



Global Scientific and Academic Research Journal of Economics, Business and Management

ISSN: 2583-5645 (Online)

Frequency: Monthly

Published By GSAR Publishers

Journal Homepage Link- <https://gsarpublishers.com/journals-gsarjebm-home/>



The Schumpeterian Model for Small Business Growth: The Case Study of the African Retail Store Markets

BY

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Article History

Received: 05/02/2024

Accepted: 12/02/2024

Published: 14/02/2024

Vol – 3 Issue – 2

PP: -67-74

Abstract

At least half of small American retail companies fail to survive during their first five years. The authors of this multiple case study explored strategies that successful small African retail store market managers used for their business growth and sustainability over their five years in the local markets. Data were collected using face-to-face open interview questions with ten participants who were successful top small African retail store business managers in the DMV (Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia) area of the United States of America. Based on the Schumpeterian model of innovation theory, the authors of this study found three useful strategies that led to increased growth, promoted sustainability, and prevented failure within the first five years in business. The three primary strategies were the determination and desire to do business, market development, and technology innovation.

Keywords: Schumpeterian model, business growth, promoting sustainability, small African retail store

INTRODUCTION

The first primary goal of any business or organization is to promote growth and longevity. Official and private organizations need to encourage business growth and longevity for the benefit of the local communities. Countries and business leaders or managers should implement and strategize business activities to meet the planned goals and promote social development. For instance, to boost small businesses' profitability and productivity, the United States created the Small Business Administration on July 30, 1953 [1]. However, despite the government's effort to sustain small business growth and longevity, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has predicted a failure of 50% of small business activities within their first startup age, generally five years [2]. This study analyzed the effective strategies of small

African retail store business managers for growth and long-term sustainability. Using open-ended interview questions for data collection, the authors aimed to collect data from real people who have experienced and understood the phenomenon analyzed. In the conclusion of this study, the authors presented some recommendations that small African retail store business managers or leaders who are struggling to meet their goals might use to increase their business growth and sustainability over five the first years and promote a positive social change from the income generated from newly created jobs in the local communities.

BACKGROUND

Small business activities promote social welfare and government wealth [3]. Luamba et al. [4] stated that small business activities are essential for improving economic,



social, and political development as they increase income for individuals and governments from new jobs. Small businesses have provided the job market with at least 66% of new jobs since the 1970s. Still, according to the SBA forecast, this number could increase in the next ten years because of the rapid development of technology and entrepreneurial initiatives [5]. Then, promoting small business activities has become crucial for government and business leaders to respond positively to the population's demand and increase social benefits.

Also, the officials' leaders need to promote small business activities to comply with their social government programs. Conversely, to stay competitive, small business managers or leaders need effective strategies to sustain their business growth and longevity over time [6]. Moreover, with the impact of globalization, business competition and challenges have increased across organizations and countries [5]. Small business leaders or managers should understand business practices, experience, and skills to be competitive in the market for a long time [6].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Previous researchers have explained the aftermaths and causes of small business failure, but this research focused on analyzing strategies to promote and sustain small African retail store activities. The authors and researchers of this qualitative multiple case study aimed to explore what effective strategies small African retail store managers need to increase growth and sustain their business longevity. This study analyzed the objective factors preventing African retail stores from failing and promoting success over their first five years to respond to this question.

INNOVATION THEORY

The Schumpeter's innovation theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Schumpeter's theory is based on the concept that innovation is the primary factor for increasing business growth [7]. Schumpeter attested that business managers should understand innovation as combining new ideas to implement new processes, services, or products to add value to organizational success or development. Schumpeter argued that innovation theory underlines the concepts of (a) creation or introduction of a new product or service, (b) development of new methods or processes of production, (c) opening or entering a new market, (d) expanding new replenishment sources, and (e) carrying out new structures within an organization [8]. Per Schumpeter, innovation is strategic to reduce business expenses and promote development and longevity. In the current business environment, where the development of technology and the Internet is increasing, business leaders or managers should use innovation theory to improve management effectiveness in real-time and at low costs.

