ten years we should be at least \$50 million in premium, that generates on a renewal basis at least five million a year. If we build it right, keep some equity in the business and have good exit plans, systems, all that stuff, that's probably why

I'm building systems now. We have all that and we can get two to three, sometimes four times our revenue in a sale so the business could be potentially worth \$15 to \$20 million dollars.

Others with significant business education and experience might not utilize specific quantitative figures as a benchmark of success but further evaluation reveals a strong emphasis on projections and break-even points.

MB 016. One of two things. One could be an early exit because I'm just looking out after my own investors and whatever point it gets to a good return on the money, that would be, the pinnacle....All it takes is, according to our projections, is twenty to thirty thousand agents to be profitable, so we can have a positive cashflow with one big MLS. That's right, Atlanta, and we're profitable immediately.

A relationship was observed in that the less business education and experience of the owner, the less quantitatively success was defined. Two Mature, although struggling due to an underlying lack of motivation for running a business in general, owners reflect this tension in their responses.

MB 001. What does success look like? It doesn't look like me (laughing). What does success look like for my company? (long pause) I guess it depends on who is defining it. What does success look like for me? Paying my bills, I guess. Product delivery without selling because ideally once the relationships are established, I don't have to sell any more. If I am constantly having to sell, then I should be constantly growing. I can do that if I want to.

MB 004. Make what I need for each day. Make some good contacts, potential customers and people enjoyed themselves.

Both of these owners clearly identified that their professional desires lie in other areas than running a business. It showed in their expectations of success. Others with different, more business oriented, expectations might have considered these ventures as failures. These owners did not as their expectations, although low from a purely financial perspective, were being met while they were allowed to pursue other, more important to them, interests.

Having owners define their own success both leveled the playing field while also revealing how a lack of business education and experience inhibited growth through the Organizational Life Cycle. One owner, in business for twelve years and struggling to break out of the Adolescence phase, revealed an earlier weakness by describing his Product, educational services, with a mission statement. He defined success by referring to the pictures of the smiling children receiving tutoring services posted on the corporate Instagram account. He is gaining the success he has defined from a Product perspective and not necessarily the success desired from a business strategy perspective. An artisan retail microenterprise (MB 038) saw creating a multi-cashflow stream, business model, with the potential for multiple locations, built on teaching and online distribution of promotional products as the way of returning to creating high end pieces of art. The part of the business model that was temporarily de-emphasized in order to build the retail and online business lines. The definition of success, from the individual who wants to race sailboats three months out of the year, to the person with a new child thus needing to support a family, to the owner that desires to sell once a specific target revenue marker is achieved, to the parent looking strictly for supplemental income from a job that doesn't interfere with family responsibilities, is the great leveler of microenterprise. The enterprise is managed according to

the desires and needs of the owner. Regardless of those desires and needs, a good understanding and implementation of marketing practices, starting with the classical Marketing Mix, can only assist in achieving those goals quicker and with less waste of resources that can be experienced through the costly adventure of trial and error.

Relationship of themes/patterns to research questions. The themes revealed a relationship between understanding the elements of the classical Marketing Mix, implementation of those elements, and sustainability as measured by movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. That understanding could be acquired through a formal or informal process. The most effective informal process was through mentorship. Having an education yielded quicker results in movement through the life cycle stages. Many microentrepreneurs had similar results through a trial and error method understanding and implementing Marketing Mix concepts. This approach wasted resources while consuming time. An unusual theme that emerged was the influence that the differing definitions of success had on one's motivation to educate and implement good marketing practices. These microenterprises were successful by the owners' definition but definitions that regarded personal metrics over business metrics often limited the pursuit of education and delayed implementation.

Summary of the findings.

