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Perceptions of E-learning by Management Trainees in a Small, Fast Food Restaurant

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Perceptions of E-learning by Management Trainees in a Small, Fast Food Restaurant

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by

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Abstract

Small businesses account for a majority of U.S. jobs and play a vital role in the economy. However, the survival rate for small businesses is disconcerting. Only half of the small businesses will survive five years or more and one-third ten or more years. Fast food restaurants are part of the food and drinking industry. It is the second largest industry in the United States and the most vulnerable to business failure. Research has shown the capabilities of small business managers can play a significant role in the success or failure of a small business, but little research has been done on the use of E-learning in acquiring those capabilities. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of E-learning of management trainees. The research sample consisted of ten management trainees at a fast food franchise in Memphis, Tennessee. The findings suggest that prior experience had little to no influence on E-learning perception, hands-on or on-the-job training is the preferred method of learning, learner preparation and support were inconsistent, and some trainees had no idea and others only guessed why E-learning was being used. The overall assessment of the E-learning training was that participants found value in it, but many learner engagement improvements are needed. Based on the study findings, there needs to be a proactive effort by organizations and training staff to address the engagement and E-learning adoption issues when management trainee preferred learning style is hands-on learning.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Jeremy Wolfe for his inspiration on how an acknowledgments section should be done. You have five minutes for this quiz. Plagiarism is frowned upon. There may be more than one answer per question. Go!

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Dedication

This dissertation is mostly dedicated to me for all sacrifices I made. However, these vampires of time and money, Gwen, Abel, Lilly, and Allison, are a close second. Gwen, you are a role-model to Lilly and Allison of what a strong woman should be. Your endless energy, patience, and ability to be the glue that keeps things from falling apart is nothing short of miraculous. Abel, my son, you are barely passing school, cannot hold a job, and, as a senior, have no idea what you are doing with your life. Here is a secret, I was in the same boat at your age, and much like me, I believe you will be writing one of these dedications in your not too distant future. Lilly, your strong will is "challenging" at times, scratch that, all the time, but it is what makes you an unstoppable force in accomplishing whatever goals you set and whatever dreams you chase. I continue to be inspired by what you can accomplish when you set your mind to it. Allison, with your larger than life personality, it is hard to believe you started out life at only 3 pounds. You have inspired all of us to fight harder, love longer, and appreciate every moment of life. You remind us of the teachings of the great philosopher Joe Dirt, "you can't have no in your heart."

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Chapter One

Introduction

The capabilities of the small business manager can play a significant role in the success or failure of a small business (Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003; Watson, 2010). Unfortunately, only about half of all small businesses survive five years or longer and only about one-third survive ten years or longer (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016). The challenges of a weakened economy (Kim & Upneja, 2014), unique organizational culture and structure, and changing business environment (Koutroumanis, Alexakis, & Dastoor, 2015), all pose survivability obstacles that small business managers must address to avoid failure.

The current small business atmosphere has evolved through technological innovations, an increase in cultural diversity, and globalization (Holtzman & Kraft, 2011; Mulin & Reen, 2010). While this environment poses new challenges for small businesses, research has continually shown a positive correlation between training and the ability of employees to handle and adapt to those changes (Admiraal & Lockhorst, 2009). Previously, small businesses have faced training barriers such as lack of time, resources, planning, and relevant courses (European Commission, 2003; Storey & Westhead, 1997). However, E-learning has provided a cost-effective (Kumar & Gulla, 2011), flexible (Hamid, 2002), and consistent (Benninck, 2004) means for small business manager development and training (Long and Smith, 2004).

The small business manager needs a variety of competencies to be successful in an ever-changing business environment, especially in the highly competitive restaurant industry. The survival rate of restaurants is the lowest of all small businesses (Kim & Upneja, 2014), yet they are virtually ignored in the literature (Chen & Elston, 2013). The limited resources available for training and development for those competencies have made small restaurants more susceptible

to business failure (Parsa, Self, Sydnor-Busso, & Yoon, 2011). E-learning has provided an economical solution for small restaurant business managers to acquire the competencies for success and mitigate some of the risks of business failure. As small businesses continue to invest already scarce resources in E-learning for their training and development needs, this study seeks to investigate the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant.

Background

Small businesses in the United States are significant drivers of economic growth, job creation, wealth, and the embodiment of the "American Dream" (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016; Mills, 2011). In 2013, The Small Business Administration estimated that there were "28.8 million small businesses that accounted for 99.7% of U.S. employer firms, 33.6% of known export value ($471 billion out of $930 billion), 48.0% of private sector employees (57 million out of 118 million employees), and 41.2% of private-sector payroll" (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016, p. 1). These small businesses are not only an important economic engine driving the economy, but they also play a significant role in innovation, equal opportunity, exports, and the production of 16 times more patents per person than larger firms (Kobe, 2007; Yallapragada & Bhuiyan, 2011; The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2014). Also, small businesses account for over 97 percent of all exporters (Kobe, 2007) and employ a proportionally greater number of workers who are 65 and older, are disabled, and are rural workers (Headd, 2010). The importance of small business to the U.S. is more than simply fulfilling the "American Dream." It is the backbone of jobs, equal opportunity, economic innovation, and is vital to the nation's success.

The restaurant industry is part of the food services and drinking places industry, according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). This industry is comprised of almost 600,000 Food Services and Drinking Places (NAICS 722), employing over 11 million people, making it the second largest industry in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Over ninety percent of these establishments - almost nine million - are small businesses with 100 or fewer employees (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

The current survivability rate for small businesses is not positive for future entrepreneurs or economic recovery. Currently, only about half of all small businesses survive five years or longer and only about one-third survive ten years or longer (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016), and the survivability rate of restaurants is the lowest of all small businesses (Kim & Upneja, 2014). The impact on the economic growth and recovery of the economy from small business failures can be seen through an increase in the unemployment rate, decrease in innovation, reduction in exports, and the increase of the prime interest rate, making small business success an essential component to continued economic recovery (Valdiserri & Wilson, 2010; Yrle, Hartman, & Yrle-Fryou, 2000).

The success of a small business is dependent on its ability to be flexible and to respond quickly with innovative solutions to customers' needs and changes in the external environment. Thus, a small business must have employees with the capabilities to respond quickly with innovative solutions to problems. Investment in human capital is a proven way for small businesses, especially those in highly competitive environments, like fast food, to increase their competitive advantage and help avoid business failure (Chen, 2010). Such investments in human capital create competitive advantage by increasing employee productivity through improved

efficiency, fewer mistakes (Sveiby, 1997), improved manager competency, knowledge, and skills that lead to product improvements and development (Day, 1994; Gould, 2009).

While the benefits of a well-trained workforce are numerous, small businesses encounter many challenges in the training and development of employees and managers. Small businesses face barriers such as idle productivity, limited resources and funding, lack of planning, and few relevant formal courses (Beaver & Lashley, 1998; Hankinson, 1994; Storey & Westhead, 1997). E-learning addresses the time and funding concerns since it can be delivered anytime and anywhere at a reduced cost, compared to traditional training. E-learning addresses the lack of planning and relevant course concerns because of an ever-expanding library of modules that allow for a large variety of subjects that can be taken on-demand without much planning.

Investment in small business managers' capabilities can play a significant role in the success or failure of a small business (Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003; Watson, 2010). While there have been studies conducted on the impact of small business manager capabilities on the success or failure of a small business, only a small number has focused on how they acquire these capabilities, and even fewer specifically on the role of E-learning in their training. Since small businesses are an essential component of the national economy and business closures negatively affect the economic recovery, the aim of this research is to provide another resource that may help to increase small, restaurant business survivability.

Problem Statement

Small businesses are highly susceptible to business failure, with restaurants having the highest failure rate of all small business types (Kim & Upneja, 2014; The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016). Small business managers can play a significant role in the success or failure of small businesses, making their training and development crucial to not only business

owners, but the economy as a whole (Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003). E-learning has given small businesses the tools to provide greater access to information, to assist managers in being accountable for training goals, to increase manager competence, to reduce training costs, and to contribute to the competitive advantage of the organization (Blocker, 2005). Despite the cost and time advantages of E-learning, it still requires the use of scarce resources to be invested in training and development of managers and inefficient use of these resources could have grievous consequences on small business survivability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant. Management trainees were interviewed using face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended questions to get the most detail out of each participant.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant?
2. How does the preferred method of training affect perceptions of E-learning?

Significance of the Study

Small businesses are the backbone of the U.S. economy, making their survivability vital to the continued economic recovery of the nation (Chow & Dunkelberg, 2011). Investments in E-learning have contributed to small business success through competitive advantages from process improvements, access to new markets, and management competencies (Apulu &

Latham, 2011; Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003; Taylor, 2013). E-learning adoption by management employees can be a significant factor in the success or failure of a small business.

The findings of this study may help develop a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to E-learning adoption by examining fast food restaurant management trainees' perceptions of their E-learning training. A greater understanding of E-learning by managers may allow human resources practitioners, business owners, and E-learning developers to take corrective actions to enhance adoption or maintain current methods to ensure acceptance. The more that is learned about manager perceptions, the better that E-learning systems can be developed for current and future manager training and development initiatives. If managers are resistant to the adoption of E-learning, the learning may not be sufficient and used to its full potential (Allen & Seaman, 2013). The continued investment of already scarce resources in an inefficient or ineffective program could be detrimental for small restaurant businesses.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is based on two critical theories found during the literature review, Human Capital Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model. First, Human Capital Theory postulates that investing in people will provide a return to the business (Sweetland, 1996) and a small business owner must subscribe to this concept before even considering investing resources in management training. Second, once the commitment to invest in E-learning is made, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) helps predict how well it will be received by the managers by measuring perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, Baagozzi & Warshaw, 1989).

Human Capital Theory

Schultz (1961) devised the concept of human capital to help explain how there can be a growth in income despite lack of growth in natural resources. His idea was that the value of an investment in people as resources was responsible for that difference. Much like Human Resource Development (HRD), Human Capital Theory has gone through different attempts to define it by numerous scholars since Schultz (1961). Nafukho, Hairston, & Brooks (2004) summarize the different definitions as

> the main outcome from investment in people is the change that is manifested at the individual level in the form of improved performance, and at the organizational level in the form of improved productivity and profitability or at societal level in the form of returns that benefit the entire society (p. 549)

This all-encompassing definition does well to include all parts, but simply put: 'investing in your people makes them more productive.'

The investment in people through education is consistently addressed throughout Human Capital Theory literature (Sweetland, 1996). The investment in increasing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the workforce in return for increased productivity is one of the KSA relationships that makes Human Capital Theory appealing to organizational leaders. If the idea of investing in employees of an organization through training may make them more productive starts to sound familiar, that is the foundation of much of Human Resource Development. At the beginning, the concept of Human Capital Theory was met with much of the same skepticism as HRD, but through the work of such scholars as Pascarella & Terenzini (1991), empirical evidence of the shared idea of HRD and Human Capital Theory, investing in people is investing in one's business was being proved as more than a theory.

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model focuses on the technology-driven training system of the human capital investment. Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) put forth a revised model of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to help predict and explain users' acceptance of certain information systems. According to the model, the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are keys to the users' acceptance of the technology. Perceived usefulness is where a user believes that his or her work efficiency may be increased by the new technology; and, perceived ease of use is where a user believes he or she will not be required to put in a great deal of effort to use the technology.

Davis et al. (1989) made some assumptions about the Technology Acceptance Model that include:

- the technology user calculates the costs and benefits of his or her actions in a rational way
- external variables predict the use of technology only through their impact on the perceived use and perceived ease of use
- the technology user is rational and uses information in an organized way

(Burton-Jones & Hubona, 2006; Davis et al., 1989)

The Technology Acceptance Model has been empirically tested and proven over the years in numerous studies and has been an invaluable reference when looking at the success rate of computer system implementations (Park, Nam, & Park, 2008). In recent years, the prevalent use of E-learning in higher education, corporate universities, and small business training created some concern among scholars and practitioners about how the Technology Acceptance Model was being applied. Roca and Gagné (2008) answered these questions with their empirical testing of E-learning and the Technology Acceptance Model. They found the Technology Acceptance

Model could be successfully applied to E-learning scenarios. Tselios, Daskalakis, and Papadopoulou (2011) expanded on the work of Roca and Gagné (2008) by examining the use of the Technology Acceptance Model under blended E-learning scenarios. Again, they found success with using the Technology Acceptance Model under blended learning and E-learning scenarios. Park, Nam, and Cha (2011) explored how to successfully apply the Technology Acceptance Model to the next evolution of E-learning, mobile learning or m-learning. They found similar success in the predictive abilities of the Technology Acceptance Model with m-learning as previously mentioned E-learning and blended learning scholars.

Summary

Small businesses are significant drivers of the United States economy through their innovations, exports, and provision of the majority of jobs (Chow & Dunkelberg, 2011; Thornton & Byrd, 2013; U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016). However, small businesses are highly susceptible to business failure, with restaurants having the highest failure rate of all business types (Kim & Upneja, 2014; The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016).

