Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

Leveraging the resource-based view of the firm to explain performance differences in ownership types in the quick service restaurant industry

Eli Golovey
18378405

An article submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

11 November 2019

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Eli Golovey Digitally signed by Eli Golovey DN: cn=Eli Golovey, o=Nando's, ou=Supply Chain, email=eli@nandos, c=ZA Date: 2019.11.10 07:51:09 +02'00'

10 November 2019

Eli Golovey

Date

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1 Cover letter

11 November 2019

RE: Choice of journal article

To Gordon Institute of Business Science

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in Project Publish. In terms of the choice of Journal, I have selected the International Journal of Hospitality Management as the journal to target for this project. The journal is a 3-star journal according to ABS 2018 rankings with a SJR ranking of 1.999. It is indexed with DHET and Scopus. This journal was selected for a number of reasons namely:

1. It is of acceptable quality in terms of the academic standards and, should the study be successful, the study will be taken seriously by the academic community
2. The areas covered include the area of research on which the study is centred
3. The restaurant industry, in which this study is based, is of high importance to the journal
4. The journal was used in the research proposal and literature review indicating that this is part of the conversation currently taking place within the journal
5. The quality of the journal allows for sufficiently high standards for the final product to generate a good final mark for the author, and stretches the author to increase the learning from the exercise

In terms of the sequence of authorship, the researcher will be the first and corresponding author and the second author will be the researcher's supervisor. The preliminaries are formatted according to APA and Gibs standards while the article follows the journal guidelines. Please note that while the chosen journal does use APA, they do deviate slightly in some instances, please bear that in mind when looking at formatting issues.

With respect to the journal word count limit, the exemplar article and other qualitative articles in the journal do not adhere to the limitation imposed in the guidelines. In consultation with both Kerry Chip and Zara Cupido, I have confirmed that my word count is acceptable and Gibs will not penalise my submission for exceeding the stipulated journal limit.

I hope you enjoy reading the submission and find it meaningful in terms of contributing in this space.

Eli Golovey

2 Theory and Literature Review

2.1 The Resource-Based View of the firm

The theory of the Resource Based View (RBV) of the firm originated in the 1980's with the seminal work of Wernerfelt (1984). The development and popularity of Porter's Five Forces Model (Porter, 1979) created a framework to evaluate industries but did not explain the varied performance of heterogeneous firms within the same industry (Barney, 1991).

The theory is concerned primarily with the assets of the firm. These assets were defined as the tangible and intangible assets in the early literature (Wernerfelt, 1984), in an attempt to help understand why some firms enjoy a competitive advantage over others within the same industry (Barney, 1991). The Resource Based View (RBV) proposes that it is the assets and use of those assets that provides some firms within the same industry a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The early literature also starts to define which resources are strategic in nature and which are not. This began with Barney (1991) defining strategic resources as those that are valuable in terms of exploiting opportunities and/or neutralizing threats, are rare within the industry, must be perfectly imitable and does not have strategically equivalent substitutes for the resource (the RVIN framework).

The RBV supposes that, should firms contain resources that meet these criteria, these should become sources of sustainable competitive advantage. The main assumption of the RBV is that these strategic resources are heterogeneously distributed amongst competing firms. The impact that they cause in terms of generating sustained competitive advantage can be long lasting and their presence helps explain why some firms consistently outperform others (Barney, 2001). The RBV has contributed to the understanding of the importance of key fields such as Human Resources, Finance and Marketing and Entrepreneurship in terms of their contribution to the development of strategic resources (Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001). Over time, the RBV has developed into a prominent theory in the management space, advancing our understanding of organizational relationships (Barney, Ketchen Jr, & Wright, 2011) and how organizations earn profit differentials over competitors (Makadok, 2011). By 2011 the RBV had seemingly reached maturity as a theory (Barney et al., 2011).

A key critique of the Resource Based View Theory is the definition of resources. The early definition of "anything that can be thought of as a strength or weakness of a firm" (Wernerfelt, 1984, p.172) and "all assets capabilities, firm dimensions, information, knowledge, etc.

controlled by a firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness" (J. Barney, 1991, p.101) has been criticized for being all encompassing, vague and open to interpretation. The definition of resources within the RBV in the various forms that they have been conceptualized, for example being either tangible or intangible, or financial capital, human capital and organizational capital, has been criticized for treating all resources the same and classifying everything within a firm as a resource (Kraaijenbrink, Spender, & Groen, 2010). Overall, there appears to be no agreement and/or understanding of how resources are conceptualized and it is important that the context be taken into account, particularly when shifting to other fields of study outside of strategic management such as entrepreneurship (Kellermanns, Walter, Crook, Kemmerer, & Narayanan, 2016), as the RBV can be applied in different ways depending on the empirical context of the application (Barney, 2001).

The RBV is increasingly being leveraged within the entrepreneurial field as a mechanism to determine entrepreneurial venture performance (Kellermanns et al., 2016) and explains how franchisors and franchisees convert resources and capabilities to improve their competitive advantage (Wu, 2015). In doing so, it is important for researchers to ensure that the resource dimensions are being considered in order for the right outcomes to be obtained (Kellermanns et al., 2016).

Whilst the RBV has relevance for entrepreneurs, Rangone (1999) noted that, while resources are needed by Entrepreneurs to develop a sustainable competitive advantage, the theory needed to look beyond the VRIN criteria. While strategic resources are important, entrepreneurs require basic capabilities in order to unlock their sustainable competitive advantage. Three critical resources were identified, namely innovation- , production- and market management capability. Entrepreneurial performance depends on the ability of the entrepreneur to successfully manage these three critical resources and align the use of these resources to the strategic intent of the firm (Rangone, 1999).

The resources to which the RBV has been applied have varied depending on the context and the definition of the various authors who have studied this field (Kellermanns et al., 2016; Rangone, 1999). The entrepreneur has been identified as a special heterogeneous resource within small to medium sized entities (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001; Barney et al., 2011; Rangone, 1999). Alvarez & Busenitz (2001) added two new resources from the entrepreneurial field namely entrepreneurial recognition defined as the recognition of opportunities and opportunity seeking behavior and the process of combining and organizing resources as entrepreneurial

specific resources that link the theory of the RBV and entrepreneurship (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001).

A number of critiques have been offered over the years and range from issues of tautology, a lack of empirical evidence, issues around measurement and identifying and explaining causal relationships (Kellermanns et al., 2016; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Lockett et al., 2009; Priem & Butler, 2001b, 2001a). Most have been debated at length and addressed but some still remain including the narrow conceptualisation of a firms competitive advantage and the indeterminate nature of resource and value (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). More recently, the emergence of the concept of Dynamic Capabilities has challenged the underlying path dependant assumptions of the RBV and highlighted the shortcomings of the theory especially with respect to high velocity markets (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Helfat & Peteraf, 2002, 2009; Lin & Wu, 2014). While the RBV may not be appropriate for some industries, the theory is appropriate for this study given the focus on analysing the differences of the different ownership types within a static franchise ecosystem.

2.2 The franchise business model

Franchising has emerged as a highly significant strategy for business growth, job creation and economic development (Kidwell, Nygaard, & Silkoset, 2007; Pizanti & Lerner, 2003). It has become a part of everyday life in developed countries and is seen by multinational as a viable and attractive business strategy in developing countries (Y. K. Lee, Kim, Seo, & Hight, 2015). There is also an increase of franchising being used by entrepreneurs looking to exploit geographic opportunities, particularly in the service industry (Gillis & Castrogiovanni, 2012). Franchising also limits the risk to the franchisor, as the economic based risks associated with running restaurants, including the high inherent industry risks associated with a high proportion of fixed assets within an outlet and the high industry reliance on consumer discretionary spending, are born by the franchisee (Koh, Rhou, Lee, & Singal, 2018).

A franchise can be defined as a business relationship that takes place as a result of a licencing agreement between two independent firms and has two primary forms; product distribution and entrepreneurial franchising (Wu, 2015). It is a source of entrepreneurial growth involving two different types of entrepreneurs, the franchisor, who manages its distribution and growth across geographies, and the franchisee, who exploits the franchise opportunity locally (Gillis, Combs, & Yin, 2018). The reasons why franchising is so popular have been analysed using the resource scarcity theory (Gillis & Castrogiovanni, 2012), which concluded that very often

franchisors will overcome the resource scarcity of managerial skills, local market knowledge, the cost of monitoring of performance and financial capital by franchising, particularly early in the firm life cycle (Gillis & Castrogiovanni, 2012; Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001).

The second theory that is often used to explain the attraction of franchising is Agency Theory. Agency Theory, in the context of franchising, states that the principal, in this case the franchisor, will conflict in conditions where it is difficult to monitor the agent's behaviour. Agency Theory suggests that as the cost of monitoring the agent increases, in the case of franchising this is usually as the number of outlets and/or geographical spread increases, the principal will trade residual profits for motivated franchisees with lower monitoring costs. Franchising allows the franchisor to mitigate against the two key hazards of company owned stores namely moral hazard which involves managers shirking and withholding effort when the franchisor is not able to effectively monitor performance. Shirking is also more prevalent in employee managers given the difference in incentive structures with franchisees and adverse selection where the employee managers misrepresent their abilities and the result is a manager who is not qualified for the position which leads to outlet underperformance and an increase in monitoring costs. (Gillis & Castrogiovanni, 2012).

Firms that are able to effectively manage the agency challenge tend to perform better and two common solutions have been put forth in the literature as a means to address the agency problem firstly, an in increase in monitoring activities and secondly, costs and incentive alignment between the franchisor and franchisee (Hoffman, Munemo, & Watson, 2016).

For the franchisee, franchising is arguably an easier path to wealth creation as they are purchasing substantial strategic and operational support (Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001). Once the franchisor matures and the franchisor has achieved the early marketing and distribution goals enabled by franchising, the franchisor may use available capital to purchase back outlets which exhibit superior performance, entering a plural ownership model (Thomas, O'Hara, & Musgrave, 1990).

With respect to entrepreneurial franchising, franchisees bring financial capital and highly motivated and competent managerial expertise which facilitate rapid growth but at the risk of franchisee 'free-riding' and other possible brand reputation risks (Gillis et al., 2018). Franchisee free riding relates primarily to the withholding of effort on the part of the franchisee. According to Kidwell et al (2007, p.525) "… free riding occurs when an individual obtains indivisible benefits from being a member of a group but does not bear a proportional share of the costs". When units deliver poor customer service, the consumer attributes the experience

to the brand, not the individual outlet (Cao & Kim, 2015). Common examples of free riding include failure to follow process, overcharging of customers, lack of effort regarding appearance, reduction in product quality or customer experience and can prove detrimental to the brand (Kidwell et al., 2007). In service franchise models, the cost of monitoring franchisees for free riding behaviour can be quite high, which could negatively affect performance (Barthélemy, 2008). This is often mitigated through the strengthening of franchisor-franchisee relationship which, if managed as a strong partnership, has been shown to positively impact on performance (Brown & Dev, 1997).

