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Strategies to Reverse Profit Declines at Exchanges

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MBA, Amber University, 1997

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Military exchange business leaders recognize declines in profit have the potential for a loss of revenue and possible closings of the military exchange business in some locations. Grounded in Porter's five forces model, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies military exchange business leaders use to reverse profit declines to remain sustainable. The participants were four military exchange managers who reversed the decline in profits and remained sustainable. Data were collected using semistructured interviews and a review of organizational documents. Through thematic analysis, three themes were identified: rivalry among existing competitors, potential development of substitutes, and the buying power of consumers. A key recommendation is for business leaders to develop, implement, and oversee various social media platforms to communicate and influence customers, the community, exchanges, and corporate buyers and leaders. The implications for positive social change include the potential retention of workers in the exchange and the improved level of service to military families and veterans who depend on exchange services.

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Dedication

First and foremost, I want to thank God for grace, mercy, and faithfulness when I needed it most. Next, I would like for this dissertation to be dedicated to my father, Mr. Wilbert Johnson, and my mentor, Dr. Frederick Stone, who saw my potential, believed in my abilities, and always supported and encouraged me to excel beyond my expectations. Although you both were not fortunate to have the opportunity to share this experience, you saw the value in getting an education, and you understood the influence of knowledge; because of you, I had the confidence to achieve this goal. I am deeply saddened that you are not here to see me take this next step in my educational journey, but I feel your spirit and continued support daily. I dedicate this work to my wife, Cindy; thank you for your confidence in my ability and that I would complete the journey. Without your support in both words and action, this milestone in life would have been impossible to achieve. To my son, Logan, and daughter, Leeana, thank you for your motivation; you are my inspiration. To my doctoral peers, thank you for your support and encouragement over the years.

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To my chair, Dr. Craig Martin, I want to extend my sincere gratitude. Thank you for your guidance and support during this process; I will be forever grateful. To my second committee member, Dr. Franz (Mike) Gottleib, thank you for your responsiveness and support. The support provided during committee review paid huge dividends in the development and completion of my study. To my URR, Dr. Matthew Knight, and Program Director, Dr. Gail Miles, I extend my sincere appreciation. To my peers, friends, colleagues, mentors, and family members who have supported and stood by me along this challenging journey, thank you for being by my side. I want to also acknowledge the leadership of the organization for the privilege to conduct my research. THANK YOU!

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Background of the Problem

The exchange leaders operate their exchange as a United States Department of Defense (USDOD) civilian entity in support of the men, women, and family members of the Army and Air Force (USDOD, 2019). The exchange's staff operations provide services for military members and their families at 74 locations in the United States and abroad (USDOD, 2017). The exchange functions as a joint, nongovernment, nonappropriated funded entity of the USDOD (2019). The exchanges' senior leadership consists of a private board comprised of military members who are responsible for organizational sustainability. The 2015 and 2019 annual reports of the exchanges indicated their financial position from January 2015 to January 2019, as well as the results of the operations and the profits for these years (USDOD, 2019). The exchanges experienced a decline in profits from January 2015 to January 2019 (USDOD, 2019). As a result of the decline in profits, organizational sustainability strategies are important in order for the exchanges to remain cost-effective.

Problem and Purpose

As of January 2019, the exchanges' profits worldwide were less than its profits as of January 2015 (USDOD, 2019). The worldwide net profits of the exchanges noted as of January 2015 were $7,329,211 and $6,699,955 as of January 2019 (USDOD, 2019). The loss resulted in a 9.4% decline in profits for the exchanges (USDOD, 2019). The general business problem is that the declining trend in profits for an exchange calls into question the long-term sustainability of the organization. The specific business problem is that some exchange leaders lacked strategies to reverse a decline in profits to remain sustainable.

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that some exchange leaders have used to reverse the trend of profit declines in order to remain sustainable. The target population was 15 exchange leaders at an exchange located in the Northeast United States who used strategies for organizational sustainability. The implications for positive social change could include benefits for workers in the exchange and the level of service to military families and veterans who depend on exchange services. The economic benefits of improving organizational performance could include pay increases, job retention or creation, and sustainment of the organization. Financially successful organizations provide communities and employees with secure employment opportunities and may decrease unemployment rates.