Moreover, Schumpeter added that a productive and progressive business must be creative by bringing up new ideas to increase production. The lack of innovative strategies

may increase costs, leading to business failure [7]. Many business leaders and managers do not take precautions to assess their customer's needs, which may negatively affect competitiveness. Schumpeter [8] focused on motivating business managers to adopt a practical, innovative business approach to ensure longevity. Luamba [6] argued that globalization has impacted business activities by increasing market competition and product or service quality. As applied to this study, Schumpeter's innovation theory holds crucial elements that contributed to exploring strategies small African retail store business managers used for their business growth and sustainability over the first five years.

SUPPORTING THEORY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Many researchers and business analysts have different perceptions of entrepreneurship; however, per Schumpeter, entrepreneurs or investors need entrepreneurship to have excellent autonomy for creativity and problem-solving to promote their businesses [7]. Schumpeter [7] stated that entrepreneurship is the spirit of creating new ventures that create new jobs, promoting growth and high economic prosperity. Per Schumpeter [8], innovation and entrepreneurship contribute to reducing the prices of products and services, creating new markets, increasing business opportunities, reducing unemployment, and encouraging development. Moreover, promoting entrepreneurship makes businesses, industries, and countries more competitive because it provides new market opportunities [6]. As business creators and risk-takers willing to make profits or develop new social projects, entrepreneurs should be innovators and have appropriate skills. Some authors argued that having business experience, passion for conducting business, and motivation to succeed are crucial to succeed in business [6, 7]. Luamba [6] argued that successful entrepreneurs should have a basic understanding of regulations and fundamental concepts of business operations. Government and business leaders should promote entrepreneurship to reduce unemployment and increase incomes for individuals and businesses [8].

The spirit of entrepreneurship is also promoted by globalization. In the modern business context, the role of entrepreneurship is shifting because of the impacts of globalization. Globalization has increased competitiveness in both international and local markets [6]. That is why entrepreneurs or investors need to use innovation strategies to increase the productivity of goods and services in the local or international markets. Entrepreneurs in the small retail industry who use innovative approaches to compete can quickly maximize profits. Also, an entrepreneurial spirit should be helpful for both governments and businesses to increase productivity [6, 7]. Luamba [6] stated that entrepreneurs might encounter many uncertainties while dealing with business processes but should be able to resolve them using their managerial skills. Luamba [6] also opined that entrepreneurs who understand how to overcome business challenges and explore the benefits of globalization by using

such innovative technology may promote their activities over time. As the population grows and technological development increases, entrepreneurship has become paramount to fostering positive social change in the local communities [4, 6].

CAUSES OF BUSINESS FAILURE

Many small business managers face tremendous business challenges, which may affect the organization's prosperity and lead to failure. As stated by Schumpeter, launching a new venture can be challenging, as well as entering new markets. Schumpeter [8] suggested that preventing failure may result from promoting innovation and entrepreneurship because it enables business managers to assess and possess appropriate resources to reach organizations' missions effectively. According to Schumpeter [7], weak managerial, technical, conceptual, and personal skills are among the factors that may lead to failure because they weaken the innovation spirit. Luamba et al. [9] argued that many small businesses failed because of a lack of entrepreneurship and innovative strategies to compete and remain productive. Demastus and Landrum [10] added that a business failure or collapse is a process that includes assessing various internal and external factors that affect the organization's prosperity. Small African retail store managers should be able to analyze business parameters like decreased sales, weak treasury, low productivity and stock, high debts, and customer deception to innovate and prevent business failures.

The causes of small companies' failure may arise from many other sources. Luamba [6] emphasized the importance of analyzing, understanding, and conducting business reasonably to prevent collapsing. Efficient small African retail business operators need efficient strategies to secure their businesses against failure. Demastus and Landrum [10] argued that a few ways to prevent failure are increasing compliance with business laws and regulations that guide business practices. Similarly, Luamba [6] added that by understanding the causes of business failures, managers may improve their decision-making and ability to plan overtime. Certain small businesses fall because of misconduct practices that negatively affect the company's financial wealth.