Trust was found to be a key determinant of performance in a franchise system. Within the context of the franchisor-franchisee relationship, trust for the franchisor can be defined as "the franchisor's willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of the franchisee based on the expectation that the franchisee will perform a particular action important to the franchisor irrespective of the ability to control the network partner" (Herz, Hutzinger, Seferagic, & Windsperger, 2016, p. 2). It is often used as a relational governance mechanism and works with the formal governance structures of the system to manage performance and brand risk. Formal governance mechanisms refer to the authoritative, contractual and ownership rules that govern the relationship. According to interorganisational literature, formal governance can vary negatively or positively with trust as a relational governance mechanism, with some studies suggesting it can be a substitute for formal governance in some cases. In certain environments trust can lower transactional costs and reduce the need for formal governance. In some franchise structures, trust can lead to increased franchisee decision making autonomy and have positive performance effects. The study found that trust acts as a facilitator of intangible knowledge transfer to franchisees, is affected negatively by environmental uncertainty and contributes positively to performance, both directly and indirectly (Herz et al., 2016). Herz et al. (2016) did find that the level of environmental uncertainty did greatly affect trust. Previous studies have also found that the level of performance of franchisees leads to increased satisfaction, trust and positive consequences for the relationship (Lewis & Lambert, 1991).

Importantly, some of that performance is related to the performance of the economy, over which the franchisor and franchisee have no control (Koh et al., 2018). To minimise that risk, the relationship is governed by the franchise agreement which specifies the level of autonomy and control in the relationship (Pizanti & Lerner, 2003). The franchisor exerts control in order to minimise brand risk, while franchisees require a proportionate amount of autonomy in order to adapt to local conditions. The size of the franchise, complexity of the concept, franchise age and range of contract all affect the amount of autonomy and control in the franchise business

model (Pizanti & Lerner, 2003). The dichotomy between control and autonomy can create tensions between the franchisor and franchisee that require ongoing management (Kidwell et al., 2007).

2.2.1 Company Owned and Operated (CO-O) vs. franchisee

One way to increase revenue and limit the risk of franchisee free riding is the option of plural form franchising, where the franchisor owns a series of CO-O outlets that exist alongside franchisee owned outlets (Gillis et al., 2018). Importantly, franchising has both advantages and disadvantages, meaning it needs to be used in the right situations (Barthélemy, 2008). Franchisee- and company owned structures differ considerably along key dimensions such as decision rights, incentive structures and operating flexibility. Franchisor participation, in plural form franchising, increases the franchise management capabilities of the franchisor and improves performance (El Akremi, Perrigot, & Piot-Lepetit, 2015; Gillis & Combs, 2009). The advantages include increased innovation, added growth, improved brand protection through concept uniformity and the increased ability to react locally to threats (El Akremi et al., 2015). Franchisors that develop and maintain these capabilities leverage effectively from the symbiotic benefits of franchisor owned outlets (Gillis et al., 2018). The performance impact of a plural ownership approach has been shown to be curvilinear and the right proportion need to be sought that is optimal for each chain based on their specific composition (El Akremi et al., 2015).

Cao & Kim (2015) found a difference in performance between ownership types and offered the difference in management structures as a possible explanation. Looking specifically at literature that has analysed the actual performance of CO-O vs. franchisee outlets, the literature suggests that franchisees outperform CO-O outlets. In their study of the financial performance of franchises Madanoglu et al. (2011) found that franchising firms outperform non franchising firms in the restaurant industry in America over a significant period of time. The study concluded that publicly held restaurant firms in the study performed better if they were franchised than if they were not. Aliouche & Schlentrich (2009) found that the US restaurant industry created more market value and generated a higher economic value add than non-franchisors. The proportion of franchisees within franchising chains appears to be increasing (Gillis & Castrogiovanni, 2012). Thomas et al (1990) found that even when franchisors targeted high performing outlets to invest in within their system, that those franchisors assessed experienced lower returns then franchisees. In their comprehensive analysis of the literature on the trends around plural form relative to age and size of a franchise,

Gillis & Castrogiovanni, (2012) found that there was little evidence to support the resource scarcity theory regarding the supposition that there will be a decrease in franchising as firms mature and that the evidence suggests that as firms in the restaurant industry mature, they franchise more and not less. Franchising also offers franchisors a means to limit the risks associated with the opening of restaurants and the risks inherent within the industry given the high impact of poor economic conditions on the restaurant industry (Koh et al., 2018).

A number of reasons have been offered in the literature for the performance differences. Franchisees have a natural incentive to maximise profit as they stand to lose their investment if they do not perform while CO-O stores may allocate efforts to non-value added activities particularly if conditions allow for free riding (Sorenson & Sørensen, 2001). A key advantage of the franchise system is that compensation and reward is directly tied to the performance of the franchisee outlet whereas the CO-O manager is typically on a fixed salary with limited incentive to perform (Barthélemy, 2008). Stores will act in a fit enhancing way with franchisees with flexible decentralised structures pursuing strategies that emphasize flexibility and local adaption while CO-O outlets will focus on strategies that emphasize predictability and control (Yin & Zajac, 2004).

While studies have in the past measured performance through stock market valuations, these evaluations do not take into account privately held firms and smaller firms, which constitute a high proportion of the restaurant industry both in American and elsewhere (C. Lee, Hallak, & Sardeshmukh, 2016). Where studies have offered reasons for performance differences such as those highlighted above, the findings related to this topic were usually postulated as possible implications and not as a direct result of a study focused on the performance difference between these ownership types.

2.3 The Quick Service Restaurant industry and industry performance

The restaurant industry can be divided into a number of restaurant types (Kim & Gu, 2003), and while no universally accepted segmentation exists, several classifications have been suggested in hospitality management literature (Hanks, Line, & Kim, 2017). Each segment does have a set of service norms upon which customer expectations differ (Hwang & Ok, 2013). While no universal performance measures exist for the restaurant industry (Jogaratnam, 1999), a number of commonly observed performance indicators exist such as

profitability, growth, customer satisfaction and meeting expectations of customers (C. Lee et al., 2016).

Consumers evaluate their restaurant experience in a holistic manner and any perception of poor service quality will affect the perception of the brand (Cao & Kim, 2015). Customer satisfaction within the restaurant industry incorporates a number of typical measures including waiting time, quality of service, responsiveness of customer facing employees, food quality and consistency and convenience (Gupta, McLaughlin, & Gomez, 2007). Importantly in terms of this study, customers are unable to distinguish between ownership types and should experience and hold both to the same standard (Cao & Kim, 2015).

Common attributes for the QSR restaurant are a reliance on narrow menus, catering to a price sensitive customer and the development of habit forming purchases on the part of the customer (Muller & Woods, 1994). Customer decision attributes typically revolve around low price, speed and time saving, and consistency (Muller & Woods, 1994). Given the focus on speed within the QSR industry, service excellence is a source of sustainable competitive advantage (White & Schneider, 2005). Service quality is considered one of the key facets in terms of customer perceptions of restaurant brands and experiences and is considered as a shortcut to achieving increased levels of customer satisfaction (Cao & Kim, 2015). Human capital is a particular resource that, within the QSR industry, if enhanced to the requisite level can lead to service excellence (Ployhart, Van Iddekinge, & MacKenzie Jr, 2011) and lower critical service issues which linger in customer minds and can result in a reduction of repeat customers (Harrington, Ottenbacher, Staggs, & Powell, 2012).

Studies have identified a link between customer satisfaction and repeat purchases in the QSR industry, with waiting time particularly being identified as the most important element of customer satisfaction that influences repeat purchase intentions. While the exact impact of repeat purchase intention on performance varies from restaurant type and brand, it has been found to correlate positively across a number of studies. The core elements of restaurant operations seem to yield the highest impact on repeat purchase intentions. Particularly serving delicious food at an appropriate costs, attentive service and cheerful greeting have the highest effect (Gupta et al., 2007).

Jogaratnam (1999) assessed performance of restaurant firms in five dimensions attempting to differentiate the strategic posture of high and low performers and found in that study that in four of the five assessed dimensions, high performing firms differed from low performing firms. The study found that high performing firms had low levels of aggressiveness defined as the

firms' propensity to directly and intensely challenge rivals with the aim of increasing market position at a faster rate using activities such as price cutting and aggressive spending, adopting a futuristic orientation, emphasising higher degrees of innovation and being more proactive then the low performers in the study (Jogaratnam, 1999).

This was supported by C. Lee et al. (2016) who found that innovation activities improve the performance of restaurant firms. It was also found in that same study that the quality of the human capital within the restaurant, specifically the restaurant owner, has an indirect relationship with performance that then supports activities enabled through the strategic position of the firm (C. Lee et al., 2016). While innovation in general is understood in reference to the restaurant industry, innovation usually refers to creative ways of satisfying customers rather than technological breakthrough (Li, Ching-Yick Tse, & Zhao, 2009).

In franchise environments, the level of market orientation which generates the performance discussed above will be driven by the franchisor for the system. The franchisor will set the tone for the franchisees in terms of their market orientation and drive to deliver on customer expectations and identify innovation. This can be particularly effective if a two-way communication channel is established that allows for feedback to the franchisor, who has the power to adjust system wide components of the franchise (Y. K. Lee et al., 2015).

2.4 Entrepreneurial drive and motivation in the restaurant industry

Human motivation plays a critical role in the entrepreneurial process and entrepreneurs could be motivated by a number of possible factors including but not limited to the need for achievement, propensity for risk taking, the need for locus of control, self-efficacy and goal setting.

Additionally, entrepreneurs exhibit certain characteristics, such as high levels of independence and the valuation of independence. Entrepreneurs also generally seem to have high levels of drive which include elements of ambition, goals, persistence and stamina that allow entrepreneurs to put forth the effort to bring their ideas to life. Lastly, egotistic passion, defined as a passionate selfish love of the work (Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003)often forms a great driving force.

This was supported by C. Lee et al. (2016) who found that there was a correlation between the level of Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (ESE) and restaurant performance as, the higher the

level of ESE, the higher the drive and goal setting of the entrepreneur, particularly with respect to driving innovation and identifying market opportunities.

Entrepreneurial motivation has been found to have a beneficial effect on venture growth and, along with the ability to assemble and organise resources, are predictors of new venture growth (Baum & Locke, 2004). Specifically, the motivational influences of both the drive to survive and the impact of unlocking the opportunity influence entrepreneurial performance (Luan & Li, 2019).

2.5 Corporate entrepreneurship and rigidity

Given the impact of entrepreneurship characteristics on the performance of restaurant firms, it is important to understand how entrepreneurial characteristics, and the lack thereof, impact on firm performance. Corporate entrepreneurship is defined as “the concept of supporting employees to think and behave like entrepreneurs within the confines of an existing organisational structure” (Kennedy, 2018).

Corporate entrepreneurship encompasses five attributes namely proactiveness which revolves around the ability to experiment and initiate action as needed, the existence of aspirations beyond current capability that drive organisations to set new goals, drive continuous improvement and find better combinations for the resources of the firm, a team orientation that will build coalitions within the organisation to support creative individuals and ideas, the capacity to resolve dilemmas which allows organisations to surmount challenges that need to be conquered in order to move the organisation forward and learning capability which is critical for organisations in terms of being able to drive change without becoming frozen in fixed patterns of thought (Stopford & Baden-Fuller, 1994).