The capabilities of the small business manager can play a significant role in the success or failure of a small business (Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003). According to Blocker (2005), the training and development of small business manager's capabilities through E-learning has given small businesses the tools to provide greater access to information, hold managers accountable for learning, increase manager competence, reduce training costs, and contribute to the competitive advantage of the organization.

This aim of this study was to provide another resource that may help to increase small, restaurant business survivability. The problem addressed during this study was to address the lack of knowledge about fast food restaurant management trainees' perceptions of their E-

learning training. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the management trainees using semi-structured and open-ended questions to probe and reveal rich detail about each of their experiences. The results of the study provided an in-depth understanding of the small, fast food business managers perceptions of E-learning.

Definition of Terms

Business failure: When a business cannot meet its financial obligations and is facing imminent closure or bankruptcy (Boettcher, Cavanagh, & Xu, 2014).

Business success: When a business survives beyond five years and is profitable.

Competencies: Observable and measurable knowledge, skills, and attitudes critical to effective job performance (Kyndt & Baert, 2015).

Competitive Advantage: The capability of the business to outperform the competition, resulting in customers receiving a benefit they cannot get from the competition (Solomon, Marshall, & Stuart, 2011).

E-learning: The dissemination of educational materials in an electronically facilitated asynchronous and/or synchronous way (Garrison, 2011). It is an electronic medium to deliver learning or education (Agourram, Robson, & Nehari-Talet, 2006).

Employee: "a person in the service of another under any contract of hire, express or implied, oral or written, where the employer has the power or right to control and direct the employee in the material details of how the work is to be performed" (Muhl, 2002, p. 3).

Face-to-face training: Training that is conducted by an instructor in person and in real time.

Human Resource Development (HRD): "the process of facilitating organizational learning, performance, and change through organized (formal and informal) interventions, initiatives,

and management actions for the purpose of enhancing an organization's performance capacity, capability, competitive readiness, and renewal" (Gilley & Maycunich, 2000, p. 6).

Training and Development: "The process of systematically developing work-related knowledge and expertise in people for the purpose of improving purpose" (Swanson and Holton, 2001, p. 357)

Small Business: The definition of small business can come from a variety of sources. The United States Small Business Administration defines a small business as having fewer than 500 employees and various revenues depending on the industry classification (SBA, 2016). The European Commission defines a medium business as fewer than 250 employees and less than 50 million euros in revenue, a small business as fewer than 50 employees and less than 10 million euros in revenue, and a micro business as fewer than ten employees and less than two million euros in revenue (EU Commission, 2003). A final source of definitions is based on previous small business research conducted.

Small Business Administration (SBA): "The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) was created in 1953 as an independent agency of the federal government to aid, counsel, assist and protect the interests of small business concerns, to preserve free competitive enterprise and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of our nation" (SBA Mission Statement, 2017)

SME: Acronym for small and medium-sized enterprise. This term is often used interchangeably with "small business."

Technology acceptance model (TAM): An information technology theory developed by Davis (1989) that exhibits how users come to accept and use technology, in this case, E-learning.

QSR Magazine. "QSR magazine is the leading sources of news and information about the $300 billion limited-service restaurant industry. For 20 years, QSR has defined this market, which

includes traditional fast food, fast-casual dining, coffee, snacks, full-service takeaway, concessions, convenience stores, and related segments of the foodservice industry" (QSR Magazine, n.d.)

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Chapter two contains a review of literature related to the understanding of small, fast food restaurants, their use of E-learning, and manager perceptions of E-learning. The two main areas of focus will be on small business and E-learning. Other critical areas of interest are Human Resource Development and the restaurant industry. This chapter will begin with a review of the literature on the challenges of trying to define a small business, its role in economic development, and the employee training practices and challenges. The next section will cover the broad concepts of Human Resource Development followed by a review of E-learning including the history, the different types, models, advantages, challenges, effectiveness, and finally, future directions. A broad overview of the restaurant industry and a literature review summary will conclude the chapter. This literature review will form the foundation on which this study will take place.

A preliminary review of the literature will include human resource development-specific journals, small business-specific journals, E-learning-specific journals, practitioner human resource development journals, Google Scholar, and databases (PsycINFO, Science Direct, EBSCO HOST, Wiley Online Library, and ProQuest) using the search terms: e-learning, electronic learning, ICT, training, human resource development, small business, small-medium sized enterprise, and SME (the acronym of small and medium-enterprise). The results yielded a limited amount of human resource development data for small businesses. Of this data found, an even smaller portion made mention of E-learning, and a limited amount of this data was conducted in the United States.

Small Business

The lack of a universal definition for small business among governments and researchers has created significant comparability challenges. The European Commission (2003), The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2017), and the majority of published research identifies three main categories under the small business umbrella: a micro firm with ten or fewer employees, a small firm that has ten to forty-nine employees, and a medium-sized enterprise with fifty to two-hundred forty-nine employees (European Commission, 2003; The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). In addition to employee size, the annual turnover/balance sheet requirements vary among them and impact their qualification for micro, small, or medium business status. An outlier, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (2016), defines the term small business using only two categories and expands the number of paid employees from 249 to 499. It defines a small business as a firm with 1 to 99 paid employees, a medium business with 100 to 499 paid employees, and anything over 500 paid employees as a large business. Another exception, The U.S. Small Business Administration (2016), casts a much broader net by classifying all small businesses under one category and defining them as an "independent business having fewer than 500 employees and caps on their revenue based on their classification code in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)" (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016, p. 1).

European Union

The European Commission defines an enterprise as "any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form. This includes, in particular, self-employed persons and family businesses engaged in craft or other activities, and partnerships or associations regularly engaged in an economic activity" (European Commission, 2003). These small and medium

enterprises are further defined using three major categories including micro, small, and medium-sized businesses. The small and medium business criteria also depend on either the turnover or balance sheet of the business. Eurostat, the office of statistics for the European Union, has published definitions of both turnover and balance sheet to eliminate any ambiguity in determining micro, small, and medium-sized business status. Eurostat defines turnover as "the total of all sales (excluding VAT) of goods and services carried out by the enterprises of a given sector during the reference period" and balance sheet as a variable that "consists of the sum of all items of the assets side or the sum of all items of the liabilities side" (Eurostat, 2017). Table 1 gives the variables to determine the sizing classification of medium, small, or micro businesses.

Table 1

EU SME Classification

Company Category	Employees	Turnover |or| Balance Sheet	
Medium-Sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m	≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m	≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m	≤ € 2

Note. Reprinted from Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 Concerning the Definition of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises by European Commission (2003). Retrieved from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2003/361/oj

Canada

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) (2016) uses paid employees as the primary criteria for small business or small and medium-sized enterprise (SME). ISED defines an SME as having 1 to 499 paid employees. SME criteria are individually broken down into two categories. A small business is defined as having 1 to 99 paid employees, a medium sized business as having 100 to 499 paid employees, and a large business as having 500 or more paid employees (ISED, 2016).

United States

The United States Small Business Administration (SBA), a department of the United States government set up to aid small businesses, defines a small business as "an independent business having fewer than 500 employees with caps on their revenue based on their relevant classification code in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)" (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016, p. 1). The Food Services and Drinking Places sector, for example, has caps of $7.5 million for most restaurant classifications, but with a range of all the way to $38.5 million. Regardless of the NAICS revenue cap, the maximum number of 500 employees is constant. The other departments of the U.S. government refer to the SBA guidelines in combination with their respective NAICS codes as a reference for what classifies as a small business. Thus, making the SBA the agency that is most responsible for defining small business in the U.S.

A notable exception to the small business definition in The United States is the Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act did not use the SBA small business size guidelines of fewer than 500 employees and NAICS revenue ceiling, and its definition is vital to what reporting and regulations small businesses must adhere. On March 23, 2010, Congress passed the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and it was signed into law by President Obama. The Affordable Care Act was a piece of legislation that provided a series of comprehensive health insurance reforms for Medicare, Medicaid, and private healthcare insurers. Also, the legislation created a significant amount of regulation and reporting requirements for both large and small

private business. SEC. 1304 42 U.S.C. 18024 differs from the SBA by defining a small business as:

> a small employer in connection with a group health plan with respect to a calendar year and a plan year as an employer who employed an average of at least 1 but not more than 100 employees on business days during the preceding calendar year and who employs at least 1 employee on the first day of the plan year
> (Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 2010, § 10104)

Published Research

The majority of researchers did not explicitly define a small business but used the number of employees and annual sales as criteria for a small business in their study sample. However, the most common criteria used in determining a small business was the number of employees. Table 2 presents some of the most cited small business articles in the United States and the criteria used to classify each as a small business.

Table 2

Small Business Research in the United States

Year	Author(s)	Country	Number of Employees	Revenue	Industry
1993	Lyles, Baird, Orris, & Kuratko	United States	< 500	1 million or more	Retail, professional/technical services, food service, and construction
2004	Ibrahim, Angelidis, & Parsa	United States	< 500		
2011	Hargis & Bradley	United States	< 250		Retail, professional/technical services, food service, and construction
2013	Allen, Ericksen, & Collins	United States	< 200	For-Profit	Basic services, professional services, retail, construction, and manufacturing

Economic Impact

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are significant drivers of economic growth, social cohesion, job creation, and wealth across the globe (Ram & Edwards, 2010; Chow & Dunkelberg, 2011). While acknowledging there is no agreed-upon definition of SME among governments, combined global statistics show that firms classified as SME's makeup 99 percent of businesses that account for the majority of employment, and over half of the value added in the global economy (APEC, 2011; OECD, 2017; SBA, 2016).

European Union. Across the EU28, SME's are geographically scattered throughout all of Europe and operate in a variety of sectors such as retail, construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. In 2015, SME's numbered almost 23 million, 99.8 % of all businesses that employed 90 million people and accounted for two-thirds of employment (Hope, Gagliardi, Marzocchi, Muller, Devnani, Peycheva, & Julius, 2015). These 23 million businesses generated almost three fifths, €3.9 trillion, of value added in the EU28 non-financial business sector (European Commission, 2016).

Canada. In 2015, SME's accounted for 99.7 percent of employer businesses in Canada. Of these SME's, 97.9 percent were small businesses, 1.8 percent were medium-sized businesses, and the final .3 percent were large businesses (ISED, 2016). SME's employed over 10.5 million people, or 90.3 percent of the total private workforce (ISED, 2016). SME's were responsible for 27 percent, or $13 billion, of innovation expenditures on research and development between 2011 and 2013. In 2014, SME's were responsible for approximately 30 percent of the gross domestic product of their province (ISED, 2016). In 2013, 73,000 SME's accounted for 25.2 percent, 106 billion, of exported goods (ISED, 2016).

United States. In 2013, The United States shared similar small business statistics to the European Union and Canada. The Small Business Administration estimated there were "28.8 million small businesses that accounted for 99.7 percent of U.S. employer firms, 33.6% of known export value ($471 billion out of $930 billion), 33.6% of known export value ($471 billion out of $930 billion), 48.0% of private-sector employees (57 million out of 118 million employees), 41.2% of private-sector payroll, and 37 percent of high-tech employment," (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016, p. 1).

Small Business Training

Research has demonstrated that innovation is key to successfully maintaining competitive advantage and surviving economic downturns (de Kok, Deijl, & Veldhuis-Van Essen, 2013). SME's are structured to be innovative, nimble, and flexible, but they must develop their employees and managers' capabilities and skills to be successful (Reich & Scheuermann, 2003). The training and development of employee and manager skills and capabilities are not just crucial for innovation and the creation of knowledge, but research has shown that training and business productivity are positively correlated (Blundell, Dearden, Meghir, & Sianesi, 1999; Konrad & Mangle, 2000). Also, training can aid in employees' abilities to adapt to change (Admiraal & Lockhorst, 2009). Researchers, small business advocacy organizations, and governments around the globe have been united in their message of the importance of employee training and development in SME's and its impact on innovation and productivity, resulting in a competitive advantage (Ashton & Felstead, 1995).

Competitive advantage is the capability of the business to outperform the competition, resulting in customers receiving a benefit they cannot get from the competition (Solomon, Marshall, & Stuart, 2011). The competitive advantage for small businesses created through the

training and development of its employees results in an increase in productivity, innovation, and the ability to adapt to change (Admiraal & Lockhorst, 2009; Konrad & Mangle, 2000; de Kok et al., 2013). Research has shown that competitive advantage built on employee skills and capabilities is harder to identify and duplicate by the competition and thus create a more sustained competitive advantage (Lubit, 2001; Stalk, Evans, & Shulman, 1992).