Moreover, the lack of transparency can also increase the chance of financial losses. Luamba et al. [11] stated that the lack of transparency in disclosing business operations as required by laws may cause penalization for failing, for instance, to detect and report fraud [11]. However, the Schumpeterian model of innovation is crucial to help increase profits and promote development in the long term. Small African retail store managers should use compliance with business regulations and laws as a strategic managerial tool to increase innovation and prevent penalization that may lead to a business closure.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations are potential weaknesses based on obstructive conditions that can influence the research interpretations and findings [12]. Hatch [12] added that researchers need to

specify their research limitations to have a specific view of the topic or the study. Otherwise, the research would be too significant with the risk of not meeting the study's objective. The limitations of this research included (a) the use of innovation theory and supporting theory of entrepreneurship, (b) the focus on the small retail industry, and (c) the use of small African retail store managers or owners as participants.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling

The sample size of the population for this qualitative multiple case study is ten small African retail store top managers located in the DMV area of the United States who have promoted and sustained their retail store beyond their first five years. In the qualitative methodology, the sample size is usually smaller than that for quantitative or mixed methods. Also, the qualitative methodology does not require a minimum number of participants, and qualitative researchers can ensure data saturation and validation if there is any new information [12]. The DMV area has thousands of small African retail business managers, leaders, or owners [5]. The participants of this study were selected using the purposive sampling method. Rahimi [13] argued that the purposive sampling method is crucial to identify and select participants who experienced the phenomenon and who could provide rich and valuable information for the research study. We used the Google search engine, SBA reports, and purposive sampling method to select the ten participants among other successful small African retail store owners or top managers in the DMV area. The purposive sampling also allowed to select participants who met the eligibility criteria, which were: (a) be a top manager or an owner of a small African retail store, (b) be located in the DMV area of the United States, (c) be registered as a small African retail store for more than five years without interruption.

Procedures

The research question of this study was: What strategies did small African retail store managers use to promote growth over the first five years?

Seven open-ended interview questions that contributed to responding to the research questions were: (a) What strategies have you used to maintain your retail store in the market for over five years? (b) What were the key barriers to implementing your success and growth? (c) How did you overcome the key obstacles to meet your business goals? (d) What strategies did you use to attract customers and increase your customer satisfaction? (e) How have you assessed the efficiency of your business strategies? (f) What have you used as strategies to remain competitive in the market? And (g) what else would you like to share about promoting your business growth?

Rahimi [13] argued that using open-ended questions in qualitative research is crucial to analyzing and understanding a phenomenon studied or explored in-depth. To better understand the phenomenon analyzed, participants had the

same interview questions and the same time of the interview (45 minutes). The interviews were recorded, and we encouraged participants to ask questions to clarify their answers and avoid misunderstandings. We also used member checking for participants to review and confirm their interview responses. Member-checking is crucial to increase the accuracy, reliability, validity, and credibility of participant responses [12, 13]. For data and research consistency, we used methodological triangulation by analyzing data from three multiple sources: (1) interviews, (2) companies' internal financial and administrative reports, and (3) governments' official documents to provide a comprehensive view of the study.

Data Analysis

After collecting data from face-to-face semi-structured interview questions and reviewing company documentation and public information, we confirmed data saturation after interviewing the tenth participant. Data were then reported into the software NVivo 12 for treatment. As required by ethical norms, we coded participant names using the coding symbols P1, P2, P3, ..., and P10 for participants 1, 2, 3, ..., and 10 for privacy and confidentiality. Data were also categorized and labeled through the content analysis of this research based on all information collected from the interview questions. The analysis of codes and themes from NVivo 12 helped to find and understand the practical strategies participants used to sustain their business growth for more than five years. Rahimi [13] stated that researchers need better data quality than quantity because quality positively affects a study's findings. Moreover, for the research reliability and data quality, we used the concept of innovation and entrepreneurship described by Schumpeter [8] to evaluate business performance and growth.