Multiple, inter-related themes were uncovered that provided support for the importance of understanding and implementing good marketing techniques in order to move through the stages of the Organizational Life Cycle. A basic lack of understanding of marketing principles, as defined by the classical Marketing Mix, was uncovered. Most of the participants had knowledge of two of the components but rarely were all four components tied together in a comprehensive approach to marketing. The trial and error methodology was the most common

approach taken to learning marketing principles. Having business experience, with start-ups or in the industry, or education, formal or informal, helped to shorten this costly approach and had impact on moving through the Organizational Life Cycle stages at a quicker pace. How an owner defines success has a tremendous impact on the degree to which the understanding and implementation of marketing is pursued.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings of this study reveal a significant lack of academic understanding regarding the classical Marketing Mix and how they inter-relate, create sustainability, and influence movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. Informal education, gained through mentorships or self-instruction, can be extremely helpful in developing sustainable marketing practices. Mentorships can be formal, such as MB 039's six month "barista school" and MB 017's chiropractic apprenticeship, or informal, such as the relationship between MB 018 and MB031. The functional depth of an informal relationship appears to be the determining factor of value regarding mentoring. Self-instruction as exhibited by MB 009, our global distributor of educational services and literature, and MB 018, who learned computer coding by reading "books for dummies", can be incredibly productive but appears to be the exception rather than the rule. Self-education, especially through reading, is more influential than transformational. The literature listed, when remembered, was split between that of an inspirational nature and what could be considered instructional. Not a single reference was made to any academic journals or publications. Business education, prior start-up experience, or business experience, especially in the specific business line in which the microenterprise was operating, showed to be the great greatest harbinger of sustainability. Combining several of these factors together appeared to improve sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle.

The owners' definitions of success had a tremendous influence on how Marketing is approached. One owner (MB 031), upon launching a microenterprise which would be his primary source of income, eloquently explained his motivation for quickly uncovering obstacles to success as "needing to eat". MB 036 mentioned openly that the reason behind his extensive cold calling for potential clients, the indirect method in which he was referred for this study, was a first child due in the Fall. This compared to the partnership of MB 014 where one spouse's reaction to the other was "as long as it doesn't lose money". It didn't. After quickly adjusting prices in order to position themselves in a premium market, the owners of this five-year-old Mature microenterprises are in the position of only taking the clients of their choosing. This partnership was a good combination of vision and quality customer service mixed with business education and experience. One of the partners was one of only two people to name all four components of the classical Marketing Mix. He did so without hesitation.

Interestingly, the current sustainability, all participants were in the first three stages of the Organizational Life Cycle, was not dependent upon the entrepreneurs exhibiting a single or combination of these factors before the initiation of their firm. Many of the owners simply had to endure a costly trial and error process before finding the proper mix of Product, Place, Price and Promotion that supported sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. Findings ways to minimize that wasteful and expensive trial and error process is the reason why the findings of this study are relevant to improving the business practices of microenterprises. This study adds to the current literature on microenterprise sustainability. Its forty participants make it approximately four to ten times larger than some of the most recent studies on the topic. It expands the geographic to mid-sized markets. Two of the most recent studies on this subject were performed in Houston, TX and Atlanta, GA. This research had no limitations on either line

of business or intent of entrepreneur; microenterprises could be run as either a primary or secondary source of income and be either full or part time occupations. The most important differentiation of the design of this study was that it specifically reviewed Marketing techniques in correlation to sustainability. Sustainability can be a costly process. This research hopes to reduce that loss of valuable resources associated the trial and error approach of classical Marketing Mix implementation. Understanding and integrating the four components into a comprehensive marketing plan should assist in creating sustainability and quicker movement through the Organizational Life Cycle.

This research has Biblical implications for both academia, current and potential entrepreneurs, and society as a whole. This is one of, if not the, largest qualitative study of marketing and microenterprise performed in the United States. Not a single recipient mentioned academic literature or academic direct involvement as an influencer. Formal business education definitely had an important role for some owners, but it was always mentioned in the background, in a supporting role, rather than being a driving influencer of entrepreneurship. As noted in the Literature Review, our country has been largely preoccupied with large corporations, or smaller ones growing into larger ones, to the neglect of microenterprise. Academic research has followed and supported that interest. The domestic economic landscape has dramatically changed, and an opportunity has availed itself for academia to lead in the development of microenterprise sustainability rather than remain content as strong supporting character.