Corporate entrepreneurship takes shape through strategic renewal, innovation and corporate venturing (Bierwerth, Schwens, Isidor, & Kabst, 2015).

As firms grow larger and become more established, firms tend to develop bureaucratic structures and controls that impede innovation and flexibility (Li et al., 2009). This leads to manager risk aversion to entrepreneurial activities and innovation (Hitt, Hoskisson, & Ireland, n.d.). Within the restaurant industry, firms that allocate a high proportion of shares to management also tend to franchise less as management becomes more risk averse and becomes comfortable with the profit taking from CO-O outlets (Koh et al., 2018). All firms exist

along a continuum ranging from highly entrepreneurial to highly conservative in nature (Barringer & Bluedorn, 1999). Corporate entrepreneurship has been found to have a positive impact on performance, with innovation and corporate venturing leading way in terms of positive impact (Bierwerth et al., 2015).

In their assessment of corporate entrepreneurship within the restaurant industry, Li et al. (2009) found that high levels of corporate entrepreneurship was linked to high levels of environmental scanning, planning flexibility, shorter planning horizons, locus of planning and financial controls (Li et al., 2009).

Looking at the other end of the spectrum, the bureaucracy and governance of the corporate environment can have a negative effect on management decision making and organisational agility (Durden & Pech, 2006). Agile organisations have a combination of speed, flexibility of their system and ability to respond that allows them to effectively react to threats and opportunities (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009). Empirical studies have found significant evidence of the positive impact of performance and decision making speed, particularly in dynamic environments where the need to exploit short lived opportunities is key (Kownatzki, Airways, Walter, Floyd, & Lechner, 2013). Firms that fail to align their operations with the external environment in a timely manor risk being outpaced by competitors (D'Aveni, Dagnino, & Smith, 2010). Within organisations that have adopted multi-business organisational structures such as the CO-O structures with the restaurant industry, decision making is often constrained by control and structural requirements at corporate level (Kownatzki et al., 2013).

In organisations where corporate control over multiple entities exists, such as the relationship between the franchise owner and CO-O outlets, a number of mediators enhance decision making speed. These were identified as transparency/alignment between the corporate level entity and the entities that it controls, an outcome orientation within the organisation to drive performance and outputs, participation and engagement between employees and management and between management structures in the parent company and the entities within the structure, trust between all key stakeholders within the organisation and timely feedback. The same study identified the corporate control types most likely to enable the above mediators and found that a combination of goal setting, extrinsic incentives, and decision process control enhanced the effectiveness of the mediators and led to improved decision speed (Kownatzki et al., 2013).

2.6 Conclusion

The literature reveals that much content and interest exists in terms of trying to understand the performance differences between firms that have franchisees and those that do not. However, the literature has thus far focused only on performance at a macro level between competing firms and not by ownership types within the same firm. Available literature has primarily focused on whether there is a performance difference, and not in terms of trying to understand why that phenomenon exists. Another challenge with the existing literature is the predominant use of both the Resource Scarcity Theory and Agency Theory in franchising research. While these do go some way towards explaining what we know about franchising to this point, they have limited the outcomes of franchising research. Gillis & Castrogiovanni, (2012) highlighted this issue and proposed the RBV as a promising theory for franchising research. The last challenge those that have tried to analyse this problem have had, is the access to information given that many of the firms in the QSR industry are privately held with limited publicly available information.

Therefore, the opportunity that exists with the current study is to understand, using the RBV of the firm, why and how franchisees are able to utilise the resources at their disposal to higher and better purpose, than CO-O outlets in the QSR industry.

The research problem and propositions have assisted with addressing this gap in the literature by understanding why the performance advantage phenomenon for franchisees exists. In doing so, the study should be of relevance, both to researchers in the field of entrepreneurship and to business management. In addition, the study will be of value to practitioners within franchise systems as plural form ownership is quite prevalent in a number of business environments.

The research question used for the study was: Within a franchise system, where the business model is well defined, and there should be no performance differences between ownership types, why has research shown that franchisees outperform CO-O stores? The research question was answered using the three propositions below to guide the study:

1. The RBV explains why and how franchisees are able to use resources at their disposal to establish a competitive advantage over CO-O outlets.

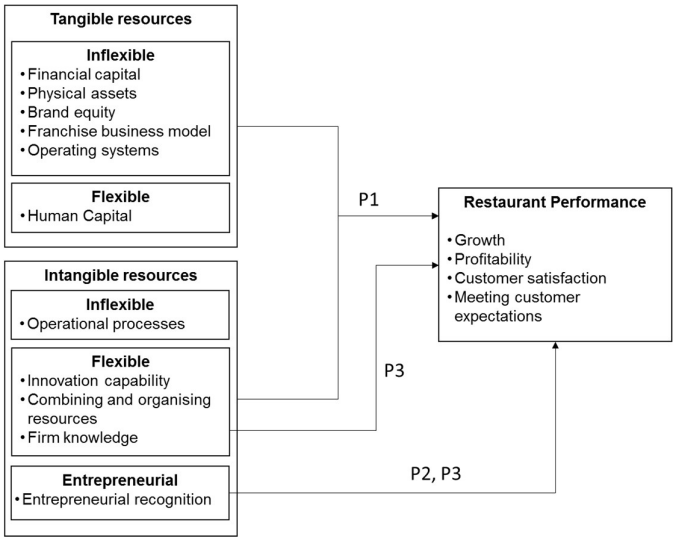
2. There are specific ownership and management related intangible resources that entrepreneurs are able to access and utilize that give franchisee operated restaurants an advantage over CO-O restaurants.
3. Increased performance by franchisees is linked to the exploitation of flexibility within the franchise operation system and processes.

The propositions above were answered through examining the performance of franchisee and CO-O outlets in a single franchise system. The theoretical lens was the RBV and each of the resource types where franchisees are able to implement changes or are unique to a franchisee were assessed. The study sought to understand what differences exist within those resources and what impact those differences have within the business that allow franchisees to enjoy a sustainable competitive advantage where none should exist. The research has suggested that the performance advantage leads to diminished system performance, the inefficient use of resources and fluctuating growth and profits for both the franchisor and the system as a whole.

Figure 1 below outlines how the RBV was applied. Flexible resources refer to the resources within the system, at the disposal of the franchisee, that can be adjusted, while those that are listed as inflexible are homogenous and cannot be manipulated by franchisees or CO-O outlets. Entrepreneurial resources are those that, according to the literature, are only available to entrepreneurs and are not available for CO-O.

Figure 1

Proposed application of RBV theory to research problem



3 Research methodology and design

3.1 Choice of methodology

Interpretivism is a philosophy which adopts the position that our understanding of reality is a social construct by human actors and differs from positivism where it is believed that data collected by the researcher is objective and aligned to prior theories and hypothesis (Walsham, 1995). Given the nature of the research question, this study was conducted using an interpretivist philosophy.

The study was deductive in nature. Deductive reasoning is theory testing as opposed to theory building and begins with a specific theory that is then tested against a specific instance to see if it applies (Hyde, 2000). Since, this study was testing for the differences in operations by collecting data from interviews, and was considering the data against the RBV Theory, an existing theory, deduction is the most appropriate approach.

Mono method is a study using a single data collection technique and corresponding analysis procedures (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2008). As the study was conducted using qualitative analysis only, the study is a mono method study.

Exploratory research is the process of examining and investigating in order to answer questions or gain understanding in an area or topic (Stebbins, 2001). Given that the purpose of the study was to understand and draw insights into how franchisees were able to use resources at their disposal more effectively than CO-O entities within the same business model, the study used an exploratory research design.

The study employed a cross sectional survey in order to generate the primary data. The survey strategy is widely used and easy to understand and is suitable to answer questions such as who, what and where (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Cross-sectional studies are conducted on a particular topic at a particular time and are often used to determine prevalence, are reasonably quick but can often struggle to differentiate between cause and effect (Mann, 2003). Given the nature of the study and time limitations, this is a cross-sectional study.

The study used structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Structured interviews were appropriate for this study as it allowed for the flexibility to ask questions and gain insights from the four different population groups listed below in section 3.2.

3.2 Population

This study was conducted entirely within a single franchise system within the QSR industry in South Africa. Respondents for the study were drawn from the relevant population for this study which included four groups:

1. Senior leadership within the QSR franchise system who were able to provide insights into the different support structures and operations practices of the CO-O portfolio vs. franchisees.
2. Area managers who are responsible for the daily management and support for both CO-O and franchisee outlets. The area managers were able to provide insights into how franchisees structure and utilise the resources of their firms differently to that of the CO-O estate. In terms of how the firm structures its operation, the area managers were to provide the same management support for the CO-O estate as franchisees provide for their individual outlets.
3. Franchisees who are able to provide insights into how they utilise their resources within their individual operations and outlets.
4. Restaurant management who are able to provide details of how resources are utilised within their specific outlets.

3.3 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for the study was the firm level. Respondents will be selected from firms within the system that fall into the four categories of the population listed in 3.2 above.

3.4 Sampling method and size

The list of the respondents was available to provide a sampling frame. However, even though the sampling frame existed, the study employed non-probability sampling. The reason for using non-probability sampling is that across the outlet estate, there are outlets of varying size, performance levels, geographic advantage and other relevant characteristics that may result in probability sampling returning results that may not be particularly meaningful, especially when looking at respondent types three and four from section 3.2 above.

The study therefore used purposeful sampling to assist with achieving triangulation, which can be achieved using purposeful sampling with multiple perspectives (Patton, 1999). The intent was to use the perspectives of the four respondent groups listed above to identify common

themes around the key research questions and to ensure that a holistic perspective was achieved, and key insights are generated. For respondent groups three and four, the performance and store characteristics were analysed to develop a purposive sample. This was to ensure that when comparing the operations and answers from the interviews, the differences in how the resources of the firm are utilised are compared between outlets that should produce similar results.

A minimum of three interviews were conducted with each of the four respondent groups with a total of 20 interviews conducted in total. The demographics of the participants can be seen in Table 1 below. The aim was to ensure that the study reaches high levels of reliability, achieves triangulation of sources and reached data saturation. Data saturation is the stage where further data collection yields little evidence of new themes, insights and perspectives (Suri, 2011).