Barriers to Small Business Training

Despite the empirical evidence and urging of researchers, small business advocacy organizations, and governments that invest in training results in increased competitive advantage through higher productivity, innovation, and flexibility, many small businesses have yet to subscribe to the benefits of a well-trained workforce (Blundell, Dearden, Meghir, & Sianesi, 1999; Conti, 2005; Konrad & Mangle, 2000). Stone (2010) found that over a third of SMEs lacked any formal training programs. The third of SMEs not engaging in training and development programs are at a significant disadvantage in the global economy compared to their counterparts who are. Among some of the most cited reasons for the lack of formal training in SMEs are:

- Attitude of the Business Owner (Zhang, Macpherson, & Jones, 2006)
- Lack of Perceived Value or Relevance (Pauselli & D'Atri, 2001)
- Lack of Infrastructure (Johnson, 2002)
- Costs (Webster, Walker, & Brown, 2005)
- Lack of Time (Webster et al., 2005)

Attitude of the Business Owner. The literature has identified several barriers to training and development for SMEs, but the attitude of the owner has been identified as the most critical factor (Gray & Mabey, 2005; Zhang, Macpherson, & Jones, 2006). Owners who do not believe

in the value of training and development will not seek out opportunities for themselves or their employees (Webster et al., 2005). Goolnik (2002) found that owner attitudes and actions towards training and development are influenced by their competitors. Some small business owners do not see the benefits of training and development because they are not looking to expand their business. Instead, such owners, often referred to as lifestyle owners, are in business to only support themselves, their families, and their employees. Collinson and Quinn (2002) proposed that some owners are forced into becoming lifestyle owners because they lack the capabilities to grow their business and the training barriers to obtaining those skills are overwhelming. Becton and Graetz's (2001) revealed that over two-thirds of participants felt that it was problematic to gain access to training and development opportunities.

Lack of Perceived Value or Relevance. The perception by many training providers is that small businesses are just miniature versions of their larger counterparts (Rowden, 1995). However, training materials that are pertinent to large businesses are not relevant for most small businesses (Pauselli & D'Atri, 2001). The lack of relevant courses and clear training objectives enforces the perception by many small business owners that there is no added value in training and development activities (Devins, Gold, Johnson, & Holden, 2005; Reich & Scheuermann, 2003). Even when courses are small business focused and have clear objectives that align the training with business objectives, another barrier is that most training programs do not lead to industry-recognized certification or a college degree. A study by Collins and Buhalis (2003) of SMEs in five European countries found that not achieving industry-recognized certifications or a college degree was a barrier to training.

Another barrier is “just-in-time training,” in other words, training that is focused on issues or problems that are occurring in the present and not at some point in the future (Webster

et al., 2005). The ability to be flexible and react quickly to changes in the business environment is a strength of small businesses, but not training for future problems and focusing on what is happening currently can be problematic for the long-term survivability of small businesses (Reich & Scheuermann, 2003).

Lack of Infrastructure. Commonly acknowledged in small business literature is the idea that training and development activities do not occur as frequently and are often less formal than large businesses (Gray & Mabey, 2005; Storey, 2004). Research has shown that small businesses have higher turnover rates than their large business counterparts and their size limits the amount of time their employees can be taken away from productivity related tasks for training activities (Gray & Mabey, 2005). In addition to the loss of immediate productivity, the idea that scarce resources are being invested in employees who will soon take these skills to other employer's influences owner's attitudes about engaging in training and development activities (Bryan, 2006).

Costs. Another training barrier for a small business are the costs. Small business owners are hesitant or not willing to invest their limited resources in training programs if they cannot see any immediate benefits (Bryan, 2006; Dewhurst, Dewhurst, & Livesey, 2007). Owners want business investments to increase the profitability of the business, and if the training benefits are not immediate or quantifiable, the owner may not see training as a worthwhile investment and likely not invest in the training and development activity (Webster et al., 2005).

The costs of the training materials, instructors, and lost productivity are significant for small business owners (Bryan, 2006; Gray & Mabey, 2005). Storey (2004) also points out how small businesses training is proportionally higher because there are rarely price breaks given for small purchases and each trainee would bear a higher proportional cost. An additional cost

before any training starts is with the small businesses having to invest in investigating different training programs, possible locations, and transportation (Reich & Scheuermann, 2003). A final cost in each of these tasks requires an employee or owner to focus on something that is not producing immediate, tangible benefits for the business.

Time. Lastly, "time is money," and each of these tasks requires an employee or owner to focus on something that is not producing immediate benefits. The small business owner must invest a considerable amount of time away from productive tasks to research and evaluate different training materials, find a training location, and plan transportation (Reich & Scheuermann, 2003). Small businesses have a finite number of employees, and when they are taken away from their daily tasks to attend training, the business is left shorthanded.

Human Resource Development

Many small business owners today, much like their ancestors, might not fully understand all the concepts of human resource development, but are using those concepts to keep their businesses alive and striving.

Human resource development as an academic discipline is a young one and has struggled to have its identity defined. The debate over whether to even define human resource development and what that definition should be has been an ongoing source of tension by many notable scholars in the field. To date, there is no consensus among scholars and practitioners to either the "to define or not define" debate, much less what the definition should be.

Two of the most recognized proposed definitions are by Gilley and Eggland (1989) and Swanson and Holton (2001). The first by Gilley and Eggland (1989) is "organized learning activities arranged within an organization in order to improve performance and/or personal growth for the purpose of improving the job, the individual, and/or the organization" (p. 5). The

second by Swanson and Holton (2001) is "HRD is a process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving individual, team, work process, and organizational system performance" (p. 4). While the definitions vary some, the theme of organized learning for the purpose of increasing personal and organization performance is present in both.

Every organization is comprised of physical, financial and human resources. The training and development of human capital that takes place in human resource development is an essential part of human resources. The physical resources of machines, buildings, and other equipment are tangible and without a doubt essential to an organization. The financial resources of money, stocks, investments, and bonds are also essential to the survival of the organization (Gilley and Eggland, 1989).

The majority of the human resources portion of the organization is comprised of employees. The ability to calculate their value is something that cannot be easily quantifiable like that of money, equipment, materials or stocks, but certainly, the value of well trained, knowledgeable and skilled employees are noticed compared to those who are underperforming. The quantifiable cost of turnover or replacing employees can be felt through "recruiting, hiring, relocating, lost productivity, training and orientation" (Gilley et al., 2002). The value of well-trained employees versus replacing a non-performing one is why human resource development is vital to any organization.

E-learning

The advancements in technology over the last 30 years have not only ushered in the creation of the smartphone and the Internet but have made them affordable and readily available. E-learning uses these advancements in communication technology to assist in making learning practical for everyone, despite time or distance. E-learning is an all-encompassing term used to

describe an electronic-based system that delivers instructional material for the purpose of learning. The Association for Talent Development (ATD) defines E-learning as a "wide set of applications and processes, such as web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. It includes delivery of content via the internet, intranet/extranet, LAN/WAN (local area network/wide area network) audio-/videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM" (DeRouin, Fritzsche, & Salas, 2005, p. 920). All of these can be received on a variety of devices such as a home computer, portable laptop, iPad or tablet, and even a smartphone.

E-learning provides businesses the ability to increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of their training programs by reducing costs, providing faster delivery, and allowing self-paced learning. E-learning can be used for the efficient delivery of everything from mandatory training modules to skill building modules to help with cross training (Clarke et al., 2005). "E-learning combines improved computer capabilities, improved telecommunications infrastructures and improved pedagogical techniques to improve training offerings cost-effectively" (Grollman & Cannon, 2003, p. 45).

History of E-learning

E-learning is one of the most current forms in the long history of distance learning evolution. Distance learning can be traced back to the 1700's when Caleb Phillips, a shorthand teacher, advertised to teach anywhere in the country through correspondence courses by mail. The growth of the United States Post Office in the 1800's allowed for correspondent education to flourish and serve women and other oppressed populations of the time (Harting & Erthal, 2005). In 1873, inspired by the success of correspondence courses in the United States, the University of the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa founded the first dedicated distance learning facility

(Ferriman, 2013). By 1892, the University of Chicago became the first U.S. college to offer correspondence courses. Correspondence education remained a favorite vehicle for distance education for the next 50 years.

The early twentieth century brought about the new technology of radio. In 1921, excited by the prospect of a new medium for distance learning, the Latter-Day Saints' University of Salt Lake City applied for and received the first educational radio license (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). The State University of Iowa began offering for credit courses via the radio in 1925 and by the late 1920's several K-12 school programs were being broadcast over the air (Moore & Kearsley, 2011).

The 1930's saw the dawn of new and exciting technology, television. A pioneer once again, the State University of Iowa began broadcasting its first over the air course in 1934 and by 1939 was offering almost 400 different educational programs (Unwin & McAleese, 1988). Throughout the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's educational broadcasting continued to flourish with the help of the contributions of the Ford Foundation, the federal Educational Television Facilities Act of 1962, and the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 (Moore & Kearsley, 2011). The funding from private donors and federal legislation led to over 53 stations broadcasting classes and programs to public schools all over the country (Schweizer, 2004).

The 1970's began with the continued increase of educational television programs, now reaching above 230, but there were changes on the horizon (Harting & Erthal, 2005). In 1971, the United Kingdom's Open University utilized television, radio, recorded audio and video, and home experiment kits to become the world's first university to teach only distance education courses (Perry, 1977). The late 1970's and beginning of the 1980's started to see the emergence

of computer architecture and experiments on its uses as an educational tool (Sun, Finger, & Liu, 2014).

The 1980's heralded the infancy of E-learning with the rise of personal computers and the beginning of the Internet (Schweizer, 2004). One of the early stages of E-learning came in the form of computer-assisted instruction. This advance allowed the user to learn about software application while actively engaging with the application. One of the most popular examples is the helpful (but, some attest, annoying) "Microsoft Paperclip" in Microsoft Office (Kylli, 2005). While computer-assisted instruction, computer software, and the Internet pushed traditional education boundaries, they were merely traditional education material being offered in an online format (Popovici & Mironov, 2015).

The 1990's saw E-learning beginning to take shape with the advent of the personal computer, digital video, broadband, and the increased popularity and availability of the Internet throughout the world. These technologies allowed the creation of the Web-Based Training era, which universities used as a viable educational E-learning tool (Kasraie & Kasraie, 2010). During this period, E-learning was used to make blended learning education possible (Shim, Dekleva, Guo, & Mittleman, 2011). The ability to transfer knowledge through web-based communications on demand and anywhere made E-learning an attractive technology for organizations and universities (Joo, Lim, & Park, 2011). The 1990's concluded with one of the most recognizable advancements in E-learning. The founding and launch of a standardized platform, such as Blackboard, for online course management and delivery.

The 2000's saw an explosion in the development of content and use of E-learning for educational purposes (Popovici & Mironov, 2014). As Internet access becomes more widespread, mobile computing options continue to grow, the number of E-learning courses

increases and new E-learning platforms are developed, more people are drawn to online learning (Chawla & Joshi, 2012). The demand for online learning has resulted in a number of E-learning universities being established, traditional universities offering E-learning courses, and corporate universities embracing E-learning technology (Parnell & Carraher, 2003).

Types of E-learning

High-speed communication technologies, web-based applications, and standardized E-learning platforms have all provided businesses with the educational tools they need to train their workforces and solve organizational problems (Cheng, 2011). The different tools available are used to support the different methods of E-learning. E-learning is most often discussed in three different contexts including synchronous, asynchronous, and blended learning (Carruth & Carruth, 2012).

Synchronous learning is an instructor-led instruction that occurs in a virtual classroom in real-time. The instructor and students meet in the online virtual classroom on a specific day and at a specific time where they can send and receive information simultaneously with each other (Ruiz, Mintzer, & Leipzig, 2006). Some examples of synchronous learning are audio/video Teleconferencing, virtual classrooms, online chat rooms, and instant messaging (Bachman, 2000).

Asynchronous learning is instructor-led, but it does not occur in real-time. Learners are given the flexibility of learning anywhere and anytime they choose. This approach allows learners to receive just-in-time training of what is needed to perform a specific task. The lack of real-time interaction is supplemented by the more substantial use of interactive multimedia to keep learners engaged (Bachman, 2000). Some examples of asynchronous learning are

interactive tutorials, self-paced online courses, web presentations, and discussion groups (Zhang & Nunamaker, 2003).

Blended learning includes a combination of face-to-face and asynchronous learning for instruction. This method allows instructors and students to have a live collaborative instruction session, but also reinforces sessions with the benefits of on-demand asynchronous learning. This mode is often viewed as the most efficient way to learn for many students because it combines the benefits of online learning and human interaction (Clarke, Lewis, Cole, & Ringrose, 2005). An example of blended learning is a university cohort program that uses a combination of E-learning and face-to-face meetings.

Advantages

There are numerous advantages of E-learning for learners, instructors, and organizations alike (Chang, 2016; Kasraie & Kasraie, 2010). The most common advantages mentioned in the literature are the cost savings and flexibility that E-learning provides (Daymont & Blau, 2011). E-learning allows organizations to reduce training costs by eliminating travel costs, salaries, lost opportunities, training facilities, and a reduction in training materials (Joo, Lim, & Park, 2011; Yusuf & Al-Banawi, 2013). E-learning allows users the flexibility to access the E-learning materials at any time, from anywhere, and to complete the modules at a pace they feel comfortable (Chen & Tseng, 2012; Shale, 2003).