RESULTS

The major themes that emerged from NVivo 12 after identifying themes, patterns, and trends for this study were (a) the determination and desire to do business, (b) market expansion and customer satisfaction, and (c) technology innovation. From data analysis, we found that participants used innovation as a visionary tool to advertise in real time using socio-media, analyzing customers' attitudes and behaviors, and assessing market trends. All ten participants agreed that innovation encompasses crucial factors that lead to business development and promote business growth and longevity. Seven out of ten participants indicated that with technological advances and the development of the Internet, innovation was appropriate for planning, controlling, and monitoring all activities at a low cost and on time. Participants also agreed that combining entrepreneurship and innovation led to the sustainability of their business even during hard times or low sales seasons. For instance, during snow, rain, storms, or other natural disasters, when sales are usually down, their businesses are always open as usual. They used a telemarketing strategy to increase sales to meet customers' demands and satisfaction.

Some participants, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10, argued that using innovation strategies in compliance with government and business regulations was paramount to prevent mismanagement or penalization. P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P9, and P10 attested that they used financial and accounting software to manage daily activities and pay taxes on time to avoid late fees and prevent fiscal penalization. This strategy aligned with Luamba et al. [11], who argued that complying with business regulations is strategic to prevent fraud, promote business growth, and avoid tax penalization. Other participants, P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10, added that retail managers who understand the positive impact of business compliance have the chance to succeed and prevent business failure. Also, participants P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9 stated that having appropriate technological and managerial tools helped oversee in real time all organizational activities, detect and prevent fraud, and allocate financial resources accordingly. In support of the participants' statements and experience, Luamba et al. [4] suggested that adopting innovative and entrepreneurial business approaches is critical for business managers to attract new customers and understand their potential needs.

As stated above, successful small African retail store managers used their entrepreneurial and innovation skills to find appropriate new market opportunities. Innovation helped them to remain competitive and secure their businesses against the competitive influence of middle and large companies. Some medium and large companies sell the same products or services at a low cost because of their high financial and technical resources to attract customers, advertise online, and compete efficiently in the local markets. Besides using innovation to promote customer satisfaction, all participants agreed that their strategy to use entrepreneurial spirit combined with innovation was critical to promoting their businesses by creating new product value and remaining competitive over the first five years. To sum up, all participants indicated that entrepreneurial spirit and innovation strategy were crucial to increasing their determination and desire to do business, market expansion and customer satisfaction, and technology innovation for sustaining growth and longevity for more than five years.

**TABLE 1
PASSION AND DETERMINATION OF DOING
BUSINESS**

Nodes/Themes	Number of Participants	% of participants' agreements with sub-themes
Determination and desire to do business	10	100
Market expansion and customer satisfaction	8	80

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Technology innovation	9	90
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Emerging Theme 1: The Determination and Desire of Doing Business

Having the determination and desire to be a business operator was the first emerging theme of this study. Responses from this theme came from interview questions 1 and 2, which focused on managerial skills and styles to promote and sustain businesses. Luamba [4] stated that the determination and desire to do business could arise from different sources, such as high competition and customers' expectations regarding products or service qualities. Implementing high product and service qualities increases the chance to succeed and meet organizational goals [4, 5]. The data collected from interviews and internal documentation such as financial and daily business reports indicated that all participants were determined and desired to do business. For P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, and P9, their determination to do business motivated them to work full time even during the hard times or low seasons such as during snow, rain, or holy days, and this helped them to increase their business performance.

All participants agreed that having managerial experience, business skills, and an understanding of business practices promoted their determination and desire to succeed (see Table 1). All participants noted that business experience and skills are essential to promoting business activities. The participants' statements aligned with the findings of Luamba et al. [9]. Luamba et al. [9] argued that business managers need experience, skills, and strategies to increase growth and sustain productivity. For example, P3 declared, "I consider myself passionate, charismatic, and loyal to my business, and I can lead my business effectively. I always try to listen to my internal and external customers to understand their real needs. This helped me to adjust my goals based on their requests or needs to meet my long-term goals." P4 echoed, "I love doing my business, and I have set my goal and determination to succeed within one year. For that reason, I have been working every day, even during the low, high, and holiday seasons, which allowed my business to be successful for a long time." P8 declared, "My determination and desire to be a successful businessperson come from my family. My experience of seeing my parents doing business since I was younger motivated me to do the same by adding my academic business skills." P4 added, "I grew up in a poor environment. My challenging life situation and observation of other African leaders' or managers' experience in the African community environment helped me understand how to build a perfect business model for success." P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P9, and P10 added that active managerial and entrepreneurial skills were crucial factors that contributed to increasing the determination and desire to reach our companies' goals.