Several stories in the Bible discuss the negative outcomes that occur when individuals or institutions become removed from their people orientated mission. “In the spring, at times when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army” (2

Samuel 11:1). David had led many battles during his lifetime but for some reason decides to delegate this season of war to a subordinate. It wasn't soon after that he seduced Bathsheba, an act that eventually lead him to murdering one of his most loyal soldiers. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul gives instruction on the problems that can arise from not being about a purpose, "...they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house" (1 Timothy 5:13). Jesus was viewed differently than the established leadership of His era. He was part of the fabric of their lives, not only teaching his followers the depths of the scriptures but how to practically live out the concepts. In John 6, Jesus introduced some difficult concepts to a crowd that was getting accustomed to the excitement that physical fulfillment that was associated with His ministry. This teaching was so challenging that the majority of those following left. Turning to His immediate circle of disciples He had the following discourse.

"You do not want to leave to, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

We have come to know that you are the Holy one of God" (John 6:67-69).

Jesus embedded Himself amongst those He sought to influence. Academic understanding of business concepts is absolutely helpful in encouraging sustainability. Investing in microenterprise is an opportunity for academia, especially Christian based, to mirror that example.

Current and potential microenterprise entrepreneurs have the potential of becoming self-sufficient, contributing members of society. Although this study evaluated a higher functioning, educated, ambitious segment of society, the potential of change for lower echelons of society are immense. In John 5, Jesus interacted with inaction with a discouraged invalid at the Pool of Bethesda. This individual had been in his condition for thirty-eight years. Most would say he had

justification for his discouragement. Bringing a vastly different paradigm to the situation, He asks of the invalid a seemingly incredulous question. “When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’” (John 5:5). The man’s response was understandable reticent and filled with discouragement. “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk’” (John 5:8). The opportunity to change society’s “...blind...lame...and paralyzed...” is palpable through encouraging the flourishing of microenterprises (John 5:3). Christian business education could be on the forefront of this potentially seismic change in the economic landscape.

As the individual changes, so eventually so will the society as a whole. These types of dramatic, environmental sea change opportunities only present themselves upon rare occasion. Christian business education has the potential to start influencing individuals, through economic and character transformation, at a level considered unavailable in the past. The structural economic landscape of the United States has changed dramatically over the past several decades. Although large corporations will continue to exist, the promises of life long employment and the associated pensions will most likely remain a relic of an earlier era. Recession and low savings rates will continue to wreak havoc on a population that continues to push the boundaries of. Longevity. Developing an entrepreneurial character within a society can help to alleviate the inevitable economic and human problems that are associated with poverty. The church is called to be a part of the society in which it is expected to influence. With the new interest in academic research on domestic microenterprise, Christian business schools have an opportunity to be on forefront of societal change through a discipline, business, that is much too often misused by non-believers.

Recommendations for Action

Basic education on marketing was lacking amongst the majority of microenterprise entrepreneurs interviewed in this study. This is evidenced by the inability of thirty eight of the forty participants to effectively articulate the four elemental components of the classical Marketing Mix. This is also evidenced by the level of trial and error required by the majority of microenterprises to effectively find a mix that was efficacious. The strongest recommendation that flows from this research is to create approaches to better educate current and potential entrepreneurs on how implementing good marketing techniques can encourage sustainability and quicker movement through the Organizational Life Cycle.

This research revealed multiple, effective methodologies that microenterprise entrepreneurs utilized in learning and developing their marketing skillsets. The most common was trial and error; a costly form of business practice that inhibits sustainability and movement through Organizational Life Cycle stage development. The approaches that proved most fruitful were a business education, mentorship, and experience, or some combination of the three.

A business education can be acquired from multiple sources and in multiple forms. Since many of the participants in this study were successful without having either a bachelor's or master's degree in some discipline of business, parchment as a prerequisite for success is a requirement. With that said, those that had some business education were generally able to think in a more strategic and tactical business manner. As one future microenterprise owner (MB 012) in this study was advised by his father after dropping out of undergraduate business school, "you don't have to have an education to be successful, but you better be educated at what you do". The lack of a formal understanding of marketing was palpable for those without it.