While cost savings and flexibility garner most of the attention, there are many other advantages of E-learning that benefit learners, instructors, and organizations. E-learning benefits learners by incorporating the latest technologies and learning theories, increases engagement through peer and instructor interactions, offers just-in-time training, provides more access to instructors, adds the ability to adapt to different learning styles, and uses real-world data giving

the learner a more in-depth and positive learning experience (Chang, 2015; Horton, 2000). E-learning allows instructors to eliminate or reduce travel significantly and update course content instantly. Organizations benefit from E-learning in more ways than just through cost reductions by being able to deliver high quality, uniform training to a global staff, and to create a valuable learning resource (Chang, 2015; Horton, 2000). Lastly, E-learning affords access to educational and learning opportunities for all (Cavanaugh, 1999).

Challenges

The literature has identified several challenges to using E-learning as a training method. For instance, Graham and Jones (2011) found that employees showed interest in E-learning, but that technical problems and financial resources are significant challenges in facilitating a productive E-learning environment. For example, the development and management of E-learning courses are more time-intensive of instructors and support staff than traditional training methods, thus requiring more financial resources (Omar, Kalulu, & Alijani, 2011). In addition to the other challenges mentioned, Bolan (2001) found that a lack of E-learning knowledge, commitment from senior management, and quality courses were additional E-learning challenges. Lastly, Internet access, limited bandwidth, technology fears by employees, the lack of university quality business courses, impersonal nature, and hard to form social and personal relationships are all challenges to E-learning success (Donlevy, 2003; Schweizer, 2004). Appendix C highlights the challenges facing E-learning.

TAM and E-learning

Developed by Davis (1989), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) measures factors that are used to predict learners' acceptance or rejection of technology. According to TAM, the acceptance or rejection of technology is based on that individual's perceived ease of use and

usefulness of the technology (Davis, 1989; Sheikhshoaei & Oloumi, 2011). TAM has been used throughout the literature to study learners' acceptance or rejection of various learning technologies, i.e., E-learning, in various organizational context (El-Gayar, Moran, & Hawkes, 2011; Sheikhshoaei & Oloumi, 2011). A study of 408 Korean construction professionals conducted by Park, Son, and Kim (2012) found that the usage of E-learning was significantly affected by the learners perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Kim and Frick (2011) conducted a study on 800 adult learners throughout the United States using the TAM and found that learners with a higher technology competence would begin E-learning training significantly faster than those with a lower technology competence. Additional studies by Cheng, Tsai, Cheng, and Chen (2012) and Shroff, Vogel, Coombes, and Lee (2007) found similar results in a variety of different context.

These studies confirmed that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use - TAM factors - influence learners' behavior with regards to E-learning (Cheng, Tsai, Cheng, and Chen, 2012; El-Gayar, Moran, & Hawkes, 2011; Sheikhshoaei & Oloumi, 2011). Learning outcomes from training can be negatively affected if users do not find the E-learning as the best way to learn the material or if the platform is not user-friendly.

Restaurant Industry

The current study was conducted in the restaurant industry, specifically the fast food segment, and understanding the variety of restaurants available to consumers is instructive. A review of the existing literature found the restaurant industry could be divided into four categories: fine dining, casual dining, fast casual, and fast food or quick service restaurants (QSR).

The restaurant industry accounts for approximately 13 million people or 10% of the total workforce, making it one of the largest employment sectors in the United States (National Restaurant Association, 2017). In 2017, with estimated sales of $799 billion, the restaurant industry was the largest growing sector. An estimated 1.6 million additional restaurant jobs are expected to be created over the next ten years, with total restaurant employment predicted to reach 16.3 million by 2027 (National Restaurant Association, 2017). The revenue and employment generated by the restaurant industry are essential to other industries in the U.S. economy. It is estimated that an additional 34 jobs are created for every $1 million spent in restaurants, every restaurant supports full-time jobs in another industry, and ancillary industries benefit as the restaurant industry grows (National Restaurant Association, 2011).

Fine Dining

Fine dining or full-service restaurants focus on the customer experience through high-quality food, superior customer service, and an ambiance that makes for a memorable experience. However, this memorable experience comes at a premium price. Fine dining restaurants are characterized by destination locations that recommend or require reservations, command a high price, tablecloths, and an attentive staff to ensure superior customer satisfaction and experience (Arora, 2012). Examples of fine dining restaurants include Fleming's Prime Steakhouse™, The Capital Grille™, Morton's The Steakhouse™, and the Melting Pot™.

Casual Dining

Casual dining restaurants focus less on the ambiance and more on the speed of service. At a lower price than fine dining restaurants, casual dining restaurants are one of the most common types of restaurants (Rivera, DiPietro, Murphy, & Muller, 2008). Casual dining restaurants are characterized by focusing on speed of service, reservations are not required or even available

sometimes, no tablecloths, and a lower price than fine dining restaurants (Arora, 2012). Examples of casual dining restaurants include Texas Roadhouse™, Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen™, Cracker Barrel Old Country Store™, and Olive Garden™.

Fast Casual

Fast casual restaurants are a fusion of casual dining and fast food restaurants. The quality of food is better than the typical fast food restaurant with faster service than is found in casual dining restaurants. Fast casual restaurants use a structure that is similar to fast food but sacrifices some speed of service for a higher quality product (Ryu & Han, 2010). This higher quality product is reflected by a price that is higher than typical fast food establishments. Examples of fast casual restaurants include Einstein Bros. Bagels™, Panera Bread™, Chipotle Mexican Grill™, and Pei Wei Asian Diner™.

Quick Service Restaurant or Fast Food

Fast food or quick service restaurants (QSR) are focused on products that are quickly and easily prepared and delivered to keep their speed of service maximized at the cost of lower quality food compared to the other dining options (Rashid, Rani, Yusuf, & Shaari, 2015). Fast food restaurants deliver products that are ready to be consumed quickly, easily, and optimized for the on-the-go consumer. Fast food has the lowest price and highest volume of all the restaurants. The fast food industry attempts to provide customers with a quick and convenient dining option with a minimal price. Examples of fast food restaurants include McDonald's™, Taco Bell™, Chick-Fil-A™, Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen™, and Captain D's™. Table 3 offers a more comprehensive list of fast food restaurants, sales, franchises, and total units.

Table 3

Fast food restaurants

Company	Category	2016 U.S. Systemwide Sales (millions)	2016 U.S. Average Sales Per Unit (thousands)	Number of Franchised Units in 2016	Total Units in 2016
McDonald's*	Burger	36,389.00	2,550.00	13,046	14,155
Subway	Sandwich	11,300.00	422.52	26,744	26,744
Wendy's	Burger	9,930.20	1,570.00	6,207	6,537
Burger King*	Burger	9,749.19	1,361.43	7,111	7,161
Taco Bell	Ethnic	9,353.80	1,510.00	5,399	6,278
Chick-fil-A	Chicken	7,973.50	4,407.10	1,730	2,102
Sonic*	Burger	4,504.14	1,284.00	3,201	3,557
KFC	Chicken	4,483.30	1,060.00	3,966	4,167
Carl'sJr./Hardee's	Burger	3,761.00	1,249.00	2,774	3,011
Dairy Queen	Snack	3,621.00	1,268.05	4,515	4,517
Arby's	Sandwich	3,600.00	1,117.00	2,314	3,358
Jack in the Box	Burger	3,445.00	1,530.00	1,838	2,255
Popeyes	Chicken	3,140.30	1,488.00	2,029	2,084
Whataburger	Burger	2,181.35	2,706.00	122	806
Zaxby's*	Chicken	1,891.98	2,318.60	677	816
Checkers/Rally's	Burger	837.36	1,114.89	541	841
Captain D's	Seafood	544.43	1,059.00	227	516

*Includes figures estimated by QSR.

Note. Adapted from The QSR 50, by QSR Magazine, retrieved from https://www.qsrmagazine.com/content/qsr50-2017-top-50-chart?sort=2016_us_systemwide_sales_millions&dir=desc

Summary

This review has provided an overview of pertinent literature and information gathered from previous studies that relate to small business, E-learning, and human resource development. The literature review found that there was no single definition of a small business or even a small and medium enterprise. The definition used would differ depending on the country where the research was being conducted, the researcher, or factors that were never given. For comparability, this study used the definition from the United States Small Business Administration (SBA). The Office of Advocacy defines a small business as "an independent business having fewer than 500 employees" with caps on their revenue based on their relevant classification code in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)" (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016, p. 1).

In reviewing the literature, numerous studies examined the positive effects of a well-trained workforce on the success of large, medium, and small businesses (Blundell, Dearden, Meghir, & Sianesi, 1999; de Kok, Deijl, & Veldhuis-Van Essen, 2013; Reich & Scheuermann, 2003). Other studies showed how E-learning was able to break through some of the training barriers for small businesses and some of the challenges that they must still overcome (Chang, 2015; Horton, 2000). However, there were a limited number of studies specifically focused on the small business manager's capabilities relevant to E-learning. At the time of this study, none looked at small business manager perceptions of E-learning in the United States.

The purpose of this study is to examine perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant. A qualitative study was used to provide an in-depth understanding of the small, fast food business managers' perceptions of E-learning. The next chapter will outline the methods used in the study.

Chapter Three

Method

Chapter three describes the methodology and procedures used in this study. This chapter describes the research design, research participants, data collection, data analysis, reliability, limitations, and ethical issues in the study. Additionally, the researcher's role and influence in the study will be addressed.

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant. The research questions of the study are best answered by an interpretive case study using qualitative research methods. The limited amount of information found during the literature review involving management trainees' perceptions of E-learning warrants a qualitative study to conduct an initial exploration of the phenomena. Participant observation, documents, and face-to-face interviews were used as data collection methods to develop a deeper understanding of small business manager perceptions. Member checks, peer reviews, and triangulation were all methods that were drawn upon to confirm the trustworthiness of the data collected. The goals of this initial exploratory study are to develop a deeper understanding of the trainees' perceptions, possibly generating suggestions for future research.

Research Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm was deemed the most appropriate for this qualitative research study. The goal of interpretivism is attempting "to understand the social world as it is (the status quo) from the perspective of individual experience" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 46). Another goal of interpretivism is a "thick description," which is agreement with one of the aims of the

research study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Table 4 shows the characteristics of the interpretive paradigm used in this study.

Table 4

Characteristics of the Interpretive Paradigm

Characteristic	Description
Purpose of research	Develop an understanding and interpret management trainees' perceptions of E-learning that could affect successful learning transfer.
Epistemology	• Knowledge is gained through a strategy that "respects the differences between people and the objects of natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Grix, 2004, p. 64). • Knowledge is gained inductively to create a theory. • Knowledge arises from particular situations and is not reducible to simplistic interpretation. • Knowledge is gained through personal experience
Ontology	• Reality is indirectly constructed based on individual interpretation and is subjective • People interpret and make their own meaning of events. • Events are distinctive and cannot be generalized. • There are multiple perspectives on one incident. • Causation in social sciences is determined by interpreted meaning and symbols.

Note. Adapted from "The philosophical underpinnings of educational research", by L. Mack, 2010, p. 8.

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

A qualitative research study is considered by many scholars to be the best methodology for studying human learning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Domegan & Fleming, 2007). The focus of this study is on management trainees' perceptions of E-learning in a small business

environment and not on the outcomes of the E-learning training. A qualitative research study is well-suited for exploring the complex human behaviors found in learning and understanding perceptions of participants. Additionally, there was a limited amount of information found during the literature review involving management trainees' perceptions of E-learning.

Rationale for a Case Study

A case study is a form of social science research that allows thick description and analysis of a phenomenon, system, or social unit constrained by time or place. It contains a comprehensive description of the setting and the participants, followed by an analysis of the data to uncover patterns and themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Robert Yin (2003) stated that "case studies are the preferred strategy when the 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed," (p. 1) and the behavior of those in the study cannot be manipulated as in this proposed study. Hartley (2004) defines a case study as

> a heterogeneous activity covering a range of research methods and techniques, a range of coverage (from single case study through carefully matched pairs up to multiple cases), varied levels of analysis (individuals, groups, organizations, organizational fields or social policies), and differing lengths and levels of involvement in organizational functioning. (p. 332)

Case study research employs the use of observation, document analysis, interviews, and recording and transcribing; these are referred to as the four major methods of qualitative research (Silverman, 2001). This study is best suited for a case study approach because it asks the "how" and "why," has clear boundaries, and it seeks to describe the whole of the case and the relationships within it (holistic). Hence, a case study allows for investigation of management trainees' stories, feelings, and perceptions of their E-learning experience at a small, fast food restaurant.

Participants

A purposeful sampling strategy was employed to select the participants for the study. Yin (2015) defines purposeful sampling as "the selection of participants or sources of data to be used in a study, based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study's research questions" (p. 339). Purposeful sampling is the most commonly used sampling strategy in qualitative research because of its focus on seeking in-depth and rich information that may lead itself to further study. The study was conducted at a local fast food franchise in Memphis, Tennessee. The local fast food franchisee employs under 499 employees and has annual revenue of less than $11,000,000, making it a small business under SBA guidelines. The interviewees were management trainees in weeks six through eight of an eight-week long management training program. The participant pool was established by soliciting volunteers from an insert in their first paycheck. All new employees receive a paper check for their first pay period, so the invitation reached all new trainees. Participants were chosen from the participant pool and interviewed off-site at the franchise warehouse conference room.