Table 1

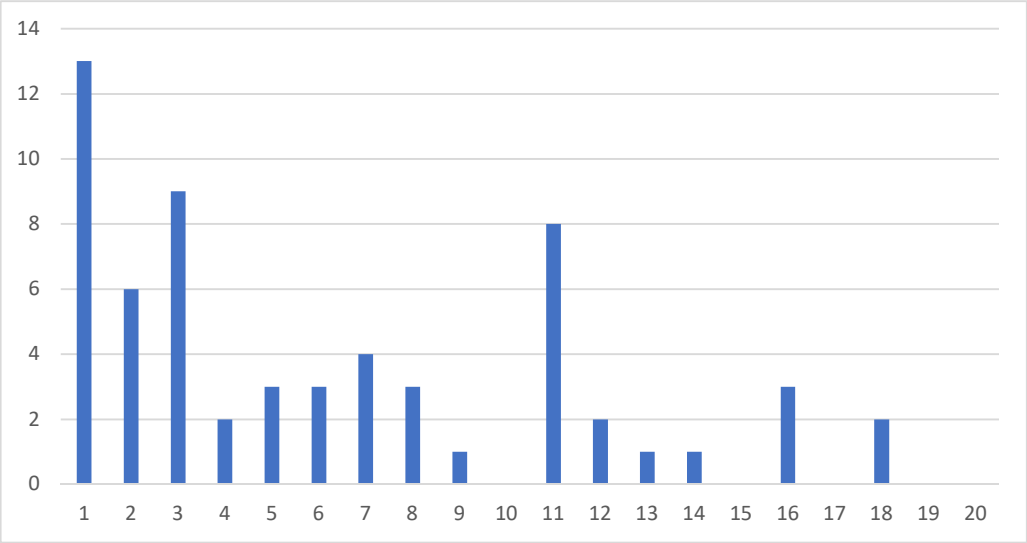
Demographics of participants

Characteristics	n	%
Population group		
• Senior managers	3	15%
• Regional managers	4	20%
• Franchisees	4	20%
• Restaurant managers o Franchise o CO-O	9 5 4	45%
Participant employer		
CO-O	11	55%
Franchisee	9	45%

Saturation typically occurs within 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) and was achieved by interview 19 of the study due to interview scheduling which saw all four franchisees interviewed last. the number of codes created by interview can be seen below in graph 1.

Graph 1

Breakdown of new codes created by interview



3.5 Measurement instrument

As stated in section 3.1 above, the study used a structured interview as the measurement instrument for collection of primary data. An interview guide that contained three sections was developed.

The first section was an introductory section to allow for the context of the interview to be explained to the participant, established the boundaries of the interview, explained how the data will be used and consent obtained according to the rules and guidelines of research at GIBS.

The second section covered demographic information needed for later segmentation, to enhance the credibility of the study and provide evidence of interview quality internally within GIBS.

The third section contained the questions required to answer the four research questions identified in section one above. The Resource Based View was used as a base and the section contained questions that allowed for the generation of insights, themes and perspectives to answer the research question and test the three research propositions. A slightly different set of questions was asked of respondent groups one and two as they had visibility over the entire system, including both ownership types and their operation. The same theoretical constructs were probed to respondent groups three and four but with slightly different phrasing to reflect

the fact they only have sight of their operations, not the entire network. The list of potential interview questions can be found in Appendix 1 below.

3.6 Data gathering process

The data was gathered over a 6-week period once ethical clearance was obtained. 18 of the 20 interviews were conducted face to face in an environment that was convenient for the participant and conducive to a safe and meaningful conversation. As the interviews included respondents across South Africa, two had to be conducted telephonically.

Consent was obtained, and anonymity ensured. All interviews were recorded for later transcription and coding. In addition, field notes were captured immediately after each interview to add to the context and identify any issues that may affect reliability or validly of the interview and study.

3.7 Analysis approach

All interviews were transcribed in full, either by the researcher or an approved transcriber. The transcriptions were then coded and analysed using ATLAS.ti.

As the approach to the study was deductive, content analysis will be used for the data analysis. Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Three types of content analysis exist, conventional, directed and summative. Of the three, directed is most appropriate when prior research exists regarding a phenomenon, but is incomplete and the approach is deductive (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As such, the directed content analysis approach was used for this study. The codes for analysis were developed and used with the data in ATLAS.ti to generate categories and then themes with accompanying identified relationships. Given that the study is deductive in nature, a code book was developed prior to the commencement of the coding and loaded in ATLAS.ti. As the coding was completed, additional codes were created based on the content in the interview. The code book can be found in Appendix 2 with codes created during coding marked with an "*". Once the themes were established from the primary data, they were combined with the findings from literature in order to generate the discussion of results and conclusion sections of the study.

3.8 Quality controls

The overall intent was for the study to contain a robust and well tested questionnaire, a relevant and credible sample and a sample size sufficient to achieve saturation and triangulation through the incorporation of four different elements within the population. This allowed for the collection of relevant themes, insights and perspectives while affording the study high levels of reliability and validity.

Validity is defined as the extent to which data collection method(s) accurately measure what they were intended to measure, and the research is about what it was intended to cover. Reliability refers to the extent to which data collection methods and analysis procedures will produce consistent findings (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The use of a focused and relevant questionnaire, the selection of a relevant purposeful sample, the survey pilot, the use of field notes to supplement the interviews, the use of ATLAS.ti for coding and a high number of respondents should ensure that the study achieves a high level of validity and reliability.

3.9 Limitations

At this stage, the following limitations are anticipated for the study. More may be added once the actual study is concluded and the primary and secondary data have been analysed.

- The study will be using a sample rather than the entire population, limiting the insights and findings to the perspectives of those that are to be interviewed. As such, the sample is not generalizable from sample to population (Myers, 2018)
- Given the nature of qualitative research, the study will not be quantifiable and verifiable (Myers, 2018)
- ‘Objectivity’ maybe difficult to maintain/determine (Myers, 2018)
- As qualitative research is mostly open-ended, the participants have more control over the content of the data collected. As a result, the researcher is not able to verify the results objectively against the scenarios stated by the respondents (Chetty, 2016)
- As the researcher is involved in the development of the codes and findings, different conclusions can be derived based on the same information depending on the personal characteristics of the researcher (Maxwell, 2005)
- The study will be conducted within a single franchise system with a specific operating model in terms of the control and autonomy provided to the CO-O and franchisee

- Firstly, the study was conducted within a single franchise ecosystem which may have resulted in some of the findings being unique to this system. Furthermore, while the study considered a number of population groups to improve validity and reliability, the sample of each population group was relatively small. Hence the results may be different in other franchise systems and the study should be replicated with larger samples sizes and other franchise ecosystems to enhance the above findings and build on the outcomes in this study.
- Secondly, the franchise ecosystem in the study is fairly mature and differentiated within the industry that it operates with a strong brand and mature franchisees. Poor performing franchisees that presented brand risks or failed to effectively deliver business results have largely been eliminated from the system over the last several decades leading to a highly effective franchisee group for the study. Findings in a less mature environment may lead to a different result both in terms of the findings and also the difference in performance between ownership types.

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5 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1 – Proposed research instrument questions

Interview Guide for Research interviews

Date: .....

Interviewer: .....

Interviewee: .....

Designation: .....

Years in organisation and years in current role:
.....

Restaurant name (if applicable): .....

Purpose of the interview – Confidential

I am a student currently completing my MBA at GIBS. I am currently conducting research into the performance differences between franchise and corporate owned quick service restaurants in South Africa and within Nando's.

The aim of this interview is to elicit views with respect to the following:

1. What franchisees do differently when compared to corporate restaurants in running their business
2. How franchisees use the resources at their disposal differently to corporate restaurants

The interview should take 45-60 minutes to complete. We assure you that the information disclosed in this interview will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of the research. Any findings will be consolidated and presented without being referenced to any individual participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

Do I have your permission to record this interview and proceed with the questions?

Thank you for your assistance!

Area manager and above

1. What are the key measures for you that determine if a restaurant is performing?

2. In your experience, based on your view of performance, why do you believe that franchisees perform differently to corporate restaurants?

3. In your view, are there any particular aspects of running a restaurant where franchisees have greater flexibility?
    - If so – please explain.

4. In your view, do you believe that franchisees are quicker to identify potential opportunities?
    - How has this helped franchisees to unlock opportunities?
    - Do you have any examples?

5. In your experience, in what ways do franchisees manage HR differently when compared to corporate stores?

6. In your view, in what way does the type and nature of the innovations developed in franchisee restaurants differ to that of corporate restaurants?

7. In your experience, how do franchisees structure their businesses differently to corporate?

8. In your view what is the impact of the different structure?

9. In your view, how does franchisee understanding of the Nando's business model and how to effectively operate within the business model differ to that of corporate stores? If so, how does this impact on operations?

10. Knowing what I am trying to discover with my research, is there anything else I haven't asked you that you might be useful for me to know?

Restaurant manager and franchisee

1. In your experience, do you believe you have a performance advantage over corporate/franchisee restaurants? Why do you believe that is the case and do you have any specific examples?

2. What are the key measures for you that determine if your restaurant is performing?

3. Where do you have flexibility to make changes to how you run your business and where do you have no choice? Please elaborate on your understanding of flexibility and if possible, give some examples

4. How do you identify opportunities in running your store to improve performance?

5. (**Franchisee**) To what extent are you able to manage the elements of your business to identify and exploit opportunities in the market?

6. (**CO-O manager**) In your view, how much flexibility do you have to identify opportunities in your market to improve sales and to what extent are you able to exploit those opportunities?

7. How do you staff your business for success?
    - Importance and level of Patrao
    - Cross training?
    - How much investment in training and cross skilling?
    - Staff incentives?

8. What do you focus on during the month to drive good performance in your restaurant(s)?

9. Knowing what I am trying to discover with my research, is there anything else I haven't asked you that you might be useful for me to know?

7.2 Appendix 2 – Code book

Codes generated during transcription	Codes generated prior to transcription
*Administration & compliance	asset
*Agility and speed	autonomy
*Area manager capacity	Brand equity
*Business model understanding	brand risk
*Cashflow	competitive advantage
*Community engagement	competitiveness
*Competing priorities	control
*Continous improvement	CO-O
*Corporate compliance	corporate
*Corporate management	customer satisfaction
*Corporate overheads	efficiency
*Corporate rigidity	effort
*Corporate support	Entrepreneurial management
*Cost management	entrepreneurial recognition
*Customer feedback and engagement	entrepreneurs
*Division of labour	financial capital
*Employee motivation	Firm knowledge
*Employee recruitment	flexible
*Expense control	franchise
*External procurement	franchisee
*Franchisee brand exit	free-riding
*Franchisee brand trust	growth
*Franchisee investment and commitment	Human capital
*Franchisee performance management	inflexible
*Franchisee quality	innovation capability
*Geographic advantage	intangible
*Gross profit	local market knowledge
*Head office distance	managerial skills
*Head Office non-performance	market management capability
*Industrial relations	Negative
*Inventory management	New channels
*Labour cost efficiency	Operating systems
*Labour scheduling	Operational processes
*Lack of capacity	Operational risk management
*Lack of focus	performance
*Lack of responsivness	Physical assets
*Lease negotation	Positive
*Like for like growth	production capability
*Local marketing	profitability
*Manager capability	QQ
*Manager empowerment	RBV
*Manager support	resource scarcity
*Menu mix	risk
*Operations manager	Sales budget
*Opportunity realisation	Service excellence
*Owner performance impact	strategic resources
*Ownership and accountability	sustainable
*People management	tangible
*Performance Management	
*Reactive analysis	
*Recruitement speed	
*Restaurant management focus	
*Safe environment	
*Staff benefits	
*Staff incentives	
*Staff welfare and happiness	
*Stock management	
*Structure	
*System management	
*Systems and data	
*Ticket average	
*Upselling	
*Word of mouth recruiting	

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Characteristics of small business leadership from employees' perspective: A qualitative study

Eka Diraksa Putra[a,*], Seonghee Cho[b]

[a] School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 17 Science Museum Road TST East, Kowloon, Hong Kong
[b] Program Coordinator, Hospitality Management, 105 Eckles Hall, University of Missouri Columbia, MO, United States

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Restaurants

ABSTRACT

Leadership is a much-studied topic, and yet, the topic still attracts researchers. As an essential factor in every organization, however, leadership contributes significantly to a business failure, especially in small independent restaurant businesses and this could be due to the unique operations of the industry and the lack of leadership studies on small hospitality businesses. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring the ideal characteristics for small independent restaurant leaders to become an effective leader using a qualitative approach from their employees' perspectives. Qualitative data were collected through four focus groups and one dyadic interview. The findings of the qualitative data analysis revealed nine themes: respectful, compassionate, effective communicator, experienced, effective delegator, gives recognition, sociable, emotionally controlled, organized. The paper discussed implications of the findings for small independent restaurant businesses and the hospitality industry in general as well as implications for theory.