One of the most successful examples of an informal education was MB 039's 'barista school'. Although performing copious research before starting the business, followed by shrewd changes in Product offerings to better serve the local market, she specifically credits this program with providing her the foundation to running a coffee house. A quick Internet search reveals a barista school in Portland, Oregon, the city she mentioned, offering a comprehensive five-day workshop for just under \$3,000. In retrospect, the participant most likely erroneously replaced "days" with "months" in her interview or the cost would have been prohibitive. Either way, the point is still relevant, a focused informal education can yield great results.

Mentorships were successful when they were consistently functional or mixed with another form of learning. MB 018 and MB 031 had developed an almost familial, father and son, relationship of mutual concern. MB 018, the father, mentioned as part his definition of success, being able to help younger entrepreneurs. He spoke at length about several that he was currently helping. This innate desire to teach and nurture was also evidenced in his discussion about being a foster parent of thirty-eight children and initiating a support center for foster parents in the local area. The importance of MB 018's efforts were reflected in the comments of MB 031. It was his nature to mentor and that, being a mentor, was not common in this study. Several individuals mentioned being mentored or gaining assistance, but this level of commitment was rare.

Experience was also an obvious precursor to microenterprise sustainability. This experience was generally gained either through prior start-ups, usually failures, or extensively developed by working the industry prior to launching a microenterprise. Tradesmen were the most likely to have experience in the industry before starting their own businesses. The Upstate of South Carolina has been unusual over the past twenty-five years with its almost unhindered

economic growth. Even with an almost never ending well of business, participants in this study still revealed challenges with establishing Price, a major component of the Marketing Mix. At some point the growth will slow and the other components will become of even greater importance.

Although microenterprise entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs, as based upon the research contained in this study, garner some of their informal education from reading, academic journals are not a genre in which they invest their time. Greater research in academia on microenterprise sustainability is definitely required for increasing awareness and designing government policies that favor and encourage their growth while other approaches must be utilized in order to reach the desired audience. Packaging together the three aforementioned methodologies could be synergistic in helping potential microenterprise entrepreneurs to create sustainability. Due to the snowball technique of recruitment, the participant base was very similar when giving a cursory view of education and stability of background. As entrepreneurialism gets encouraged to a broader range of society, the business education and mentorship could be merged with research from other disciplines; sociology, psychology and religion; that seek a more holistic approach to human development beyond just a balance sheet.

The concepts revealed in this, and others similar to it, study need to be promoted much like any product. As learned from this research, certain channels of promotion are more prominent amongst potential microenterprise customers. Since the findings can be treated as a Product, the potential recipients, or target audience, should be considered as customers. Distribution, the Place, of the Product needs to be considered for maximum reception. MB 039 traveled all the way to the West Coast to attend barista school. That level of start-up capital is not always readily available, especially in the lower socio-economic strata of society where

microenterprise entrepreneurialism desperately needs to take root. Regional ‘microenterprise schools’, hosted and taught by those in academia performing the research, could provide the formal educational foundation. Networks for mentoring could be established linking these schools with established groups. Only one participant mentioned SCORE.org, a nationally recognized business mentoring organization, during the interview process. He mentioned it not as a recipient of resources but as a contributor of education at seminars due to the unique specialty of his business. Distribution of follow-up resources could be performed utilizing internet resources such as blogs, webinars, and push newsletters. Regional follow-up courses, in specific disciplines or covering specific topics, for further formal education. These could be distributed virtually.

Recommendations for Further Study

Although this study increased the knowledge on microenterprise sustainability by specifically reviewing Marketing techniques in a large population, areas for future research were uncovered. The vast majority, if not all, of the participants were either college educated or significantly exposed to entrepreneurialism before beginning their foray in business ownership. Research on how to cultivate entrepreneurialism in individuals without such an advantageous background needs to be performed so that these findings can be utilized by those in need of economic security. Those studies can either be performed descriptively or prescriptively. This study was beneficial in that it looked across numerous lines of business and uncovered similarities across a large population.