Ethical Concerns

A protocol form, provided in the Appendix, and informed consent form, also provided in the Appendix, were submitted to the University of Arkansas' Institutional Review Board for approval before the beginning of data collection to ensure the protection of all study participants. Participants were asked to select pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality in the reporting process of this research. No anticipated risks exist for participants of this study. Study participants were free to withdraw from research participation at any time during the study. The recordings and transcriptions of the interviews will remain confidential, and any field notes, recordings, and transcriptions will be destroyed when the dissertation is complete.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted in-person interviews with a sample of ten management trainees. The face-to-face interviews took place in the franchise warehouse conference room. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour and used a semi-structured interview protocol based on a list of questions developed to help answer the research questions. A digital audio recorder was used to record the data, and written notes were taken as a backup. When necessary, a follow-up phone call with participants was needed to clarify responses. The interviews were conducted using Berg's "10 Commandments of Interviewing" as a framework:

1. Never begin an interview cold.
2. Remember your purpose.
3. Present a natural front.
4. Demonstrate aware hearing.
5. Think about appearance.
6. Interview in a comfortable place.
7. Don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers.
8. Be respectful.
9. Practice, practice, and practice some more.
10. Be cordial and appreciative. (Berg, 2004, p. 110-111)

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research studies. Since the researcher was conducting all the interviews and document analysis, the disclosure of biases, anticipations, and assumptions are critical for issues of trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). A researcher should have empathic neutrality and a desire to "understand the

world as it unfolds" and then present the rules in an objective way (Patton, 2002, p. 51). "Because qualitative researchers believe that your personal views can never be kept separate from interpretations, personal reflections about the meaning of the data are included in the research study. You base these personal interpretations on hunches, insights, and intuition" (Creswell, 2008, p. 264). The management trainees did not know about the researcher's involvement with the implementation of the E-learning modules. The first-hand knowledge of the E-learning modules allowed the researcher to have some unique insights. The challenge of remaining impartial and keeping bias in-check during the study required remaining cognizant of any bias during the entire research process. The researcher, remaining aware of this issue, led to the careful development of open-ended questions that allowed opportunities for ideas to be challenged. Last, the researcher's familiarity with the E-learning software required the researcher to use very little to no jargon or acronyms that are specific to the proprietary E-learning modules.

Trustworthiness

The traditional criteria of reliability and validity that are used to ensure rigorous and credible research data are easy to apply in quantitative research studies because they use standardized instruments that are readily assessed. However, qualitative research studies use the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and often rely on smaller, purposeful sampling. Therefore, the reliability and validity criteria traditionally used in quantitative research cannot be easily applied to qualitative research where the goal is developing a deeper understanding and meaning of phenomena.

The difficulty in applying traditional methods of validity, reliability and objectivity criteria to qualitative research does not mean that rigor does not exist nor should there be a one-size-fits-all approach to validity and reliability. Trustworthiness is a term being used more

frequently in the literature to safeguard the quality of research. Harrison, MacGibbon, and Morton (2001) define trustworthiness as: "the ways we work to meet the criteria of validity, credibility, and believability of our research – as assessed by the academy, our communities, and our participants" (p. 324). Guba and Lincoln (1981), Creswell (1998), Shenton (2004), and many other scholars identify four strategies to establish trustworthiness that have similar external and internal validity, reliability, and objectivity as their quantitative parallel: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

Credibility is the qualitative equivalent of internal validity found in quantitative research. Credibility is a paradigm for making sure the data and data analysis are believable and a matchup with reality. However, the very nature of qualitative research states that different people have different perceptions of reality. The interpretive perspective proposes that understanding is co-created and thus the inclusion of member checking is an important method to increase credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe the inclusion of "member checking into the findings as the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). The researcher will perform member checks by making sure that participants are given copies of the interview transcripts and then given an opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of their responses.

Patton (2002) proposed that credible qualitative research should contain three elements: "rigorous methods, the credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry" (p. 552). The researched fulfilled the requirements of the three elements by adhering to the process of grounded theory, acknowledging his own experiences as a human resource professional, and his belief in the merits of qualitative research in the pursuit of answering the research questions in the study.

Transferability

Transferability is the qualitative equivalent of external validity found in quantitative research. Transferability is the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied or generalized to a different population or setting than that of the study. Transferability is a significant obstacle for qualitative researchers and especially studies like this one with small samples sizes and a single case study. In these cases, the researcher can boost transferability by "providing a detailed, rich description of the setting studied, so that readers are given sufficient information to be able to judge the applicability of the findings to other settings which they know" (Seale, 1999), p. 45). The researcher will provide information about the geographic location, descriptive information about the setting, and data collection procedures to fulfill these requirements.

Dependability

Dependability is the qualitative equivalent of reliability found in quantitative research. Dependability is the ability to consistently achieve the same study results in a similar context. The issue with dependability is that humans are complex and the numerous factors that influence their behaviors, actions, and ultimately their answers are boundless. Dependability is further complicated by multiple interpretations of the same data by different researchers, readers, and even the participants themselves. Again, the researcher can help achieve dependability by documenting in detail the data collection methods, decisions made during the data collection and analysis stages, and the methods used during the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the final criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. It is the qualitative equivalent of objectivity found in quantitative research. Confirmability is

ensuring the findings of the study are the results of the data collected and not researcher bias. Triangulation is one of several methods that help mitigate researcher bias in qualitative studies. Triangulation is the use of multiple data sources, i.e., information gathering during the interviews, training documents, and observation of the training. As reoccurring themes emerge from the different data sources, this approach offers an opportunity to cross-validate the data being collected. Again, member checking was used to ensure the trustworthiness of data.

Data Analysis

An interpretive researcher gathers the bulk of his or her data through direct interaction with the phenomena studied. In a qualitative case study, the search for understanding and meaning of the phenomena through direct interpretation of first-hand observations and the feelings and perceptions of the participants is an integral part of the data analysis process.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) define qualitative data analysis as "the process of making sense out of the data. Moreover, making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning" (p. 202). Shown in Figure 1, Schutt (2011) outlined a flow chart of characteristics shared by most of the qualitative data analysis approaches.

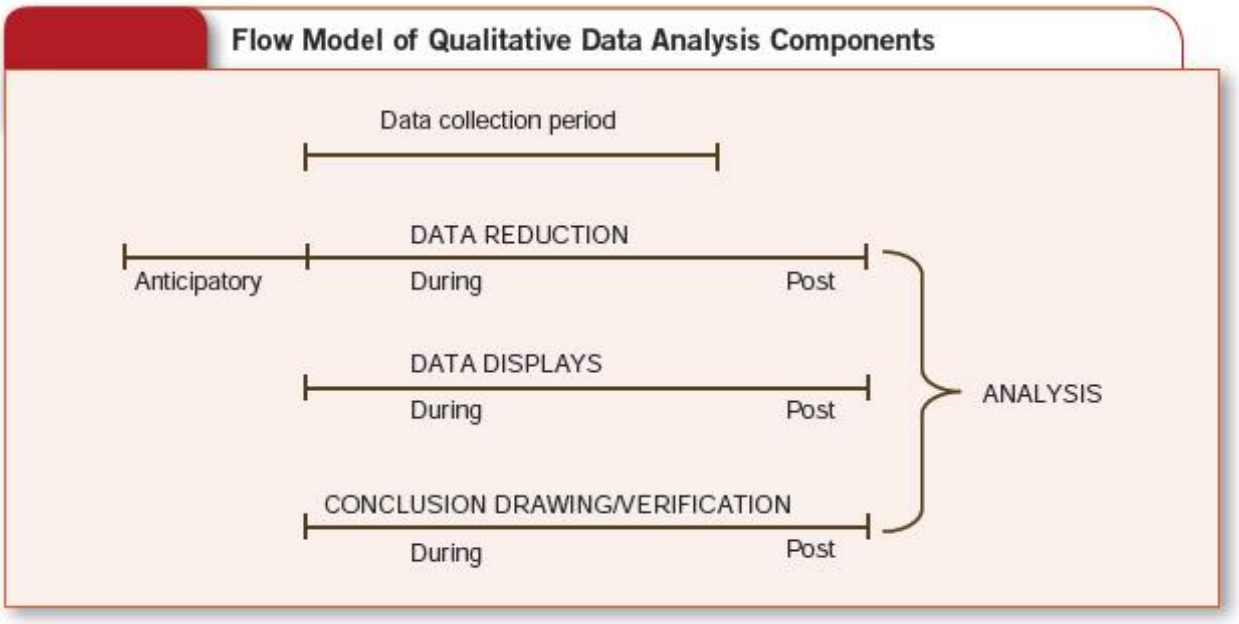

Figure 1. Flow Model of Qualitative Data Analysis Components. Reprinted from *Investigating the social world: The process and practice of research*, by Schutt, R. K. (2011), Pine Forge Press.

Unlike many of the formulas of quantitative data analysis, there are no such formulas for qualitative research. The data rarely proceeds in a linear fashion, and as shown in the flow model, the data analysis begins during the data collection process. During the data collection process, the researcher takes notes and works to identify issues and concepts that may be useful later in examining the phenomena. After the interviews are transcribed, and member checks are conducted, notes taken during data collection and transcription will be categorized and organized to search for patterns, themes, and the emergence of meaning from the data. The goal of coding and organizing the data is to create categories that provide a preliminary framework for making deductions and drawing conclusions about the phenomena being studied.

Coding

With the goal of developing a theory or model, this study followed the two cycles of coding put forth by Saldaña (2013). The first cycle of coding, initial or open coding, was used to

break the transcripts down line-by-line into smaller sections that could be examined and compared, allowing themes to be revealed (Saldaña, 2013). The initial coding of interview and document data aided in identifying and theorizing about processes that guided the researcher on codes to further explore. Also, it assisted the researcher in becoming more familiar with the "participant language, perspectives, and worldviews" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 64).

The second cycle of coding, focused coding, was used to identify themes that were thought-provoking to the study, organize the similar codes into groups or clusters, and construct codes for the newly created groups or clusters. Focused coding allowed the most noteworthy concepts that emerged in the data from multiple participants to be compared to the codes initially found in the initial coding (Saldaña, 2013).

All of the interview transcripts, field notes, and any additional documents collected during the interviews were coded using the same two-cycle process. The two cycles of coding produced categories and subcategories that could be merged, allowing for a comparative analysis to be conducted (Saldaña, 2013).

Assumptions

This study has several assumptions associated with it:

1. The qualitative research model was the most appropriate to explore management trainees' E-learning perceptions.
2. The management trainees provided honest and forthright information during the interviews.
3. The E-learning modules accurately prepared managers for their duties.
4. This was the management trainees first time participating in the E-learning modules.

5. The management trainees would be available and willing to participate in the interview process.

Limitations

The following limitations were present for this study:

1. The sample size was limited by the company due to the time commitment needed to interview each participant.
2. Self-reported data is less precise than other forms of data collection.
3. The study participants were from one geographic region only.
4. The study only represents one specific industry, restaurants.
5. The transfer of learning from the training was only measured by the manager's perceptions and not any consistent behaviors, testing, or feedback from peers or supervisors.

Delimitations

The delimitations of a study are the factors that might prohibit a study from being replicated in the future (Bryant, 2004). The delimiting factors of this current study are:

1. A focus on the specific sample population that was studied.
2. Proprietary E-learning modules that were used.
3. The findings of the management trainee interviews from the small, fast food restaurant may not apply to other small businesses, but may be interesting and suggest further studies.

Declaration of Potential Bias

The researcher of the current study has been working in the fast food industry for the past nine years. While this experience provides the researcher many insights into the industry

outsiders would not have, it also creates a potential for bias and preconceived notions. Lastly, it is important to disclose that the researcher is a current employee of the subject fast food restaurant.

Chapter Four

Findings

Chapter four describes the finding of this research study. This chapter includes the demographic information of the participants, a summary of the findings, emerged themes discovered during the detailed analysis, and a chapter summary.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate management trainees' perceptions of their E-learning experience at a small, fast food restaurant. The participants included ten management trainees in weeks six through eight of an eight-week long management training program. They were interviewed using face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended questions to get the most detail out of each participant. Two research questions were used to guide the research study to explore management trainees' perceptions of E-learning and their preferred methods of training.

Q1. What are the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant?

Q2. How does the preferred method of training affect perceptions of E-learning?