1. Introduction

As a sector comprised of small businesses that employs the largest number of workers in Western countries (Wagener et al., 2010), the restaurant industry contributes significantly to the U.S. economy. According to the National Restaurant Association, the industry was expected to contribute $798.7 billion in sales to the economy in 2017 (National Restaurant Association, 2017). In addition, the restaurant sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in the U.S. economy and employs approximately 14.7 million people or about 10% of the total U.S. workforce and it is the second largest employer after the government (Batt et al., 2014; National Restaurant Association, 2017). Recent data have shown that the restaurant industry remains one of the steadiest contributors to private sector growth, with 40,200 new jobs in February 2016, and total restaurant employment is expected to reach 16.3 million by 2027, which includes approximately 1.6 million new jobs provided by the restaurant industry (National Restaurant Association, 2017).

However, restaurants are vulnerable to failure. Previous studies have shown that about 30% of restaurant businesses fail during their first year of operations and, among many other problems, leadership has been held accountable as one of the roots of these problems and failures (Everett and Watson, 1998; Parsa et al., 2011, 2005; Valdiserri and Wilson, 2010). Parsa et al. (2011) reported that approximately 9000 or, as mentioned earlier, 30% of independent restaurants fail during their first year. This failure rate contributes to a potential loss of $5.20 billion in restaurant revenue from the U.S. economy.

Despite numerous studies of leadership, especially in hospitality industry contexts, previous studies have shown that no single leadership style can be applied to all situations and not all leaders employ the same leadership style for successfully achieving organizational goals (Valdiserri and Wilson, 2010; Zenger and Folkman, 2009). In addition, most leadership studies have been conducted using the employees of large companies such as hotels or chain restaurants, neglecting the employees of small businesses, especially of small independently owned restaurants owned by an individual(s) who work at the property daily. As a result, the development of leadership practices among small restaurant businesses is limited because considerably less time has been spent discussing leadership approaches within a small business setting, including of these small independently owned restaurants. According to the NPD Group (2016), 630,511 restaurants were operating in the United States in spring 2015 with 340,135 counted as independents.

Moreover, the owners of small independently owned restaurants are generally the leaders of their businesses, and, because of limited resources, they must understand almost all job functions needed for the business (e.g., cook, cashier, and server). Compared to chains or franchised restaurants, small independently owned restaurants tend to face a lack of management skills. Owners must also make decisions quickly

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: eka.d.putra@polyu.edu.hk (E.D. Putra), Choseo@missouri.edu (S. Cho).

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and often without involving subordinates in the decision-making process, which can minimize employee motivation as they feel their opinions do not matter to the owner, and this feeling contributes to employees determining to leave their job (Detert and Burris, 2007). As a result, small independently owned restaurants experience a high failure rate. Because the unique operations of each small independent restaurant business affect each owner's management style, it is important to understand the effective leadership characteristics for this role. Therefore, leadership in the context of small independently owned restaurants needs to be explored and this study aims to answer the following research questions: first, how do employees perceive an effective leader in small independently owned restaurants; and second, what ideal characteristics for leaders of small independently owned restaurants do employees perceive?

2. Literature review

2.1. Leadership theories

Leadership is a much-studied topic, and yet, the topic still attracts researchers due to the rich complexity of the interactions between leaders, followers, and their circumstances (Badshah, 2012; Kreitner and Kinicki, 2013; Park and Leeds, 2013). As leadership theories have been examined in a variety of studies, among many factors, Wren (1994) stated that the characteristics of leaders (personal traits, culture, and behavior) were factors that influence the success or failure in producing results (as cited in Valdiserri and Wilson, 2010). Amid the leadership theories of the past, approaches based on traits, behavior (styles), and contingency were the three upon which most leadership studies were based (Hsu et al., 2003; Northouse, 2015; Ogbeide et al., 2008).

Researchers studying the traits of leadership earlier in the 20th century believed that great leaders had special traits that not every person had and that they were born with these traits (Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948). Studies of leadership behavior, unlike studying traits, which focuses mostly on the leaders themselves, focus on what leaders do and how they behave, whether in a task or a relationship (Ogbeide, 2011, 2008). Empirical evidence has shown that the behaviors of leaders have a great influence on the behaviors of their employees, which in turn can positively affect organizational performance (Chung-Wen, 2008; Clark et al., 2009; McGrath and MacMillan, 2000; Nahavandi, 2006). The last approach, known as the contingency approach, is situational leadership which suggests that leaders should act based on situational factors and should be expected to adapt to different situations and adjust their leadership styles accordingly (McMahon, 2010; Northouse, 2015; Ogbeide, 2011, 2008). Since the early 1980s, researchers have introduced newer concepts to better describe leadership styles such as leader-member exchange theory (LMX), transformational and transactional leadership, and servant leadership. Hence, numerous empirical leadership studies to seek outcomes of the leadership approach such as employees have been conducted in almost every field of studies, including the hospitality industry.

2.2. Leadership studies in the hospitality industry

The hospitality industry is known as a "people" industry because, in addition to providing its customers with physical, tangible products, the industry also provides intangible services, such as face-to-face interactions with customers that require highly service-oriented employees (Putra et al., 2017; Teng and Barrows, 2009). Furthermore, the nature of the work in the hospitality industry is also unique in that it is known for being labor intensive and having an unfavorable work environment with low wages, long working hours, few career opportunities, and time pressures which provide an excellent environment for exploring issues of human resources management and organizational behaviors regarding leadership (Barron et al., 2007; Erkutlu, 2008; Kusluvan et al., 2010; Minett et al., 2009; Pittaway et al., 1998; Singh et al., 2007; Wong and Chan, 2010). Therefore, effective leadership is crucial, indeed essential, for the industry. As a result, a substantial number of leadership studies have been published in the hospitality industry literature that examine effective leadership styles and how they influence employees in hospitality settings.

An early study of leadership style in the hospitality industry stated that an autocratic style of leadership was popular in the industry because of its intensive focus on management (Worsfold, 1989). The use of an autocratic style in hospitality management can be attributed to the nature of jobs in the industry with an often unpleasant work environment or incompetent management style negatively affecting employee motivation (Barron et al., 2007; Kusluvan, 2003; Kusluvan et al., 2010).

However, according to Foels et al., (2000), the preferred leadership style in the hospitality industry is democratic. This was demonstrated by a study of 180 hotel employees at one hotel site over a four-year period from 1997 to 2000. This study reported that employees prefer leaders with a style that is not autocratic, and prefer a democratic style where leaders inform them of decisions with full explanations (Deery and Jago, 2001). Additionally, a study of 797 midlevel U.S. hotel chain managers and employees found that an autocratic leadership style is not appropriate for managing hotel employees because it can decrease their commitment to service quality. The study also found that an autocratic leadership style had no effect on employee shared values, role clarity, job satisfaction, or commitment (Clark et al., 2009). Employees from different generations such as Generation X and Millennials also tend to respond less favorably to an autocratic leadership style partly due to the negative perception of characteristics of the approach. However, different studies have also shown that the democratic style of leadership is not always applied by leaders or managers. For example, a study of 15 Egyptian and 16 foreign general managers of Egyptian five-star chain hotels found that 68.8% of foreign general managers and 40% of the Egyptians adopt an autocratic style of leadership at work. The study further explained that cultural and language barriers are why more foreign general managers than Egyptian general managers adopt the autocratic approach of leadership (El Masry et al., 2004).

Transactional and transformational leadership are another two approaches that have been studied extensively in the hospitality industry. By definition, transactional leadership is an approach focused on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance promoted through rewards and punishments (Breevaart et al., 2014). Unlike transactional leadership, which is similar to and based on autocratic leadership (Tracey and Hinkin, 1994), transformational leadership emphasizes the emotions, values, and creativity of employees. Transformational leaders offer idealized or charismatic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, and these characteristics help them motivate their followers to achieve organizational goals (García-Morales et al., 2012; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). In addition, transformational leaders tend to maintain strong relationships with their followers by establishing open communication and providing resources to achieve goals (Brownell, 2010; Erkutlu, 2008; Bass, 1999). Followers are likely to see transformational leaders as satisfying and effective leaders (Bass, 1999). Tracey and Hinkin (1994) conducted a study on large hotel management organization employees, seeking an answer to whether the transformational leadership style is effective and the right fit for leaders working in the hospitality industry. Their results showed that transformational leadership had a strong, positive correlation with all outcomes, while transactional did not have any significant relationship with the outcome measures. A different study of boutique hotel employees by Erkutlu (2008) supported the findings in Tracey and Hinkin (1994); the result showed that all characteristics of transformational leadership behavior were positively related to employees' satisfaction with supervision and their work, employees' commitment, and employees' performance.

Furthermore, Brownell (2010) examined studies from the past 25 years and argued that transformational leadership is the most relevant leadership for leaders in the hospitality industry. This was supported by a different study of 797 midlevel U.S. hotel chain managers and employees whose result stated that transformational leadership was an ideal leadership style in managing frontline hotel employees (Clark et al., 2009). A recent study of transformational leadership using five-star hotel employees in Egypt also showed that transformational leadership had a significant negative relationship with employees' job stress and job burnout (Salem, 2015).

In addition to transactional and transformational leadership, servant leadership is a recent leadership approach that has been argued to be a good fit for the hospitality industry (Brownell, 2010; Ispas and Teberian, 2012; Ling et al., 2017). Introduced by Greenleaf (2002), servant leadership gives leaders a primary purpose of serving others, especially employees, and its characteristics differ from other leadership styles. Specifically, leaders using the servant approach put their subordinates' needs, aspirations, and interests above their own and tend to serve them first as opposed to leading them (McMahon, 2010). Instead of using "I lead," servant leaders use "I serve" in their approach because they believe that the primary reason why leaders exist is to serve first, not to lead first (McMahon, 2010; Sendjaya and Sarros, 2002). Also, the primary focus of servant leadership is on developing team member(s) or employee(s), while, for example, the focus of transformational leadership is on the needs and goals of the organization (Brownell, 2010; Gregory Stone et al., 2004).