Larger studies evaluating specific lines of business could further add to the body of knowledge, especially if focused on specific areas of the Marketing Mix. An example might be how the area of Promotion informs sustainability within the local retail market. Combining areas

of the Marketing Mix for further analysis would also be useful. Some microentrepreneurs had challenges clearly defining their Product or not visualizing different Products with distinct benefits and challenges. Researching how to develop the proper distribution, Place, or Promotion for different Products, Product lines, could be beneficial in helping microenterprise entrepreneurs manage scarce resources.

This research uncovered that motivation and the entrepreneur's definition of success had a strong influence on the level of effort invested in developing sustainable marketing techniques. Difficulties in either personal life or business growth exposed some of the owners' lack of desire for investing resources in learning more about marketing. By the time one of these findings were compiled, one of the participant microenterprises had already experienced discontinuance by selling to another entrepreneur. A lack of sustained growth exposed an underlying desire to be in another field. Compared to another participant with same lack of business education or experience, and operating a microenterprise in the same classification, motivation informs practices in regarding marketing. The second individual is about to go through her second significant product expansion.

The last area for future research that this study uncovered involves how business education and training is disseminated. The majority of participants in this study lacked a formal education in business but for those who did, it was positively impactful on their operations. Developing new approaches to educating potential and current microenterprise entrepreneurs is crucial the health of this entire subset of small business. The wealth of knowledge and expertise on the business topics required for microentrepreneurial success are contained within academia but beyond the reach of the traditional educational approach of bachelors and graduate degrees.

Researching different channels of distribution for Marketing education could prove productive for both entrepreneurs and academics.

Reflections

The research process for this study became very interesting as the number of participant interviews were completed. Lussier and Halabi (2011) were correct in their earlier recommendations to focus on qualitative research in future studies of microenterprise. The richness of the human element is difficult to quantify. Interviews that capture the genesis behind techniques and motivations and desires that inform these decisions are difficult to capture through quantitative methods alone.

The predetermined difficulty with this case study approach was concern of getting so close to the participants that it influenced the questioning and data collection process. This concern proved relevant as the I found myself wanting the participants to succeed. Who doesn't like to see the Davids win against the Goliaths? Having an Interview Guide to conduct the questioning proved invaluable. It kept the discussion on focus regarding the intended purpose of the research which was sustainable Marketing Mix techniques that encouraged movement through the Organizational Life Cycle.

Although the majority of the participants did not have prior start-up experience or a formal business education, the positive difference was palpable when those did exist. The trial and error process in trying to find the proper Marketing Mix proved costly to those who did not have a business, formal or informal, education. Prior start-up experience proved helpful when discussing this current microenterprise but that painful trial and error process was still endured in the earlier ventures. Education, though not always acquired in the traditional manner, is invaluable.

The concept of non-traditional dissemination of ideas, goes against our modern traditions, but aligns quite well with the Biblical model. God has a history of using non-traditional methods of delivering instructions. In ancient times He spoke to Moses through a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-17). Numbers 22 has God delivering a verbal message to Balaam from the mouth of his donkey. God utilized the Marketing Mix component of Place by using the belly of a huge fish to distribute His message to the targeted customer segment of the Nineveh (Jonah 1:17). Its theme is not merely contained to Old Testament stories. “And the Word was made flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). A God in swaddling clothes who would eventually arrive at His coronation on the back of a donkey is not most certainly unconventional deity.

Is there a way to mix the benefits of the formal and informal? The Priests, Levites, and Scribes were the educated elite of their day and provided valuable instruction to the Israelites throughout history. The Pharisees around the time of Jesus personify this earnest desire to disseminate truth but somewhere along the way they had lost a connection with those they were serving. The thoughts from this research that leave me wanting to ask more questions revolve around this concept of how to disseminate the value of traditional, formal business instruction in a non-traditional, informal manner. Jesus lived and walked and ate with those he sought to influence, and it changed society dramatically. It wound up changing history. Maybe academia can discover (Promotion) a new way to distribute (Place) their valuable knowledge (Product) in a way that is accessible (Price) so that it informs the microenterprise changes currently happening in our society. It might change history.

Summary and Study Conclusions

This was a qualitative, multiple case study on classical Marketing Mix techniques utilized by microenterprises and how they influence sustainability and movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. It had forty participants involved in various lines of business. All of the microenterprises were located in the Upstate region of South Carolina. This research utilized a standardized Interview Guide to assist in ameliorating bias and enhance validity.