Description of the Sample

Ten independent interviews were conducted with ten management trainees to gain a deeper understanding of their stories, feelings, and perceptions of their E-learning experience at a small, fast food restaurant. All ten participants answered every question. Interviews with participants occurred over a seven-week period. Of the ten participants interviewed, seven were female, and three were male. Five ranged in age from 20 - 29, three between 30 - 39, and the final two between 40 - 49. Eight participants identified as Black or African American and two identified as White or Caucasian. One participant had an Associates degree, four a high school

diploma, one a postsecondary nondegree award, and four some college, but no degree. See Table 5 for details.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age Range	Race	Education
P1	Male	20 - 29	Black or African American	High school diploma or equivalent
P2	Female	30 - 39	Black or African American	High school diploma or equivalent
P3	Female	30 - 39	White or Caucasian	Some college, no degree
P4	Male	20 - 29	Black or African American	High school diploma or equivalent
P5	Male	20 - 29	Black or African American	High school diploma or equivalent
P6	Female	20 - 29	Black or African American	Some college, no degree
P7	Female	20 - 29	Black or African American	Some college, no degree
P8	Female	40 - 49	Black or African American	Some college, no degree
P9	Female	30 - 39	Black or African American	Postsecondary nondegree award
P10	Female	40 - 49	White or Caucasian	Associates Degree

Summary of the Findings

The interviews consisted of ten data-generating questions:

1.) Do you have any prior experience with online training?
    a. What did you like and dislike?
2.) What is your preferred method of learning? Such as E-learning classes, on-site instructor-led training, or hands-on learning?
    a. Why did you find it to be the most beneficial?
3.) Did you participate in the online training on D's Net?
4.) How comfortable were you participating in this online training?
    a. What did you like and dislike?
    b. Did you feel adequately prepared to navigate the online modules?
    c. Are support systems available if you have questions or something is not working correctly?
5.) How convenient was it for you for you to participate?
6.) Why do you think your company uses online training?
7.) What types of technology do you personally use on a daily basis?
8.) How do you feel about the content of your online training?
    a. Did you find it relevant to your job?
    b. How soon after the completion of a module would you practice it?
9.) What is your overall assessment of online training as a tool to help you do your job better?
10.) What recommendations would you make to improve the future success of online training?

Data saturation was achieved with ten respondents. All ten participants were given a copy of their transcripts and asked to review them for accuracy. Eight of the participants had no changes, one clarified something he or she said, and the last one filled in some blanks of inaudible spaces during our conversation.

Several themes emerged during the interview, and coding processes including: prior experience influence on E-learning perception, hands-on is preferred method of learning, learner preparation and support was inconsistent, why is E-learning used, assessment of the E-learning training, and engagement improvements needed.

Detailed Analysis

The audio collected from the interviews was transcribed and confirmed by listening to the audio while reading the transcribed text. Any discrepancies between the audio and transcription were fixed during this process. Member checking was then performed by allowing the participants to review their transcripts for accuracy and clarify anything they felt did not accurately describe their perceptions. The transcriptions were then analyzed many times by the researcher to identify themes. The data was first coded using initial or open coding allowing themes to be revealed. The second cycle of coding, focused coding, was used to identify themes that were significant to the study, organize the similar codes into groups or clusters, and construct codes for the newly created groups or clusters.

Theme 1: Design and Content Influence on E-learning Perception

Participants' previous experience with E-learning did not have an important, if any, influence on their opinions of the Captain D's online training. However, the design and content of the online training was a significant factor that influenced their opinion of both experiences.

Participant 1 had E-learning experience at both Arby's and Burger King. They found the content to be informative and relevant giving them a positive experience of online learning.

> The online, it didn't do nothing but help me understand better, because when you do something so long, I mean you'll know how to do it just by going straight to it, but knowledge wise, you'd be like, if someone was to ask you, "How long for this?" And you'll be like, "Uh, well only thing I know is from doing it from this way, this point of view," but it kind of help you sharpen up everything the correct way cause a lot of times, being in a restaurant, we do know the correct way but a lot of times we like to take the easy way, take a shortcut this way, but if somebody comes in new we just can't right off the bat be like, "Okay, you can take the shortcut this way."

They found the content and design of the Captain D's E-learning system beneficial to their job giving them a favorable opinion of the online learning.

> I can't dislike the online training cause it does help. Cause even if we lost on something or got a question about something, and it's still GMs I know probably go to D's net, and you know type up whatever such and such, you know how long can such and such sit out, and like I said, it's a big help.

Participant 4 had previous E-learning experience with McDonald's. They found the modules were full of extraneous information that made them longer than needed. In a fast-paced industry, this was especially frustrating and left them with a negative opinion of E-learning.

> I really don't like online training because it takes so much ... being as a manager... You know we're a fast food company so, I can't ... I feel like I am not really helping of I'm going to be online training. So, they have ones on fries, and it'll be 15 minutes long just to tell you that fries cook for three minutes and 30 seconds, and they're good for seven minutes. I'm more of a hands-on type person too. I like to physical, and I don't want to sit there and look at it. I want to be able to get up, somebody walk with me and, you know, I am doing it, and they critique me right then and there.

However, when asked about the online training they had recently completed with Captain D's they responded:

> But this training, I liked it because it went in-depth, it actually showed me in time, it was nice and short too 'cause most videos from previous place I worked was very long, like very long, 30 minutes long. These videos are nice and short, and right afterward you can go and practice on it, and it was just really nice. I'm more of a hands-on type of person.

Participant 6 had previous negative experiences with online learning at Burger King, Taco Bell, and McDonald's. He or she did not identify the content or design as the reason for the negative feelings, but stated, “I don't care too much about watching a video. I'd rather you show me, and tell me, then that's it.” The Captain D’s training modules were met with a little less pessimism as they found the content and design appealing. They stated, “It's organized. It's real organized. Step by step what needs to be done, so, it's a good flow.” and they appreciated the value of it being “a refresher and a follow-up.”

Participant 8 had previous experience at a school system. Their negative opinion of the E-learning training primarily stemmed from the lack of interaction with a trainer, but the content was also a factor. They stated:

> I didn't like it, basically, because I couldn't interact. I could pause it, maybe try to find an answer, but I'd rather much be able to ask questions when they come up, and then that way I can get it in focus and get it into my head, that's what I'm doing. And then I don't think they give you enough information to do what needed to be done.

Captain D’s online training also suffers from a lack of interaction, but the improved content left them with a more positive experience.

> No, it was relevant to what we do. Because when it came down to doing some cleaning procedures on the broiler, you have to know- just like filtering them fryers. It did help me, some. It really did. Some of it was boring. But I think overall it did help me. It helped me a lot to accomplish what I needed to know.

Theme 2: Hands-on is the Preferred Method of Learning

All ten participants identified hands-on learning as their preferred method of learning. Many participants preferred hands-on learning with the added benefit of an instructor or trainer to help answer any questions that might arise during their training.

Participant 3 preferred hands-on learning but pointed out the added value of having an instructor or trainer working alongside them.

> I don't like reading. I'm more of a hands-on type person too. It's how I learn the best. I like to be physical, and I don't want to sit there and look at it. I want to be able to get up, somebody walk with me and, you know, I'm doing it, and they critique me right then and there.

Participant 5 had a similar sentiment about the benefits of hands-on learning with an instructor or trainer.

> Because when you hands-on, you can be working with the person, teaching him right beside him and let him know, or she, that this is right or wrong, or this is the right way, because online things or being told is kind of hard if you've never had the experience. On hands, it's basically more, more hands-on you just know what to do instead of just trying to figure it out yourself.

Participant 8 found the immediate availability of answers from an instructor or trainer an important benefit.

> I'd rather have hands-on and have an instructor there, so when I'm learning, if there's something that I don't understand as to why we need to do it, then I can stop right then and say "Hey, why do we have to do it like this?" Or "What does this mean?" And that's a better way that I can understand what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. Versus this is what you do, and dah dah dah, and that's it.

Participant 9 did not specify the need for an instructor or trainer, but offered some insight on why hands-on learning is more beneficial for them.

> Seems like my brain remembers more like that. Because, you know, it's one thing to see it in writing but to actually have it in action is something totally different. And you know, and I think having it in action actually lets you put together what you just read. You know, hey, let me put these steps in order. Then this is how let’s say filter. I just saw the video, but let me actually do it. Now it would make more sense.

Participant 10 had a similar view about the connection between action and memorization. They stated that “Because when I'm actually doing it, you know, doing the motions it helps me to memorize better and learn better.”

Theme 3: Learner Preparation and Support was Inconsistent

There were many inconsistencies in the way participants were prepped for the online training and the support systems available in the event of a problem.

Participant 1 was given an outline of what courses would be taken and verified the system was working before leaving. They explain the process as, “What she did was she wrote them down. She let me know what the videos were going to be. Then once we clicked on … she stayed for the like the first 30 seconds of them.”

Participant 2 had a much different experience in which they were told “go find the videos and watch them, and sit in here” and to continue this during non-peak hours until all the modules were complete. They were not specifically told what to do in the event of a problem, but the assumption was to tell the training manager.

Participant 4 felt they were only “kind of prepared,” but could not really pinpoint what they felt was missing. They explained:

> they only kind of prepared me for the video, it was like, "Well, tomorrow you're gonna be watching a video, and it's going to go over this, and we'll go over it with you." And yeah . So when they come, she would come sit with me, "this is the video, these are the modules you're going to be looking at, and this is how long, this is what it's going to be explaining about" and during the video, she would go do her manager stuff and she would come back and check on me throughout the video.

They also commented on the support system available. They stated that “I felt like I was bothering her when was helping other people. So, if I had any questions, I would usually wait, or she'd say, "Just wait, get done with the video. If you have any questions, the video can answer it."

Participant 5 was given minimal preparation and had a basic answer of whom to speak with if there was an issue. “Most of the time they were there watching me, letting me know, making sure I paid attention, writing notes down, and just keep eyes on me. I would talk to the manager, the store manager if anything goes down.”

Participant 8 was also given an outline of what modules would be completed that day but had a much different experience with the support system, commenting,

> Oh, no, our mentor was Karen. She would always say, if you don't understand something, just come to me. She would always be available; whether she was busy or not, she always took the time out to tell me what I need to know, or tell me go find it, and tell you how to find it, and show me that. So that way I knew what to do. And I kind of knew what I was looking for, but she always was there to help. To me, especially.

Theme 4: Why is E-learning Used

One of the questioned posed to the participants was "Why do you think your company uses online training?" None of the ten participants had been told by the company the rationale for using online training, why it was beneficial to them, or even why it was advantageous to the company. They were perplexed by the question and then offered an assortment of answers that generally revolved around paper conservation or appealing to different learning styles.

Participant 1 felt:

> it's doing a favor by taking the paper away. Like a three-minute video probably have better than going through a stack of paper that you got to study for, or you got to, you know, even though we still have a book, our books, and stuff on what we still have to go through what position we training on, but it helps out some. It helps take the pressure off the trainer.

Participant 3 echoed the paper conservation theory of Participant 1. "No. Cause why can't it just be on paper? Just to save paper? I don't know. I really don't know."

Participant 4 believes that "some people are visual learners, some type of people are hands-on, so that's why I think."

Participant 5 stated that "like, for me, if I never worked before, if I was just coming in, I think it's the best way to help someone who has never worked here before to get an example of how to do things right."

Participant 6 agreed with Participant 4 on how different learning styles are appealing to different types of people. They stated:

> Good question. That's a good one. I mean you got people who like rather hear it, see it, versus being hands-on. You got two different type of people. You got some people who like be hands-on, you got some people who need to see it and watch it, and then they'll know. So, I'm one of them hands-on.

Participant 7 blended the theme of paper conservation and learning styles and theorized that some people just prefer online learning and that printed materials might not be available when needed, while online learning modules provide access whenever needed.

> I feel like they were using them because certain people are probably good at doing online stuff. But my reason I feel like we use it is to help us. Because what if we. Say some store might not have any of the paperwork around us. Or in here we're blessed that we have all of our little paper works or notes, and stuff all around if we need some help, you can look at it. But that's why we go to the D's Net. It's just a lot. So, it's like a reference library.

Participant 8 hypothesized that online learning allows the trainer to multitask. “So, we can do less and not take away from the business. I think we do it because we still run the business, so she may have to do something for business, so we'll be able to sit down in front of the computer. That's why I think we do that.”

Participant 9 echoed previous views on accommodating different learning styles being the primary reason and technology being essential in the workplace. They commented:

> Computers are, it's center to the world. So, you need to know how to navigate through all that. But then too, some people are visual learners, and some people are hands-on learners so, you're getting the best of both worlds. You're still getting the hands-on learning plus the visual so someone who might not be pick it up as quick as hands-on skilled can have the visual aspect of it so take notes before we go in there. So, I think that's why it's there, to help with both sides.

Participant 10 believed that “because one, it's convenient, two, you can reach more people that way, you don't have to set up a big classroom for it. To me, it just reaches the masses easier.”

Theme 5: Assessment of the E-learning Training

The overall assessment of the E-learning training by all ten participants was the courses were relevant to their job functions and beneficial to their training, despite being hands-on learners. However, there were many areas of opportunity to improve E-learning engagement and motivation discussed.

Participant 1 found the ability to see the overview of an entire process and the ability to revisit training materials beneficial. They commented that “once you watch those videos, you'll have an idea even though you be brand new, but you'll still have an idea on how everything's supposed to go. Even if we lost on something or got a question about something, go to D's net, and you know type up whatever such and such, and like I said, it's a big help.”

Participant 4 commented that “I liked it because it went in-depth, it actually showed me in time, it was nice and short too 'cause most videos from previous place I worked was very long like very long, 30 minutes long. These videos are nice and short, and right afterwards you can go and practice on it, and it was just really nice.”