Furthermore, studies on servant leadership have shown that servant leadership approaches have the potential to improve organizational performance (as cited in Joseph and Winston, 2005), including organizational satisfaction (Laub, 1999), safety practices (Sarkus, 1996), productivity (Osborne, 1995), and financial performance (Melrose, 1998; Ruschman, 2002). In addition, (Babakus et al., 2010) studied 530 frontline bank employees in New Zealand and found that both customer orientation and servant leadership significantly reduce burnout and ultimately turnover intention. The results also showed that person-job fit mediates the influence of customer orientation and servant leadership on burnout and turnover intention. In a hospitality setting, a study of servant leadership analyzed the influence of servant leadership on employees' customer-oriented organizational citizenship behavior and found that there was a positive relationship that was mediated by leader-member exchange (Wu et al., 2013). Furthermore, a different study by Liden et al. (2014) on 961 employees working in 71 restaurant chains found that the servant leadership approach has a positive impact on restaurant performance and employee job performance, creativity, and customer service behaviors and a negative impact on employee turnover intention. Also, a recent study by Ling et al. (2017) on 1132 employee–supervisor pairs from 80 departments in 16 star-level hotels in China found that servant leadership approach has positive effects on group trust climate and employee work outcomes such as organizational commitment, work engagement, and work performance.

However, despite many studies on leadership in hospitality settings, the findings cannot be aggregated to provide a complete understanding of leadership in the hospitality setting, and this may be because leadership studies in the hospitality context are still in the early stage of development (Boyne, 2010). For example, despite the increased use of the transformational leadership construct and several studies claiming that the concept has substantial validity for predicting a number of outcomes, including leader performance and effectiveness as well as employee satisfaction and motivation (Harms and Credé, 2010), some scholars have criticized the theory because of several ambiguities (Bryman, 1992; Yukl, 1999b). For example, the definition of transformational is ambiguous because of the diverse components proposed by the theory. Also, the construct validity of the theory was doubted because of the overlapping content and high inter-correlation among the transformational behaviors. Boyne (2010) agreed and further mentioned that many transformational leadership studies in the hospitality industry "have pursued a range of research questions without specifically building upon existing knowledge from previous hospitality leadership studies" (p. 18).

In addition, most leadership measures have been developed using leaders or managers as the subject, neglecting subordinates' perspective. Because employees are the most valuable assets of every organization, exploring and understanding their perspective of leadership is crucial. Studies have shown that most employees leave their job because of leadership issues within an organization (Abbasi and Hollman, 2000; Holtom et al., 2005). Also, there has been a dearth of leadership studies within the small business context, including small independent restaurants, which has affected the development of leadership practices among small businesses (Cope, 2011; Cope et al., 2011; Kempster and Cope, 2010; Liden and Antonakis, 2009). As a result, little is known about the characteristics of leaders of small independent restaurants and their impact on employees' performance.

2.3. Small restaurant businesses and their characteristics

Small businesses are known for their importance in creating jobs and helping grow the economies of most countries (Legohérel et al., 2004). However, unlike large businesses, management systems in small businesses are known to be unorganized and not well established because of limited resources, such as capital and human assets, which means that small business leaders can have difficulty managing their businesses (Dawson, 2000; Kirby, 2006). Specifically, due to their size, small businesses do not have much time or capital for finding and hiring the right employees. As a result, to survive, they tend to hire employees who are under age 25 or over age 65 as their workforce with a high percentage of these employees having only a high school diploma, and these employees are most likely working in a service industry such as in restaurants (Headd, 2000).

The restaurant industry, especially small independently owned restaurants, is known for having characteristics such as hectic pace, high labor intensity, instability in employment, and a high level of employee turnover (Kusluvan et al., 2010). Unlike chain restaurants that have a system in place to help franchise owners tackle major issues such as human resources management (e.g., employee training, retention, satisfaction) and marketing (e.g., new products development, advertising), independent restaurants have very limited access to assistance in dealing with these issues, which causes owners or managers have to depend upon their expertise.

According to Banki and Ismail (2015), the main reason that small independent restaurant owners have for opening a restaurant is to fulfill human needs, such as to seek autonomy. Furthermore, due to the low entry barriers for the industry, a small independently owned restaurant is frequently funded by personal or family savings (Ahmad, 2015; Parsa et al., 2015; Smith, 2011). They also tend to perform most, if not all, of the leadership functions individually rather than collaboratively as large businesses such as chain restaurants do (Shailer, 1993). Small independent restaurant owners are also often required to be present at the restaurant on a daily basis to help run and control operations. Therefore, due to the uniqueness of the small independent restaurant businesses, which affects management styles, and a lack of leadership studies on small hospitality businesses, it is necessary to explore the leadership skills best suited for running a small independently owned restaurants. Additionally, there has been a dearth of leadership studies within small business contexts, including those in small independent restaurants, that has affected the development of leadership practices among small businesses (Cope, 2011; Cope et al., 2011; Currie et al., 2009; Kempster and Cope, 2010; Liden and Antonakis, 2009). As a result, little is known about the characteristics of leaders in small independent restaurants; thus, this study attempts to fill the substantial gap in this knowledge.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

A purposive sample population (Miles and Huberman, 1994) was sought using the following criteria to locate employees who worked at small independent restaurants: (a) at least 18 years old and (b) currently or previously employed at a small independent restaurant for at least six months. This study used the Small Business Administration's (SBA's) definition of small business: an independently owned and operated restaurant business that employs fewer than 500 employees. According to Parsa et al. (2015), about 93% of restaurants employ fewer than 50 people.

Participants were approached using several techniques to join one of several focus groups. Specifically, participants were recruited through a combination of snowball and convenience sampling techniques, such as sending announcements directly via e-mail, word-of-mouth, and flyers. Several instructors of hospitality management classes were asked for permission before distributing a recruitment letter via student email. Flyers were distributed to about 30 small independent restaurants in a town in the Midwestern United States. Restaurant owners were asked for permission to inform their employees of the study by placing a flyer(s) in an employee area or on a bulletin board. Participants who were recruited received $20 as compensation for their time and transportation at the end of each focus group, which lasted about 1–2 hours.

Furthermore, for this study, a focus group was chosen as a technique for data collection because it helped participants share in-depth information about their perspectives on the characteristics of small independent restaurant leaders. Unlike one-on-one interviews, focus groups are known for their group dynamics that help make the type and scope of data collected deeper and richer through the social interaction between the participants (Chan, 2010; Kandasamy and Ancheri, 2009; Ritchie et al., 2013).

3.2. Participants

Sixteen participants who were at least 18 years old and currently or previously employed in a small independent restaurant for at least six months were recruited to participate in the study. Well-designed focus groups usually consist of between 6 and 12 participants and last between 1 and 2 h (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). However, when specific participants are integral to a situation (Greenbaum, 1998), such as in this case, those having had specific work experience in small independent restaurants and with a specialized knowledge to discuss (Kruger, 1994; Morgan, 1996; Morgan et al., 2013), three or four participants are sufficient to conduct a focus group. Hence, five focus groups with three or four participants in a group were formed for this study.

In detail, one focus group consists of four participants while another three focus groups each consist of three participants. However, the other focus group consists of only two participants, as one participant failed to attend the focus group meeting, and this was considered as a dyadic interview (Morgan et al., 2013). Despite there were only two participants, Morgan et al. (2013) mentioned that the interactions occurring between two participants during the interview process "creates a much greater similarity to focus groups" (p. 2). As one participant is sharing his or her point of view regarding a research topic, the other is extending what the first participant shares by sharing and/or comparing his or her point of view, which makes the process similar to that of a focus group. Hence, like in a focus group, the similarities and differences of both participants still give a researcher more in-depth information than a one-on-one interview. Also, a dyadic interview can be a more effective technique especially when two people come from and have experienced a similar situation, in this case, working at a small independent restaurant (Greenbaum, 1998). For this reason, these two participants were considered integral to understanding work situations, and their dyadic interview was performed and considered in this study. The four focus groups with 13 participants and one dyadic interview with two participants yielded 151 typed, single-spaced pages of transcripts. The demographic information of the participants is available in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic of Participants.

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	7	46.67
Female	8	53.33
Total	15	100
Age	1	6.67
19		
20	1	6.67
21	5	33.33
22	3	20.00
24	2	13.33
25	2	13.33
33	1	6.67
Total	15	100

3.3. Interview guide

The purpose of an interview guide is to help the researchers direct participants towards being more productive and engaging in group discussions (McLafferty, 2004). Researchers should arrange interview questions from general to specific (Kingry et al., 1990). The interview guide that was used was pilot-tested in a focus group by using four master's degree students studying hospitality management who had experience working in a restaurant. After receiving feedback from the participants in the pilot interview, eight major questions were identified for use with the real focus groups. The first four questions were general (Kingry et al., 1990), asking about the participants' intention to work in the restaurant industry, who was in charge (the leader) of the daily operations at the restaurants where they worked, their perceptions of a good leader for the restaurant industry, and the most important element that leaders in the restaurant industry need to have. Next, participants were asked specific questions regarding their perceptions of their leaders' personality and relationship with employees. During the focus group discussions, participants were also asked several follow-up and probing questions.

3.4. Data validation

To ensure the overall validity of the qualitative focus group data and the accuracy of the verbal accounts of the participants' experiences, each focus group discussion was recorded with the permission of the participants and fully transcribed. Despite this study only had four focus groups and one dyadic interview with a total of 15 participants, data saturation was greatly satisfied after conducting three focus groups. Compared to individual interviews, saturation of data is reached earlier in the focus groups, especially when focus groups are conducted using a relatively homogeneous population such as in this study (Greenbaum, 1998; Guest et al., 2017). In their study, Guest et al. (2017) further explained that 90% of all themes were discoverable within three to six focus groups. In fact, they were able to identify the most important themes in their study with only three focus groups. Hence, to further confirm the validity of the findings and to produce a credible set of data, saturation of our data was checked by continuously examining the existing data and conducting one more focus group (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Flinders, 1997). Then, to confirm the data analysis and further test the validity of the findings, participants were given the opportunity to review the themes that emerged from the interviews. This process of

member-checking helped to further validate the data by ensuring that they accurately reflected participants' experiences. Lastly, all data interviews were coded manually by two people, the authors, and three different doctoral students who were trained in the qualitative paradigm were asked to check and refine the analysis and categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

3.5. Data analysis

Data analysis was intended to answer the research questions concerning an effective leader and the characteristics of small independent restaurant leaders. Hence, data coding was applied for qualitative data analysis and thematic analysis was used with the text being divided into small units (phrase, sentence, or paragraph), each unit is assigned a label, and then each unit being grouped into codes (Creswell and Clark, 2011). The codes were then examined for patterns and organized into central themes across the individual cases and, to protect participants information, pseudonyms were used (Ayres et al., 2003; Nespor, 2000; Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007).