This research revealed that the majority microentrepreneurs could not adequately articulate the four elements; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; of the classical Marketing Mix. There was a correlation between having a formal business education and ability to define and understand these elements. Business success was not determined solely on the ability of the participant to articulate the Marketing Mix gained through a formal education. Trial and error was the most significant form of education or experience noted by the participants regarding the Marketing Mix elements. Microentrepreneurs who had some business education, formal or informal, or had learned through trial and error from a previous start-up, were more likely to show sustainability as evidence through quicker movement through the Organizational Life Cycle. The microentrepreneurs' definitions of success influenced the level to which they sought a deeper understanding of Marketing and how it applied to their firms. Even for those with a more personal, rather than business orientated, definition of success, a deeper understanding of the Marketing Mix elements could be helpful.

Secondary revelations revealed how participants pursued educating themselves and the validity of a formal business education. Those few with a formal business education saw quicker movement through the Organizational Life Cycle thus validating the value of such a pursuit. Mentoring was an effective approach to achieving sustainability but was uncommon. The skills

transferred through the mentoring process were highly functional did not include instruction on Marketing. Personal education was primarily through reading. The majority of the reading mentioned was more of a motivational, rather than educational, nature. Self-education, as the primary means of learning, is only efficacious in rare circumstances. All of these understandings gained about microentrepreneurs learn further supports the validity of some form of business education. The best channel through which that education is distributed may not be the traditional one.

This research closes the gap on both the fronts of geography and size. The majority of literature on microenterprise sustainability is found in the developing world. The limited research preformed within the United States on this topic has small, usually single digits, sample sizes. This study supports Schreiner's early call (1999) for more domestic research within the United States. It also adds to the reliability of the topic of microenterprise research by expanding the participant sample size to forty.

The last two areas where this study closes the gap is on methodology and topic. Lussier and Halabi (2011) called for greater qualitative research on the topic of microenterprise sustainability since numerous studies had already determined quantitative reasons behind small business insolvency. Haynes (2017), in a domestic study of microenterprise, noted a correlation between promotional techniques and sustainability. This study answers Lussier and Halabi's call for qualitative research while also specifically responding to Haynes by defining promotional techniques as the classical Marketing Mix.

For reasons discussed earlier in the paper, the economic landscape of the United States has dramatically changed over the past several decades. Microenterprise has the potential to offer some solutions to the challenges that have impacted the recipients of those changes. A deeper

understanding of Marketing techniques, as defined by the classical Marketing Mix, has shown an ability to help create sustainability in this economically vital sub-sector of small business.

Academia has knowledge that microentrepreneurs require but the traditional approach towards distribution is not reaching that population. Rethinking (Promotion) how that knowledge (Product) can be distributed (Place) at a reasonable cost (Price) just might be the challenge of the next generation of educators.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introductory statement: Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this research study. As mentioned before, all responses will be masked with a pseudonym so that your confidentiality is maintained. After each interview you will be provided with a transcript for your review in order to ensure the accuracy of your responses. There are two research questions governing this study. The first research question addresses the Problem Statement regarding the issue of sustainability amongst microenterprises based upon their implementation of good marketing practices. Marketing practices will be viewed through the lens of the classical Marketing Mix defined as Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.

Opening Questions

Intended to provide background so future questions can be altered to appropriate level of understanding of Marketing terminology.

1. Describe your general understanding of how Marketing applies to your business?
2. Through what methods; e.g. formal education, experience, SCORE, personal study; did you come to that understanding?
3. What is your understanding of the classical Marketing Mix concept?
4. How do you insert the Marketing Mix components of Product, Price, Place, and Product into your marketing plan?
5. Have your understandings changed at all over time?
6. What has driven those changes?

This next set of questions is going to directly address how the Marketing Mix informs the practices at your company.

- 1) Product
 - a) What is your product?