Participant 5 stated that “everything relevant” to their job and that “it's good if you've never worked here before, it helped me know more and more about what to do.” They expanded on the relevance of the content, “because the video had a specific thing they wanted to talk about like cashier or kitchen … each one had a specific task ... you know which one you needed to know.”

Participant 6 was “not big on online,” but found it a valuable resource “for a refresher” or a reference library that could easily be accessed by “getting the laptop or the tablet and it's right there instead of having to ask for help.” They also found the content to be “organized. It's real organized. Step by step what needs to be done, so, it's a good flow.”

Participant 7 said about the E-learning system that “overall it is okay, but just me personally, I'm just more of a hands-on person.” They found value in that it was “short, it was simplistic, and it was straight to the point, and then when I'm able to get on the line, "Oh already know, I got this." They had just the right amount of information, to me.” They also appreciated that “it's not long, boring videos, and modules, and stuff. It actually five, six, seven minutes. They had just the right amount of information, to me.”

Participant 8 found the online training “boring,” but beneficial to their overall training. They stated:

> Yeah, it did help me, some. It really did. Some of it was boring. But I think overall it did help me. It helped me a lot to accomplish what I needed to know. But I just didn't like, and for me to learn, those are some of the things I have to ask questions. But, you know, you can pause it. Then you can go find a trainer. It was like, can you tell me what this means, or whatever. It was relevant to what we do.

Participant 9 liked many of the modules, but felt “they could have been a little more detailed, like how our training book was.” They found some the videos lacked the detailed content found in the training manual and adding a “quiz after the video, let us see what we've learned” would be helpful.

Theme 6: Engagement Improvements Needed

The final question of the interviews, “What recommendations would you make to improve the future success of online training,” revealed a common theme of ways to improve engagement among the participants. The majority of the suggestions revolved around the need to make the modules “less boring,” more interactive, and enhancing the content. These suggestions included the benefits of adding a quiz or questions at the end of the modules, incorporating more real-world scenarios, gamification, and more access.

Participant 1 suggested a “five question assessment” at the end of each module to ensure that participants are retaining the information and improve the accountability of the trainee. They suggested a system similar to other fast food restaurants where “after watching the video and if you fail the test, then go back and watch the video again, then you have to take the test over. Just go back and retake the test until you pass.” This system also puts some accountability on the learner to make sure they “are paying attention and not playin’ on the phone” during the online modules. They describe a scenario of how not paying attention and continually failing the learning checks at the end of the module can increase accountability.

> Like I said, you ought to pay attention because if you don't, if you're sitting back there, they'll come back there wonder about you, the training manager. It's going to make her wonder about you; it will make her want to be like ... make her or him be like, okay ... you been back there for a long time ... but he don't know not a clue, not an idea about anything ... he or she ... they don't know nothing.

Participant 2 suggested the addition of PowerPoint slides to accompany the online content and “maybe some type of answer games on some of them to get your mind thinking. I feel like those would be good ideas if we had that.”

Participant 3 commented that there was some repetitiveness in some of the videos and that “the same ones are listed under a different name twice” in different sections. They also suggested the addition of questions at the end of each module, and adding that when an answer is “wrong, it explains at the bottom what, why it was wrong.”

Participant 4 recommended that the modules be available to participants outside the company network. They stated, “Cause some people want to grow faster in the company, so they probably want to take it home when they got nothing else to do and study and look over it and come back the next day bigger and better.”

Participant 5 suggested the addition of "real-life scenarios, more scenarios like, if I'm new ... I'm a cashier, and a customer complains about anything ... I think more like them ... more problems."

Participant 6 was "not big on online," but found the modules useful as a resource library. They had no suggestions for improvements as, "It is perfect, I promise. I love it fine."

Participant 7 suggested improving engagement through gamification and adding a PowerPoint outline. They stated, "Like some people use the props or they use the slideshows. I remember we used to do a lot of power-point, I feel like that helps, like slideshows having maybe a little test games on some of them to get your mind juggling. Maybe a little games in some of them. You know to keep people ... I don't know how to keep them focused on it more?"

Participant 8 found that some of the modules were similar to narrated PowerPoint slides and actually demonstrating the things being described would be beneficial. They said:

> Instead of just having still pictures, sometimes, I know you can have it like people just actually doing it. You can see a live person doing this instead of having a still picture. That makes it kind of boring sometimes. But if I could see a person disassembling the broiler, and he's saying what the part is and all of that, instead of just showing a picture of the broiler, or a picture of that kind of stuff. I think if you had sort of like live stuff, it'd be much better than just the still pictures. Because you just look in there and she just talking, and you just looking at it.

Participant 9 felt there was room for improvement in the content and the addition of questions at the end of each module. They said, "to me; they could have been a little more detailed like how our training book was. I think that could have been just a little more detailed and quiz us after the video, let us see what we've learned."

Participant 10 felt "there should've been videos of someone performing the actions" and thought the addition of a quiz at the end of each would be beneficial. They commented, "I think there should be test questions at the end of each module to make sure that people are really

paying attention to the videos since they were kind of boring. She was very monotone, so it's easy to tune out. I think if you say that there is going to be a test at the end people would pay more attention."

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate management trainees' stories, feelings, and perceptions of their E-learning experience at a small, fast food restaurant. The participants varied in age, race, gender, and level of education. Data saturation was achieved at ten participants. This chapter provided a demographic overview of the participants, a summary of the results, and a detailed analysis of the themes found.

Themes that emerged during the interview process included: prior experience influence on E-learning, hands-on is preferred method of learning, learner preparation and support was inconsistent, not sure why E-learning is used, assessment of the E-learning training, and engagement improvements needed.

Chapter Five

Findings, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

Chapter five presents a summary of the findings and conclusions drawn from the data that was presented in chapter four, discussion of findings in relation to literature, limitations, the implication of the findings for practice, recommendations for further research, and summary.

It is widely accepted throughout the literature that small businesses in the United States are significant drivers of economic growth, job creation, and wealth (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016; Mills, 2011). However, only about half of all small businesses survive five years or longer and only about one-third survive ten years or longer (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016), and the survivability rate of restaurants is the lowest of all small businesses (Kim & Upneja, 2014). While studies have shown small business managers' capabilities can play a significant role in the success or failure of a small business (Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003; Watson, 2010), only a small number have focused on how they acquire these capabilities and even fewer specifically on the role of E-learning in their training.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to investigate management trainees' stories, feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions of their E-learning experience at a small, fast food restaurant. After conducting a qualitative content analysis of interview data from ten management trainees, six themes emerged. The six themes are prior experience influence on E-learning perception, hands-on is the preferred method of learning, learner preparation and support were inconsistent, why is E-learning used, assessment of the E-learning training, and engagement improvements needed.

The results of this qualitative research study answered the research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant?
2. How does the preferred method of training affect perceptions of E-learning?

Theme 1: Design and Content Influence on E-learning Perception

The study revealed that participants with previous E-learning experience did not have an important, if any, influence on their opinions of the Captain D's online training. However, the design and content of the online training was a significant factor that influenced their opinion of both experiences. Several of the participants had negative previous online training experiences due to content and design issues, but credited content and design as a contributing factor in their positive experiences with the Captain D's online training. Content and design were contributing factors in the other participants positive previous and current online training experiences, and others negative previous and current online training experiences. The design and content of the online training systems were crucial factors that influenced participants perceptions.

Theme 2: Hands-on is the Preferred Method of Learning

All participants identified hands-on learning as their preferred method of learning, but their definition of hands-on learning is more in line with on-the-job training. While many of the participants identified the repetitive motion of doing things hands-on as a critical factor in the retention of information, the benefits of having immediate access to an instructor or trainer to answer any questions that might arise during their training was recognized as an important factor in their preferred method of learning. Several of the participants addressed specifically how they prefer hands-on learning over online training. It allows them to be critiqued by the instructor or trainer in real-time and anything being done wrong can be immediately be corrected.

Theme 3: Learner Preparation and Support was Inconsistent

The study found inconsistencies in the way participants were prepared for the online training and the support systems available in the event of a problem. One of the participants was given an outline of the modules that would be covered, what to do in the event of a problem, and the trainer stayed to make sure everything was working before walking away. In stark contrast, another participant was given virtually no instructions and simply told how to access the training modules and to complete them whenever they had time. Other participants had varying experiences on learner preparation from being given an outline the day before on what they were going to do the next day to just being pulled from their regular work and told to do this online training. The explanations of support systems available varied from being encouraged to "stop the module and come to find the trainer if there are any questions" to being told "to not ask questions during the modules and wait until they were done with everything."

Theme 4: Why is E-learning Used

Surprisingly, the question that participants had no answer for, took the longest time to think about before answering, or appeared to be most frustrated trying to answer was "Why do you think your company uses online training?" While the issues with learner preparation have been documented, even those participants who felt very prepared for their online training experience struggled with the question. In all, none of the ten participants had been told by the company the rationale for using online training, why it was beneficial to them, or even why it was advantageous to the company. The participants offered an assortment of answers that followed a theme of paper conservation or appealing to different learning styles. Also, all ten participants asked the researcher at the end of their interviews to provide the answer to this question.

Theme 5: Assessment of the E-learning Training

Despite reportedly preferring hands-on learning, all participants found the content of the online training relevant to their job functions and an overall benefit to the training program. Again, content was an essential determinate in the assessment of the online training program. The majority of participants found the ability to watch the entire process being done in detail and then having the ability to revisit it later to be the most important advantage of online training. If the process being shown was making hush puppies or cleaning a piece of equipment, the modules being detailed, accurate, and concise were crucial factors cited by participants in their assessment of the online training program. However, many of the participants pointed out many areas of opportunity to improve E-learning engagement and motivation during the conversations.

Theme 6: Engagement Improvements Needed

Information gathered during conversations about the overall assessment of online training and the final interview question, "What recommendations would you make to improve the future success of online training", yielded a common theme of engagement and motivation deficiencies. A common idea amongst participants was the addition of a mastery quiz at the conclusion of each module to make the experience more interactive, ensure information is being retained, and to increase accountability. Several participants suggested adding some aspects of gamification to make things more interactive and fun, but still to accomplish the goal of information mastery. Several other participants suggested PowerPoint slides or some other type of handout that they could follow along with as the information being shown on the online module. Lastly, several participants addressed the issue of some modules being "boring," and made suggestions for content improvements to help increase engagement. They suggested the addition of real-world

scenarios of "ugly" customer service situations and the additional visual of seeing people demonstrating what is being taught versus a monotone-narrated PowerPoint.

Limitations

Though this research study has produced findings that may help develop a greater understanding of the factors that contribute to E-learning adoption in small, fast food restaurants, there are some limitations to usefulness. The participants for this study were limited to management trainees within this one fast food franchisee, and data were collected only from this sample of new management trainees. There are new trainees at many other fast food restaurants who were excluded from the study. Additionally, due to the small sample size, the diversity of the participants might not reflect that of the general population.

Implication of the Findings for Practice

With the number of small businesses closing in on 30 million and accounting for 99.7 percent of U.S. employer firms, many human resource professionals will work for or at a small business during their career (The U.S. Small Business Administration, 2016). The grim statistics of small business survivability in the United States, and the importance small business managers' capabilities can play in the success or failure of a small business, makes learning how these capabilities are acquired valuable information for human resource professionals (Knotts, Jones, & Udell, 2003; Watson, 2010). This study demonstrates the role E-learning plays in the acquisition of those capabilities, the challenges E-learning possesses for learners, the importance of organizational support, and the critical impact content has on E-learning adoption. A greater understanding of the role E-learning plays in small business management training helps instructional designers, human resource professionals, business owners, and other training and

development stakeholders in the continual improvement process of more efficient learning transfer.

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations for practice are offered. All recommendations for practice are directed towards E-learning instructional designers, human resource professionals, business owners, and other training and development professionals. It is recommended that:

1. E-learning training programs should be designed to ensure the learning style of hands-on or tactile learners is being addressed. While this is a difficult challenge, the incorporation of drag-and-drop activities, utilizing tapping, swiping, and motion controls in tablet-based activities, point-and-click games, and interactive presentations are ways to address the needs of hands-on or tactile learners.
2. Real-world scenarios should be a part of any E-learning training program. These real-world scenarios should strive to include the actual objects, sounds, and equipment learners will experience when possible. This approach allows learners to gain practical knowledge and help provide a context for information they have learned.
3. The addition of a mastery quiz at the end of modules and gamification elements should be considered to improve engagement, assist in identifying areas of deficiency, and as a way to increase accountability.
4. Create an introductory module that will set learning objectives, explain learner benefits, and describe support systems available to ensure that all learners are given the necessary support information.