4. Findings and discussion

The research questions were asked to determine an effective leader in small independently owned restaurants perceived by employees and the ideal characteristics for leadership at small independent restaurant business that the participants perceived. The findings answered both research questions through nine themes (respectful, compassionate, effective communicator, experienced, effective delegator, gives recognition, sociable, emotionally controlled, organized) emerged that revealed specific leadership qualities to help leaders in small independently owned restaurants to become more effective as reported by the participants (Tables 2–3).

4.1. Respectful

Being respectful was the first theme to emerge from the focus groups in regards to positive leadership characteristics for small restaurant owners, and it was considered to be one of the most important characteristics that would help leaders in small independently owned restaurants to become more effective. For this study, "respectful" was defined as a feeling of admiration, showing or having respect for all employees, including not talking down to employees, not looking down on employees, and treating employees fairly and of equal worth on a professional level. During the focus group, several participants shared their experiences of being treated both respectfully and disrespectfully at work by their leaders. For example, Mary, a 22-year-old female back-of-house employee, shared her boss's disrespectful behavior toward some employees. Mary stated:

> He thinks he's a leader because he's the boss. And obviously we do what he tells us to do, but he's very pompous and he talks down to people, and he makes them feel small. Just, he has made me feel small so many times and he just treats people like they don't matter.

Table 2
Qualitative Research Questions and Themes.

Research Question		Themes
RQ1	How do employees perceive an effective leader in small independently owned restaurants?	Respectful Compassionate Effective communicator Experienced Effective delegator Gives recognition Sociable Emotionally controlled Organized
RQ2	What ideal characteristics for leaders of small independently owned restaurants do employees perceive?	

> And that's not good, especially when you're working in a kitchen and putting out banquets that are like 500, 600 people. It's important that your staff is happy. But they're not going to be happy if you're talking down to them or talking to them like they're stupid or like they don't understand English or something. We had a girl who didn't really speak English very well so he would talk to her and she was younger, she was in high school and he would talk to her in this higher register voice, like you're talking to a baby.

A different participant in a different focus group, David, a 33-year-old male employee also shared the same idea and stated "in previous experiences I've had leaders that have been very verbally abusive and to a point where I just didn't respect them at all. When I lose respect, every thing goes down hill from there."

The examples show that creating a respectful culture in an organization is important and can help improve a company's performance, especially companies in the hospitality industry, which are known for their high levels of employee turnover (Kusluvan et al., 2010). Mary and David's recollections of their experiences with several different bosses emphasize how being respectful to subordinates has an impact on restaurant operations and can reduce costs by reducing the turnover rate (Costello et al., 2011). This particular finding also supports an organizational justice theory, especially the interactional justice theory where it states that employees would be positively affected if they are treated with dignity and respect (Schermerhorn et al., 2004).

4.2. Compassionate

Being compassionate was the next positive characteristic to come out of the focus group data, and "compassionate" was defined as showing sympathy and concern for employees. During the discussions, several participants shared their experiences with leaders who showed compassion for their employees. For example, Samantha, a 19-year-old employee who worked as a server at a local restaurant, shared her experience of being harassed by a drunk customer. Samantha stated:

> Once there was a guy, who was just kind of being disrespectful in our restaurant. He, didn't work for us, he was just a customer. But he was really drunk, and he was starting to get handsy with some of the waitresses. He, like, hit on me, he flirted with me and it was just kind of gross, and the manager kicked him out. And then the manager asked me, like, "Are you okay," "What happened?", like, "Is there anything I can do?" So, just talking about that was kind of a serious conversation, I guess.

Later in the discussion, Samantha further stated that "They just handled it really well, and I felt protected and cared for. And, I felt really safe in, like, a, kind of a sketchy situation." She also added that "The owner did talk to me the next time I saw him and was like, 'I heard about this, are you okay?' and he told me that the customer is not allowed in here anymore."

Samantha's experience was echoed by Cindy, a 21-year-old female waitress. One of her friends had a very similar experience where she was verbally abused by a customer. Unlike different owners where Cindy previously worked for did not care about the situation because the owners thought the customers were always right, this time the owner intervened and asked the customer to leave.

Samantha and Cindy's friend experiences show that how their leaders or managers' action made them feel safe in their workplace. As a workplace known for its vulnerability, restaurant employees are dependent upon their leaders (Ram, 2015). In addition to feeling safe at work, the response of their leaders could have a positive impact on their work performance as it could increase their self-esteem and positive feelings and help them care more about their job and that, in turn, could make them more productive (Fehr and Sprecher, 2009). As can be seen, being compassionate is very important for leaders in the restaurant industry. This particular characteristic could be related to one of

Table 3
Categories of Leadership Characteristics.

Category	Description	Descriptive Statement
Respectful	A feeling of admiration, showing or having respect for all employees.	Avoid "talking down" to employees
Compassionate	Showing sympathy and concern for employees.	"Put yourself in someone else's shoes"
Effective Communicator	The way leaders communicate with their employees.	"A different tone on how things were asked to be done."
Experienced	Having knowledge or skill in a particular field, especially a profession or job, gained over a period of time.	"The amount of knowledge and experience definitely makes the leader in the end."
Effective Delegator	Placing employees in positions they are best suited for and empowering them to make decisions relating to the accomplishment of their tasks.	"I think it empowers the employees and gives them a sense of responsibility…"
Gives Recognition	The process of recognizing employees' positive job performance at work.	"Definitely recognize a good job when a good job is done."
Sociable	Willing to talk and engage in activities with other people; friendly.	"Owner and employee should be friendly."
Emotionally Controlled	The ability to deal with, manage, express and control emotional states.	"Keep a cool head in really hectic situations."
Organized	The ability to plan and accomplish things in an orderly fashion.	"Struggled keeping organized with the schedule."

characteristics of transformational leaders, the individualized consideration. As stated by Avolio and Bass (1995), leaders with transformational approach tend to display more frequent individualized consideration by showing and giving support to subordinates. A different study also mentioned that the individualized consideration characteristic is essential for leaders to have as it would help followers to be motivated at work (Sarros et al., 2002).

4.3. Effective communicator

Being an effective communicator was the third theme to emerge in this study, and this emphasized the importance of the way that leaders communicate with their employees, especially in the hospitality industry where lack of communication is an example of a common managerial issue that increases the employee turnover rate (Brownell, 2010). Most participants agreed that communication style in an organization is crucial, especially in the restaurant business, which is known for its fast-paced work environment. Gary, a 24-year-old male back-of-house employee, shared his experiences with the head chef and the owner has different ways of communicating with employees. Gary stated:

> The head cook that left had been there for years and had his crew established and was very efficient in turning out food fast and cleaning and had routines set, and so when he left, the owner tried to fill that void. But it wasn't the same. He has different methods. Different methods of communication. There's definitely a different tone on how things were asked to be done instead of before, a harsher tone. A more, get it done now, while before it was work at your own—make sure the job gets done but do it the right way, but since it's the owner now… they are a lot more nitpicky about how things get done.

During the interview, Gary further mentioned in detail how the owner persistently used a harsher tone when asking back-of-house employees to get a job done. Consequently, Gary explained, many employees decided to quit. Being a good communicator is undoubtedly crucial to every organization, especially for leadership, and these findings show that a leader's style of communication directly affected employee performances. The findings support a previous study Fairhurst (1993) that stated, "In choosing words that members accept as representations of actions and events, they become social constructs that members define as real" (p. 333). Especially since the nature of the work in the restaurant industry is uniquely known for having an unfavorable work environment for the reasons mentioned earlier, leaders in restaurants need to consciously choose their messages well and communicate with employees in a respectful manner.

Furthermore, in the example, Gary compared the way in which the two leaders communicated with their subordinates. Even though the head cook did not own a share of the restaurant, he had an influential position in the business and was responsible for the back-of-house and was able to synchronize all related employees through an effective style of communication. Therefore, different styles of communication can influence employees' perceptions of a leader as either effective or ineffective.

4.4. Experienced

The next favorable characteristic for small restaurant leaders to have that emerged in this study was being experienced. "Experienced" for this study was defined as having experience or knowledge and skills in a particular field, especially a profession or job in the restaurant business that was gained over a period of time. Leaders with experience have been recognized in previous studies that demonstrate that having experience will help leaders develop leadership skills (McCall, 2004). Mary shared her experiences and stated:

> And that's why he… he delegates really, really well and if someone doesn't understand something he'll walk them through it, and if someone's new he'll help them in whatever way they can and he just… he always gives compliments to people, he always just makes people feel really good about themselves. Especially if someone's feeling down and it doesn't even matter if it's someone in back of house or front of house. He does that with everybody. And it's just really amazing to work with someone who's been in this industry for years and years and years and is still so… connective. He connects with people on a personal level. He doesn't think that he's above them or anything like that. He just… he's great.

This example highlights that an experienced leader can handle a situation in a way that will have a significant impact on employee performance. A different participant also supported this idea and stated that "the amount of knowledge and experience definitely makes the leader in the end." This statement is supported by previous studies reporting that experienced leaders can influence the work environment and thus are important in improving employee retention rates (Leach and McFarland, 2014). As low employee appreciation is common in the restaurant industry (Kusluvan et al., 2010), having work experience in the restaurant industry could help someone be a better leader because he or she understands the nature of the work, and the experience would help the leader be more confident in leading and motivating employees.

4.5. Effective delegator

Being an effective delegator of tasks in a restaurant was another topic that came up in the focus groups and reflects the fact that the restaurant environment is fast-paced and requires leaders to manage many tasks. Hence, delegating or placing employees in positions for which they are best suited and empowering them to make decisions related to the accomplishment of their tasks will help leaders in the

restaurant industry focus on other more important tasks. Many of the participants highlighted that being able to delegate work is another important characteristic that a leader needs to have. David, a 33-year-old male employee, shared his previous experiences working with leaders in the restaurant industry and shared:

> "So, when a leader's supposed to be doing their job, when they're supposed to be delegating, when you have a team of 12–15 servers, then works a little different when you only have two or three. So, delegation becomes pretty important. And when that doesn't exist, then it just becomes a mad house and there's no organization. And then you kind of start wondering, why is this person a manager? Why is this person a leader when they're not doing anything?"

In a different interview, Laura, a 20-year-old female, shared the same idea with David of how being an effective delegator is important for a leader, especially in the restaurant industry. She talked about her boss's ability to delegate tasks to employees so that the restaurant would run more smoothly. Laura stated:

> My boss was fairly good at delegating his tasks, so he hired what he called crew leaders, and crew leaders could be in charge of anything from opening the store to closing the store and counting the money at night, locking it up in a safe.

Also, Laura further mentioned that being able to delegate not only eases the leader's workload, it also makes employees feel empowered by giving them a sense of responsibility within the business. She shared that she felt empowered at the end of the night after counting the money and discovering that the restaurant did well even on a fairly slow night. David and Laura's statements are supported by previous studies that show that delegating tasks to employees gives them the autonomy to make decisions, which empowers them and, as a result, encourages them to perform better (Klein et al., 2006; Offermann and Hellmann, 1997; Sharma and Kirkman, 2015; Yukl, 1999a).