- i) Is your product a good or service?
 - ii) Do you have multiple products?
 - b) What benefits does your product provide to the consumer?
 - c) Do you consider yourself an innovator or imitator?
 - d) Who are your competitors?
 - e) How do you differentiate your product from the products of your competitors?
 - f) Please explain your expansion plan(s) regarding your product(s)?
- 2) Price
- a) What is your general understanding of pricing strategy?
 - b) How did you determine your initial pricing strategy?
 - c) Has it changed over time?
 - i) If 'yes' -What drove those changes?
 - d) Do your competitors' prices play into your pricing decisions
 - i) Do you monitor competitors' price? How often?
 - ii) How do you respond to competitive pricing changes?
 - iii) Do you have multiple strategies regarding pricing?
 - iv) Are they customer or product specific?
- 3) Place
- a) How do you currently distribute your product(s)?
 - b) Has this changed or time?
 - i) If 'yes'- How has this changed?
 - ii) What drove the changes?
 - c) Is there a virtual aspect to your distribution plan?
- 4) Promotion
- a) Advertising & Customer Service
 - i) What is your current advertising strategy?
 - (1) Do you have any current advertising pieces available for review that are part of that strategy?
 - 'Yes'... Review pieces. How did you go about developing this piece?
 - 'No'... Explore concept of what exactly is an advertising piece.
 - (2) Does your advertising strategy involve an online presence?
 - 'Yes'...seek explanation.
 - (a) How did you develop this online strategy?
 - (i) How has it changed over time?
 - (ii) What metrics do you utilize in monitoring this strategy?
 - (iii) What have been the results of this strategy?
 - (b) Describe your social media strategy.
 - 'Yes' ... Please describe your social media strategy?
 - (i) How did you develop this social media strategy?
 - (ii) What metrics do you utilize in monitoring this strategy?
 - (iii) What have been the results of this strategy?
 - 'No'... seek explanation.

- 5) Public Relations
 - a) What is your Public Relations plan? (be prepared to define PR)
 - b) Has it changed over time?
 - c) What was the genesis behind each change?
 - d) Do you foresee any changes in the future?
 - i) What is driving those changes?
 - e) What metrics do you utilize to measure efficacy with your strategy?
- 6) Direct Marketing
 - a) What is your current Direct Marketing strategy?
 - b) How has this strategy changed over time?
 - c) What was the genesis behind each change?
 - d) Do you foresee any changes in the future?
 - i) What is driving those changes?
 - e) What metrics do you utilize to measure efficacy with your strategy?

This second research question addresses the problem statement from a conceptual framework. It focuses on asking about the participant's understanding of the developmental stages through which microenterprises transition and how the implementation of core Marketing Mix principles may influence this transition?

1. Has your company gone through different stages?
2. What characteristics defined those different stages?
3. What occurred that caused a transition from one stage to the next?
4. How did your Marketing strategy evolve with those transitions?
5. Paint a picture of what 'success' looks like for your company?
6. Are you familiar with the concept of Organizational Life Cycle?

If 'yes', where does your company fit within that concept?

If 'no', are you familiar with the concept of biological life cycles?

Brief review of the OLC might be required at this point depending upon the participants' replies.

7. What stage in the OLC would you currently place your business?
8. Please explain your reason for this placement?
9. (If beyond stage 1). Can you share with me what it was that helped you to move from the prior stage into this stage?
10. (If currently in stage 1). Can you share what it will take to move to the next stage?

Closing Statement: Thank you again for taking this time to both meet and discuss these intricate details about our business. Just to reiterate, all identifying information will be kept confidential. I will get a transcript of our conversation to you within forty-eight hours for your review so any corrections can be made. If you can, please review that document as soon as possible so I can continue with the data analysis portion of the study. Once again, I want to thank you for participation.

Appendix B: Consent Form

An Analysis Of Marketing And Microenterprise: Does Marketing
Have An Impact On The Sustainability Of Very Small Organizations?