5. Simulation-based learning should be considered for tasks that pose a danger to the learner (i.e., cooking with fryers, fryer maintenance, broiler use). This approach could be more engaging than passively watching a video, and would allow learners to develop the knowledge and skills needed for hands-on tasks in a safe environment.
6. The researcher believes the most important of all the suggestions is simply to listen to the participants. A survey should be conducted at the end of the E-learning training to evaluate the quality of the content, learner motivation, and recommendations for future online training to help improve the content and design.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research in understanding the perception of management trainees could include the following:

1. The research for this study came from a small sample size. Future research should be conducted with a larger sample size from multiple regions and include other small, fast food franchises that use E-learning mentioned in the study such as McDonald's, Taco Bell, and Burger King. Researchers who replicate this study could find sufficient responses that may lead, ultimately, to Grounded Theory.
2. Future research could benefit from replicating the study using sizeable fast food franchises and determining if the results are similar to small, fast food franchises.
3. It is also recommended that future researchers examine the questions in this study from the perspective of employees and explore what those results reveal.
4. It would be valuable to compare single-unit operators with multi-unit operators. Additionally, fast food employees might have opinions that are different from those of the business owners.

5. The use of Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model to measure the effectiveness and impact of the current training and again after E-learning improvements are made. Return on Investment (ROI) for the organization can be measured through increased production, fewer customer complaints, and reduced waste.

Summary

All ten participants in the study indicated they preferred hands-on to online training. It is apparent from the findings of this study that E-learning was not the first choice for training by any of the management trainees interviewed and merely the completion of a checkbox on their training program. This could stem from a combination of hands-on learning being their preferred method of learning, the lack of knowledge of why the participants were using online training, or the lack of interactive tools in the current modules. The heartening news is that all participants found some value in the online training, but there needs to be a proactive effort by the organization and training staff to help with motivation and E-learning adoption issues. Time spent investing in motivational and E-learning adoption activities could be helpful in making online training more than a checkbox in a training program, but play a useful role in learning transfer.

Recommendations gathered from this study indicate concerns by management trainees about hands-on or tactile learning style being ignored in the online training. They further indicated there was a lack of engagement activities in the online training that possibly resulted in missing relevant information. The impact of how this result impacts the overall training program is unknown, but it is certain the participants in this study found the online training left something to be desired. How this organization responds to the participant recommendations could dictate the success of their E-learning program.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Dear Sir or Madam

My name is Anthony Longo, and I am a doctoral student from the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources, and Communication Disorders at the University of Arkansas. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small fast-food restaurant. You're eligible to be in this study because you have participated in the D's Net E-learning training.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes to one hour about your perceptions of the D's Net E-learning modules. There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to a greater understanding of E-learning.

Remember, this is entirely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. Also, you may withdraw any time from the study. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at emailaddress@uark.edu or 901-555-5555.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Anthony Longo

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Perceptions of E-learning by Management Trainees in a Small Fast-Food Restaurant
Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Principal Researcher: Anthony Longo
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Jules Beck

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

You are invited to participate in a research study about your perceptions of the E-learning modules on D's Net. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have recently completed the E-learning modules in the management training program.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?

Anthony Longo
Address
Memphis, TN 38120
901-555-5555
Email address@uark.edu

Who is the Faculty Advisor?

Dr. Jules Beck

What is the purpose of this research study?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of E-learning by management trainees in a small, fast food restaurant.

Who will participate in this study?

Approximately 10 participants.

What am I being asked to do?

Participate in an approximately one-hour interview.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

There are minimal risks in this study. Some possible risks include: not wanting to answer a question during the interview. To decrease the impact of these risks, you can: skip any question that you do not want to answer. You can stop participation at any time.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

If you decide to participate, there are no direct benefits to you. The potential benefits to others are: restaurant owners and human resource practitioners may develop a better understanding of management perceptions of E-learning.

How long will the study last?

Participate in an approximately one-hour interview.

Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?
You will have the satisfaction of contributing to our research and understanding of how E-learning programs can improve resources available to small fast-food management.

Will I have to pay for anything?
No, there will be no cost associated with your participation.
What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?
If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. Your job will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

How will my confidentiality be protected?
All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy and the information will be recorded with a pseudonym. I will secure your information with these steps: lock all paper data in a filing cabinet and lock the computer file with a password.

Will I know the results of the study?
At the conclusion of the study, you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Jules Beck, email@uark.edu or Principal Researcher, Anthony Longo, aalongo@uark.edu. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

What do I do if I have questions about the research study?
You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher, Anthony Longo or Faculty Advisor, Dr. Jules Beck as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

Principal Researcher
Anthony Longo
email@uark.edu
901-555-5555

Faculty Advisor
Dr. Jules Beck
email@uark.edu
479-555-5555

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
Institutional Review Board Coordinator
Research Compliance
University of Arkansas
109 MLKG Building
Fayetteville, AR 72701-1201
479-575-2208
irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

Participant: By signing this consent form, you indicate that you are voluntarily choosing to take part in this research.

_____ _____ _____

Signature of Participant Printed Name Date

Statement of Consent to be Audiotaped:

I understand that audio recordings may be taken during the study to assist with the accuracy of my responses. I understand that I have the right to refuse the audio recording and can still participate in the study. I understand that the audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription and that no identifying information will be included in the transcription.

_____ _____ _____

Signature of Participant Printed Name Date

Appendix C: IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

To:	Jules K Beck GRAD 117A
From:	Douglas James Adams, Chair IRB Committee
Date:	07/20/2018
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	07/20/2018
Protocol #:	1806125513
Study Title:	Perceptions of E-learning by Management Trainees in a Small Fast-Food Restaurant

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Anthony A. Longo, Investigator

Appendix D: Interview Protocol and Questions

Interview Protocol and Questions

- The interviewer will review notes and protocol before each interview.
- Each interview will be digitally audio recorded where permission is granted by the participant. The audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription; no identifying information will be included in the transcription.
- Each interview is expected to last between 45 to 60 minutes.
- Interview Methodology:
    - Interviews will allow for follow-up questions seeking clarification or examples that will contribute to an in-depth investigation.
    - Some follow-up questions will be used to stimulate interviewee memory.
    - The interviewer will use a semi-structured question set containing basic demographic and interview questions.
    - Predetermined questions will be the same for all participants.
- Each interview session will be documented with the following:
    - Pseudonym of the interviewee,
    - Location of the interview,
    - Date,
    - Start time,
    - Finish time,
    - Any atypical events and occurrences that may affect outcomes.

Demographics

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Age:

- 20 – 29
- 30 – 39
- 40 – 49
- 50 – 59
- 60 – 69

Race:

- White
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian
- Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian
- Other Pacific Islander

Education:

- No formal educational credential
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Some college, no degree
- Postsecondary nondegree award
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral or professional degree

Do you have any prior experience with online training?

- What did you like and dislike?

What is your preferred method of learning? Such as E-learning classes, on-site instructor-led training, or hands-on learning?

- Why did you find it to be the most beneficial?

Did you participate in the online training on D's Net?

How comfortable were you participating in this online training?

- What did you like and dislike?
- Did you feel adequately prepared to navigate the online modules?
- Are support systems available if you have questions or something is not working correctly?

How convenient was it for you for you to participate?

Why do you think your company uses online training?

What types of technology do you personally use on a daily basis?

How do you feel about the content of your online training?

- Did you find it relevant to your job?
- How soon after the completion of a module would you practice it?

What is your overall assessment of online training as a tool to help you do your job better?

What recommendations would you make to improve the future success of online training?

Appendix E: Published Research

Published Small Business Research

Year	Author(s)	Country	Number of Employees	Turnover/Balance Sheet/Revenue	Industry
1993	Lyles, Baird, Orris, & Kuratko	United States	< 500	1 million or more	Retail, professional/technical services, food service, and construction
1997	Wong, Marshall, Alderman, & Thwaites	England	25 to 500		both independent firms and autonomous subsidiaries
1999	Kerr & McDougall	Scotland	< 50		
2002	Matlay	England	< 50		Manufacturing and service firms
2002	Rigg & Trehan	England	10 to 30		
2004	Ibrahim, Angelidis, & Parsa	United States	< 500		
2005	Webster, Walker, & Barrett	Australia / New Zealand	<5 (majority) up to 50	<$200,000 (42%) $200,000 to $500,000 (21%) $500,000 and greater (32%)	All 17 Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classifications
2006	Sels, De Winne, Delmotte,	European Union	10 to 100		

	Maes, Faems, & Forrier				
2008	Coetzer & Perry	New Zealand	< 49		Manufacturing and service firms
2011	Hargis & Bradley	United States	< 250		Retail, professional/technical services, food service, and construction
2011	Mbonyane & Ladzani	Singapore	< 200		Spaza shops, restaurants, and supermarkets
2013	Allen, Ericksen, & Collins	United States	< 200	For-Profit	Basic services, professional services, retail, construction, and manufacturing
2014	Wan Hooi & Sing Ngui	Malaysian	< 150	RM25 million	Manufacturing and service firms
2016	Tam & Gray	Hong Kong	< 100 people, or < 50 non-manufacturing		

Appendix F: Advantages of E-learning

Advantages of E-learning

Advantages	Description	References
Flexibility and convenience - anytime, anywhere, and anyone	The business can efficiently provide the most updated training to any of their locations, where employees can access it at any time and anyplace.	Batalla-Busquets & Pacheco-Bernal (2013), Burgess and Russell (2003), Chen (2008), Chen & Tseng (2012), Daymont & Blau (2011), Faherty (2003), Fry (2001), Gudanescu (2010), Newton & Doonga (2007), Nisar (2002), Shale (2003)
Cost savings	The business can reduce training expenses by eliminating the travel costs, facilities costs, and lost opportunity costs of getting the instructor and employees in the same place at the same time. Also, the materials costs are less, and the fewer lost employee hours of work.	Benninck (2004), Burgess & Russell (2003), Chen (2008), Chen & Tseng (2012), Faherty (2003), Hurt (2008), Joo, Lim, & Park (2011), Kasraie & Kasraie (2010), Newton & Doonga (2007), Nisar (2002), Setaro (2000), Shale (2003), Tarr (1998), Yusuf & Al-Banawi (2013)
Self-paced and personalized learning	Learners can complete the training modules at their own pace and review any materials until they fully comprehend it. The business has more control over the learning process by being able to customize the learning materials.	Batalla-Busquets, et al. (2013), Benninck (2004), Burgess & Russell (2003), Chang (2016), Chen (2008), Gudanescu (2010), Hamid (2002), Horton (2000), Newton and Doonga (2007), Nisar (2002), Setaro (2000)

Uniform content and delivery	The training delivered will be uniform among and reduce the possibilities of misinterpretations and content being left out.	Benninck (2004), Burgess & Russell (2003), Chang (2015), Nisar (2002), Setaro (2000)
Just-in-time content, modules updated quickly, and permanent archive of courses	E-learning allows businesses to update training modules and materials instantly across the company. The constant updating of information and anytime, anywhere access allows the modules to be extremely valuable for just-in-time learning. The modules are then archived for review at a later date.	Batalla-Busquets & Pacheco-Bernal (2013), Chen (2008), Faherty (2003), Gudanescu (2010), Hamid (2002), Tarr (1998)
Improvements in the workforce and customer satisfaction, employee productivity	Learners can utilize case studies, role-playing, coaching and mentoring, discussion boards, chat rooms, tutorials, and other online sources that give them practical knowledge and confidence to perform their job more efficiently. Also, the online format allows the learner to go back and redo any mistakes without the embarrassment of other classmates seeing.	Benninck (2004), Burgess & Russell (2003), Chen (2008), Faherty (2003), Fry (2001), Gwebu & Wang (2007), Kramer (2007), Setaro (2000)

Appendix G: E-learning Challenges

E-learning challenges

Challenges	Description	References
Technical issues - limited bandwidth, Internet access, etc.	Limited bandwidth leads to performance issues with sound, video, and graphics, resulting in an inadequate learning process from the choppy video, missing audio, and long download times. Other areas do not have access to broadband, or the cost is too prohibitive.	Benninck (2004), Fry (2001), Galusha (1998), Gudanescu (2010), Schweizer (2004)
High development costs	The development of E-learning courses is the more time intensive and costly than traditional to develop. However, once the front-end work is complete, the course can be reused making them much more cost effective to maintain than traditional courses.	Benninck (2004), Berge & Giles (2008), Chen (2008), Nisar (2002), Omar, Kalulu, & Alijani (2011)
Organizational support - lack of knowledge, commitment, and quality courses	A lack of organizational support in conducting a proper needs analysis leads to poor understanding of the system, higher costs, and the potential of an incompatible system. Without proper staff allocated to developing curriculum, the training might not match organizational needs.	Benninck (2004), Bolan (2001), Fry (2001), Galusha (1998), Gudanescu (2010), Nisar (2002)

Impersonal, limited social and personal interaction, and lack of feedback	Some learning materials and styles still require human interaction. These issues will continue to lessen as E-learning continues to advance. A primary example of needing human interaction can be seen in team building activities and emotional issues.	Donlevy, 2003, Fry (2001), Galusha (1998), Gudanescu (2010), Nisar (2002)
Fear of technology, limited computer and Internet knowledge	Some learners may have a fear of technology that may require basic computer training and continued support to help overcome their fears.	Chang (2015), Fry (2001), Horton (2000), Gudanescu (2010), Nisar (2002), Schweizer (2004)