4.6. Gives recognition

The ability to give recognition to employees was another characteristic that leaders of small independent restaurants need that came up in this study, and this was defined as the process of recognizing the positive job performance of employees at work. Recognizing employees and giving them positive credit for their hard work rather than focusing on mistakes makes employees happy and engaged in their work. Participants agreed that recognizing employees for doing a good job makes employees feel appreciated. For example, 20-year-old Maggie shared her story on how her boss recognized her performance during the past year and wanted to raise her wage and stated that "I've been working there for about a year and they told me that they noticed how well I've been doing there and they wanted to give me a raise, so… I think that was something." In a different story, a 25-year-old male employee, Brian shared that

he felt recognized when the owner gave him an unexpected bonus. He stated that "when I get the pay check he put another like hundred bucks to me saying that "I know you work hard. That's why I'm giving you little tips." So he was really awesome."

In this case, Maggie and Brian's company noticed their work and recognized their effort by increasing and giving extra dollars. A different participant echoed Maggie and Brian's sentiment and mentioned that leaders recognizing good job performance make employees feel valued at work. This theme is supported by numerous studies that show how recognizing employees for doing a good job increased their intrinsic motivation and had a positive impact on work performance (Zopiatis et al., 2014). The act of recognition also has been proved to improve organizational performance (Cho et al., 2006; Guthrie, 2001; Milman and Ricci, 2004; Moncarz et al., 2009; Walsh and Taylor, 2007). Also, this theme also supported by many motivational theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, especially the esteem level. When employees receive recognition for their work, it will increase their self-esteem which later would have a positive impact on their work performance.

4.7. Sociable

Being sociable or willing to talk and engage in activities with employees was another category that emerged in this study. As stated earlier, jobs in the restaurant industry are unique and require significant interrelation between leaders, employees, and customers. When leaders can maintain positive human interrelationships by talking with and engaging in activities with other people, especially with employees, it creates a positive work environment. As a result, it helps employees feel more comfortable at work. It also has an impact on employee job performance, such as being sociable to customers. This finding is supported by previous studies indicating that leaders who are sociable make employees more satisfied at work and willing to put more effort into serving customers (Khuong and Nhu, 2015). Several participants stated that their leader considered them a friend rather than a subordinate from the first day that they were hired, and yet still maintained a professional manner. As Michael shared that "Like, as soon as I got hired, we just started randomly carrying a conversation. He didn't even consider me as an employee. He just considered me automatically as a friend."

However, as shared by different participants such as Connie, a 25-year-old female employee, leaders should not be too friendly, and they must put some space between themselves and their subordinates so that employees will have some respect for the leader. Hence, as a service industry, being able to interact not only with customers but also with subordinates in a professional manner is very important for leaders because it makes subordinates feel comfortable and willing to work or engage more at work (Howell, 2017). Also, this finding supports the Blake and Moulton's managerial grid where the model shows that restaurant employees prefer to work with a people-oriented manager or leaders with sociable characteristics (Blake and Mouton, 1981).

4.8. Emotionally controlled

Being emotionally controlled was the next theme to emerge and was defined as the ability to deal with, manage, express, and control emotional states. Leaders expressing positive emotions can inspire and motivate employees while the expression of negative emotions, such as anger or panic, can have a negative impact on employee performance (Lewis, 2000). As the nature of the work in the restaurant industry can trigger some negative emotions, leaders in the restaurant business must be able to control their emotions, especially negative emotions. Several participants stated that being calm during rush times was very important because when the leaders could not control their emotions, it had a direct impact on their employees' work performance. As Mary shared:

> It's really fast-paced, so… some people… you have to have a—the right attitude to work in a restaurant, either in front of house or back of house. Because it's really, really fast-paced you have to make sure that you keep a cool head in really hectic situations and be able to multitask really well. Some people can do it and some people just… can't.

Furthermore, another participant, Penny, added a narrative that further highlighted the

importance of leaders controlling their emotions. Penny shared that "If your leader's going to…

if he's going to freak out, everyone else is going to panic, and it'll just be like, "Oh, he's freaking

out. Like, oh, why is he freaking out? I don't get it," and then it's just—poof—chaos…."

John also added to the discussion and shared that "I agree, yeah,

definitely, keep your cool. Don't panic. Never panic. That—that should be like rule number one of the restaurant industry, like, when something's starting to go wrong, don't panic, that's not going to help."

Because of the stressful work environments in restaurants, every small independent restaurant leader needs to be able to control their emotions at work, especially during busy hours. Being able to deal with, manage, and control emotions is important for every leader. Studies have shown that leaders who cannot control their emotions tend to have a negative impact on employee work performance. Hence, this finding supported previous studies study stated that leaders negative emotional display had a significant and negative main effect on participant assessment of leader effectiveness compared to a more neutral emotional (Lewis, 2000). This finding also could relate to some theories on emotional intelligence such as a lack of emotional stability or high in neuroticism in the Big 5 personality traits. As mentioned in the theory, leaders who have a high score in neuroticism, they tend to be unstable emotionally (Zillig et al., 2002)

4.9. Organized

Being organized was the last theme that emerged in this study and was defined as the ability to plan and accomplish things in an orderly fashion and this characteristic of leadership is important for a leader in a small restaurant business. Similar to the previous theme, being organized could relate to another trait in the Big Five Personality Traits theory which is conscientiousness. When leaders have a high score in conscientiousness, they tend to be organized and like to spend time preparing, have a set schedule, prefer to finish tasks on time, and pay attention to details (Zillig et al., 2002). An example can be found from one of participants' story, Britney, who shared that "The first day, I was training during parents' weekend, or like Dad's weekend or something, so it was just so crowded, and they didn't teach me how to use the machine. I mean, it's basically like "learn as you go." As a result, it will have an impact on the company's performance.

Furthermore, Britney also mentioned that the high employee turnover rate at the restaurant where she worked might be due to the owner's leadership, specifically in how they train employees at work. When leaders are more organized in managing their businesses, especially as related to their employees, such as in creating work and training schedules, employees tend to be more engaged at work. Leaders can be better organized if they better understand the work situation, identify tasks, and assign tasks to the right employees on a daily basis (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2013). This is supported by previous studies that have shown that being organized, keeping employee work schedules organized, and having a training plan for new or current employees are as aspects of being organized that can have a positive impact on employee performance (Herman et al., 2013; Yang et al., 2012).

5. Conclusion

Numerous studies have been conducted on leadership, yet the majority of these studies have used large companies and have neglected small businesses, especially small independent restaurants owned by an individual(s) who works at the property daily. Consequently, the development of leadership practices among small businesses, such as small independent restaurants, is limited because considerably less time has been spent discussing leadership approaches within an appropriate setting. Hence, this paper has attempted to address the gap in knowledge by attempting to understand effective leaders and the ideal characteristics for the leadership of small independent restaurants as portrayed by their employees. As a result, nine themes were provided by participants that revealed specific leadership qualities to help leaders in small independently owned restaurants to become more effective as reported by the participants. According to the findings, among the many characteristics, being respectful, compassionate, and effective communicator were found to be the three most important behaviors that a leader needed to demonstrate. As a "people" industry, having some work experience in the restaurant industry was also found to be an important attribute that leaders need to have. This work experience could help leaders understand the industry better and help them delegate work and recognize employees, which were the next two important elements that a leader needs to possess. Furthermore, being sociable, able to control emotions, and organized were the last three characteristics that leaders of the small independent restaurant needed to possess and demonstrate.

5.1. Implications for practice

The main purposes of this study were to explore the ideal characteristics for small independent restaurant leaders to become an effective leader from their employees' perspective. This study will help academics and practitioners understand several characteristics of small independent restaurant leaders as voiced by their employees.

Previous studies have argued that employees are indeed an important asset to any company (Cho et al., 2006). Therefore, since the restaurant industry is known for its high turnover rate, the results of this study suggest that the leaders of small restaurants need to fully understand how, for example, being more respectful to employees and providing them with support will reduce the rate of employee turnover, which in turn will help the restaurant lower training costs and increase services. For this reason, small acts such as not talking down to employees, being present, and helping employees prepare and serve food or clean tables during regular and rush times will help employees feel more appreciative toward their leaders. Giving employees more credit for their hard work rather than pointing out errors is another important means for employers to use to increase the number of employees who intend to stay at their jobs.

5.2. Implications for theory

Despite the many leadership theories that have been devised, this study helps researchers better understand the ideal characteristics needed for leaders to become an effective leader of small independently owned businesses in the hospitality industry based on the perceptions of their employees. These specific characteristics can be found in the research findings where these employees tend to have different preferences for leader characteristics as compared to the main current leadership theories. For example, unlike the characteristics of leaders using a transformational leadership approach who are known for being charismatic, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (García-Morales et al., 2012; Judge and Piccolo, 2004), findings in this study have demonstrated that being respectful was the most prominent characteristic that a leader needed to have. Also, despite the nature of the work in the restaurant industry being considered unpleasant (Barron et al., 2007; Kusluvan, 2003; Kusluvan et al., 2010), the research findings emphasized that leaders employing the positive characteristics discussed in this study would help improve their employees' performance.

5.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Several limitations of this study should be addressed. First, the sample size of the qualitative study was relatively small and collected from a relatively homogenous sample. Also, according to their age range of 19 to 33 years of age with only one participant with the age of 33, the participants were considerably young. Hence, if the data were collected from participants over 33 years old and/or having more work experience, the study could yield different results. Also, the findings in this study were only from employees' perspective and the model should not be identified and generalized as a full competency model.

However, despite these aforementioned limitations, future research

can be conducted through a similar study using a different method of data collection to decrease challenges in finding the right time and place for the focus groups, which commonly occurs in a focus group study (Then et al., 2014). Therefore, by applying or combining different types of data collection for the qualitative portion of the study, such as individual interviews and observations and collecting a larger sample, a study may discover more interesting findings. Also, collecting data from owners or leaders and comparing the results with data from employees might result in more robust findings. Future studies may also consider testing the characteristics found in this study by developing a leadership construct and quantitatively testing the construct for a generalization effect.

Appendix A. – Focus Group Protocol

1. Focus Group Introduction

- Thank you for agreeing to be part of this focus group and we appreciate your willingness to participate. You have been asked to participate in a focus group about leadership in the restaurant industry. You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group and stop at any time. There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. We hope you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group.

2. Introductions

- Moderator; assistant moderator

3. Purpose of focus groups

- The reason we are having these focus groups is to find out your perception of leadership in the restaurant business.
- We need your input and we want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us.

4. Ground rules

- We want you to do the talking.
- We would like everyone to participate. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
- In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group and that responses made by all participants be kept confidential
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Every person's experiences and opinions are important.
- Speak up whether you agree or disagree.
- We want to hear a wide range of opinions.
- What is said in this room stays here.

5. We will be tape recording the focus group interview

- We want to capture everything you have to say.
- Although the focus group will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report. You will remain anonymous.

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Oliver, R.L., 1997. Satisfaction: A Behavioral Perspective on the Consumer. Irwin/MaGraw-Hill, New York.

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