Some researchers argued that effective business managers should be experienced and determined to sustain their business longevity [4, 6, 9]. All participants confirmed that their determination to manage their business activities

associated with their entrepreneurial experiences was crucial to promoting business growth and longevity. Moreover, all participants added that management and business experience were significant factors that led to business development and sustainability (see Table 1). The findings supported Luamba et al.'s [4] statement that managers should focus on understanding their determination and desire to sustain their business productivity, profitability, and longevity.

Emerging Theme 2: Market Expansion and Customer Service

The second emerging theme was market development and customer service. The market development and customer service theme arose from questions 1, 3, 4, and 6, which focused on understanding participants' connection to business sustainability, customer satisfaction, customer retention, and market competitiveness. The market development and customer satisfaction theme aligned with the innovation theory because participants used market development analysis to understand customers' behaviors regarding their perception of new products or prices. Le [14] stated that business innovation is critical for creating new market values and retaining customers. After analyzing several companies' seasonal trends and periodical inventory reports, it became clear that managers avoided shortages and met customers' demands. For participants P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10, analyzing market trends and improving customer service contributed to increased sales and growth over time. Participants also recognized that analyzing customers' attitudes and behaviors, improving the quality of products and customer service, and promoting competitiveness was strategic to increase market development, customer satisfaction, profitability, and longevity (see Table 1).

Moreover, participants agreed that market development and improving customer service helped their businesses to increase sales during the high season and official holidays like the first day of the year, Christmas, Easter, July 4, and Halloween. Etim et al. [15] described customer service as a position in a business structure that allows customers and businesses to make informed decisions about the choice of the product or service before, during, and after sales. The interview findings indicated that participants promoted customer satisfaction to increase and retain customers (see Table 1). P1 revealed that excellent customer service promotion helped the company collect more information regarding regular and potential new customers. P1 added that implementing customer satisfaction helped motivate customers to purchase more products. Participant P3 echoed that promoting positive customer service contributed to knowing how the company treats and considers customers within the business. Madura [16] revealed that understanding the business environment and market research helps to be competitive and increase customer satisfaction. Participants agreed that customer satisfaction led to market development and business expansion. P1 stated, "To increase my customer relationship and customer service, I record clients' data such as phone number and Email to interact with them by sending

such as greeting text messages, informing or announcing the arrival of new products, and sending the wishes for holidays." P1 added, "I always try to improve my clients' customer satisfaction by greeting them upon arrival, explaining the benefits of each product, and assisting them to carry heavy articles to the checkout." P4 indicated, "I always buy and sell my products based on customers' demands to satisfy them and avoid shortages. My focus on promoting customer service was learning customers' attitudes and identifying new products that match my clients' demands."

The participants, P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10, added that price strategy was critical to attracting and retaining customers, increasing customer service, and expanding the market by opening new stores in other locations and states. Kireyev et al. (2017) noted that price is a critical factor that motivates customers to purchase products. Price strategies were crucial for increasing competitiveness for P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10 participants. For example, P2, P3, P7, and P10 applied the .99 pricing strategy to small items. P1, P4, P5, P6, and P10 added that using the slogan "buy one and get the second at half price" enabled them to increase sales. All participants agreed that the price strategy was strategically significant to expand the market, increase customer satisfaction, and promote business growth.

Some researchers and business analysts encouraged business managers to be talented and ambitious in increasing customer satisfaction for growing sales and profits [4, 6, 9]. Participants also used innovative strategies to get clients' information from surveys and phone calls and learn their behaviors to improve product and service quality. Eight participants suggested that prioritizing the roles and needs of customers and communicating effectively with them when presenting new products increased their desire to buy more and more. The findings were substantial to Luamba's [6] analysis of promoting customers' positive attitudes, product or service quality, customer service, and price strategy for increasing sales and boosting customer satisfaction for long-term development and longevity.