Bruce Morgan

Liberty University

Department of Marketing / Graduate School of Business

You are invited to be in a research study on how good marketing practices encourage sustainability very small organizations. You were selected as a possible participant because 1) located in the western Carolinas 2) owner of a microenterprise 3) your company falls within the first three stages of the Organizational Life Cycle 4) at least 18 years of age. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Bruce Morgan, a doctoral candidate in the Marketing Department /Graduate School of Business at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to learn how good Marketing practices involving the classical Marketing Mix; Product, Price, Place, and Promotion; influence sustainability of very small organizations.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Meet for an approximately 60 minute interview. The interview will be recorded to ensure accuracy of the information provided.
2. Review the transcribed interview for accuracy.
3. If the first interview does not adequately cover all the questions, be willing to meet for a second interview for no longer than 30 minutes. This interview will also be recorded.
4. Review 2nd interview, if necessary, transcription for accuracy.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study are a greater understanding of their own marketing practices.

Benefits to society include assisting in developing research that can easily be transferred to practical application that may help alleviate some of the challenges involving sustainability faced by microenterprises.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

The following procedures will help ensure participants' confidentiality:

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Physical notes or documents will be held in a lock box only accessible to the researcher. After three years, all documents records will be destroyed
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.]
- Discussion of the findings will be shared only with faculty mentor and other committee members as necessary.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Bruce Morgan. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 864.276.9927 or bmorgan11@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Steven Cates, at scates1@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix C: Consent Form Publication of Prior Research**Re: Request for consideration of reproducing data in dissertation**

MARÍA TERESA TASCÓN FERNÁNDEZ <m.tascon@unileon.es>

Fri 8/30/2019 8G12 AM

To: Morgan, Bruce <bmorgan11@liberty.edu> **Cc:** Javier Castaño <fjcasg@unileon.es>

Dear researcher,

You have our permission with the condition that it is properly cited and referenced. We are satisfied that our work is useful for other researchers. Thank you for your consideration and good luck with your dissertation.

Maria T. Tascon and Francisco J. Castaño

El jue., 29 ago. 2019 a las 16G48, Morgan, Bruce (<bmorgan11@liberty.edu>) escribió:
Greetings,

I am contacting you because I would like to ask your permission to reproduce a table of yours contained in the Literature Review portion of my dissertation. The table (Table 1. Economic features underlying the variables) is part of your 2017 publication titled "Selection of Variables in Small Business Failure Analysis: Mean Slectin vs. Median Selection". After defending my dissertation, my program requires me to submit it for publication in the Liberty University open access institutional repository, the Scholars' Crossing, and in the Proquest thesis and dissertation subscription research database. If you allow this, I will provide both endnote citation as well as an in-text acknowledgment, see below, of your work.

Note: Reproduced and adapted with permission (See Appendix C) (Tascon & Castano, Table 1, p. 57, 2017).

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Bruce A. Morgan Liberty University Greenville, SC USA

Appendix D: Consent Form Publication of Prior Research

From: **Van Scheers, Louise** <Vscheml@unisa.ac.za>
Date: Thursday, September 5, 2019
Subject: Request to reproduce work
To: "brucemorgan1985@gmail.com" <brucemorgan1985@gmail.com> Cc: Marketing <Marketing@unisa.ac.za>

Dear Bruce

You are welcome to use the figure. Good luck with your studies

Kind regards

Prof Louise van Scheers
Department Marketing & Retail Management University of South Africa
Cell: 0823231365

From: Bruce Morgan <brucemorgan1985@gmail.com> **Sent:** 02 September 2019 17:28
To: Marketing <Marketing@unisa.ac.za>
Subject: Request to reproduce work

Greetings,

I am contacting you because I would like to ask your permission to reproduce a figure of yours contained in the Literature Review portion of my dissertation. The figure (Figure 3: Marketing and managerial skills that respondents feel they lack) is part of your 2005 publication titled "Investigating whether a lack of marketing and managerial skills is the main cause of business failure in South Africa". After defending my dissertation, my program requires me to submit it for publication in the Liberty University open access institutional repository, the Scholars' Crossing, and in the Proquest thesis and dissertation subscription research database. If you allow this, I will provide both endnote citation as well as an in-text acknowledgment, see below, of your work.

Note: Reproduced and adapted with permission (See Appendix D) (Radipere & van Scheers, Figure 3, p. 407, 2005).

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Bruce A. Morgan

Liberty University

Greenville, SC USA