Emerging Theme 3: Technology Innovation

The emerging theme of technology innovation comes from questions 2, 3, 5, and 7. The participants recommended using innovative technology tools, such as telemarketing campaigns on social media, to post signs, pictures, and videos to improve business practices. In the current business context, business managers need to accept and adopt the change at any time to remain competitive because of the rapid evolution of technology and new regulations on the market [4, 6]. Turienzo et al. [17] indicated that real managers need to adopt and accept technology innovation because the world's evolution is increasing daily, and the number of people, businesses, and regulations is also rapidly increasing. Eight participants stated that adopting positive changes in dealing with customers, suppliers, and government leaders impacted their business growth positively.

With the development of technology, business managers can work, monitor business activities, and make effective decisions using technical modern tools [4, 6, 9]. Luamba et al. [18] argued that technological innovation allows, for example, managers to have inventories, sales, and production costs and assess business activities at a low cost. The results of the interviews aligned with Luamba's [6] findings and indicated that participants used technology innovation to reduce production costs and increase profits. P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7 also noted that technological innovations such as barcode scanners, cameras surveillance, and material detectors contributed significantly to reducing losses and having a reliable inventory. The findings also showed that each participant used innovative technology during the low sales seasons to increase profits and sales. Also, P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, and P10 warned that sustainability and adoption of the market changes were sometimes challenging to reach. Still, business model innovation helped them increase profits, remain sustainable, and adopt market changes innovatively. Nine participants recommended that business leaders need a technology innovation strategy that matches the company's mission and vision to explore new market opportunities and remain competitive.

Moreover, participants confirmed that using innovation associated with technology innovation strategies was among the strategic factors that promoted a sustainable competitive advantage of their businesses and implemented additional profits for many years. Similarly, P1 stated, "In the current business environment characterized by the development of innovative technology, we can have managerial information in real-time, identify any potential or hazard issues in the production processes on time, and find solutions before they affect sales or stocks." P4 echoed, "With the advance of technological innovation, we can sell online by phone or email to mitigate production costs and increase growth." P4 argued, "Using innovation as a strategy helped to advertise using free socio-media such as Facebook, Twitter, and text messages to maintain sales." Nine out of ten participants suggested that small African retail business leaders should adopt an innovation strategy and use innovative technology to increase sales and sustain long-term longevity. The findings were consistent with the requirement to use innovation as a strategic business tool for business growth and expansion of markets for many years.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Small retail companies or businesses are job creators and promoters of social change and economic development. The success of small businesses is crucial for owners, managers, entrepreneurs, population, and government leaders. Technological innovation and globalization greatly impact business activities and have increased competition in local or international markets, making it more challenging for some small retail managers to survive for more than five years. Small business owners and leaders must review traditional business practices and develop innovative strategies to reduce production costs, increase sales, and sustain longevity. This

research explored business strategies small African retail owners or managers used to remain sustainable beyond five years. Exploring innovation and entrepreneurship theories in business practices ensures companies' success and longevity. However, exploring innovative ideas contributes to preventing failure and enhancing the growth of businesses in the long term.

In today's business environment, innovation has become unavoidable for small retail companies to sustain productivity and longevity. Consequently, based on Schumpeter's innovation theory, the results of this study indicated that small African retail business managers need to adjust their strategies based on consumers' feedback, consumer behaviors, and market trends, which helps develop successful innovative strategies. The model proposed by Schumpeter [8] provides strategies to analyze and assess organizational growth and offers a comprehensive view of change initiatives to develop and sustain any business activity. Small African retail store managers should review their business practices and create new procedures and methods to ensure appropriate strategies to support themselves for a long time.

The results of this qualitative multiple case study also revealed that using (a) determination and desire to do business, (b) market development and customer satisfaction, and (c) technology innovation were critical strategies that sustained small African retail store activities beyond the first five years. Small African retail store owners or managers struggling to compete in the local market and promote growth should explore the advantages of the Schumpeterian innovation model and use this study's findings to sustain and promote their activities over time. Small business owners or managers may have different strategies to sustain their business activities for the long term; however, finding appropriate and innovative strategies is critical for sustaining business prosperity and longevity. All participants indicated that aligning innovation with the determination or desire to do business, market development and customer service, and technology innovation was strategic for small African retail owners or managers to sustain growth and remain sustainable. The findings may promote positive social change by increasing employment and economic development.

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