Population and Sampling

The sampling of participants included confirmation that the participants were from the population of the 15 exchange leaders who had previously utilized strategies to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. I selected an exchange located in the Northeast United States from those with leaders who had been successful in implementing strategies used to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. I used a purposeful sampling technique to select four qualified participants from the target population that consisted of 15 exchange leaders employed by the organization for 5 or more years. I planned to conduct interviews with the four selected participants or until data saturation occurred**.** Upon achieving data saturation, the actual number of participants will be added in Section 3. Although qualitative research involves other types of sampling, purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative single case study research that requires the selection of information-rich informants from a larger population who are willing to communicate their knowledge about the subjects of interest in the study (Fuller, 2017; Sil & Das, 2017).

Out of a population of 15 exchange leaders, this study included an interview sample of 10 exchange leaders. Data saturation was reached before interviewing 10 exchange leaders. This qualitative single case study of the case organization included the population of exchange leaders who had successfully implemented strategies for sustainability operating in an exchange in the Northeast United States. As a result, sampling of the population members was an appropriate strategy for a single case study that includes well-established, clearly defined boundary limitations (Ruel, 2017).

The study consisted of leaders who worked at an exchange within the Northeast United States. The sample size in the case study research could relate to individual choice, but saturation is a concept supported by qualitative research (Ruel, 2017). Saturation is the point at which a qualitative researcher does not discover new information from the additional data selected (Ramadan, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018). Tran et al. (2017) stated that data saturation dialogue validates the analysis of peer-reviewed case study research. According to Bacon et al. (2017), data saturation might not be the best marker of sufficient sample size in all studies.

I scheduled the time of the interview, and I conducted the study at the convenience of the participants. The preference was for in-person (face-to-face) interviews, but I offered videoconferencing interviews to accommodate a participant's schedule or individual preferences. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the selection of the interview locations accommodated the participants' comfort levels and adhered to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. If allowed, I conducted in-person (face-to-face) interviews at a location selected by the interviewees; otherwise, I used videoconferencing interviews. Because of the importance of the interview area, recommendations included a location that allowed participants to communicate privately. I conducted the interviews in an environment that lead to trust. I gave the interviewee time to reflect on and analyze their experiences to provide detailed, meaningful responses to the interview questions, and carefully interpret documents. To achieve triangulation of data sources, I used participants' interviews data, organization's documentation, and member checking (Bacon et al., 2017; Bashir & Marudhar, 2018).

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research is the methodology I chose for this study. Qualitative researchers view phenomena from the perspective of the participants and investigate selected themes that emerge from participants' accounts of their experiences (Bansal et al., 2018; Fuller, 2017). I also considered quantitative and mixed method approaches inappropriate for this study. A researcher who applies quantitative methods depends on the results to understand how to develop and accurately analyze the data (Sergis et al., 2018). Mixed-method research includes the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods by researchers (Yin, 2018; Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). The study did not include hypotheses or variables, which precluded the use of quantitative or mixed method. I used a qualitative method for this study because I wanted to explore participants' experiences to identify the strategies participants used to develop a positive profit trend in order to sustain the business.

A single case study design research is optimal for exploring critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal cases in a real context (Paulsen, 2017; Yin, 2018). I selected a single case study design for this study because using it allowed me to explore critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal strategies that some exchange leaders implemented to reverse a decline in profits for the exchanges to remain sustainable. Ethnography involves open or private participation in people's daily lives by researchers who explore their beliefs, feelings, and meaning of relationships as the ethnographic subjects interact with the culture (Lichterman, 2017). I did not use an ethnographic design because it was not practical or necessary to conduct the study with individuals in their natural environment over an extended time frame. Researchers use phenomenology to study the lived experiences of participants' lived experiences to collect their perspectives on an event (Loslever et al., 2019; Oye et al., 2019), which was not applicable for this study. Instead, I used a single case study design.

Research Question

The research question was as follows: What strategies do some exchange leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable?

Interview Questions

The interview consisted of the following questions:

1. What strategies do you, as an exchange leader, use to reverse a decline in profits?
2. What strategies do you use to sustain profits when considering the existing competition?
3. What strategies do you use to sustain profits with a threat of new entry competitors?
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of the bargaining power of suppliers in order to sustain profits?
5. What challenges do you experience with the development or use of substitute products in order to sustain profits?
6. How do you measure or evaluate the success of the bargaining power of consumers in order to sustain profits?
7. What additional information would you like to provide about strategies leaders use to reverse trends in profit declines in order to remain sustainable?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Porter's (2008) five forces model. In 2008, Porter defined the five forces model in which he described forces that threaten an organization (Grigore, 2015). In this study, Porter's five forces model was the selected model because its usage would help to identify the strategies that exchange leaders had used for organizational sustainability resulting from a decline in profits.

An organizational leader's application of Porter's (2008) five force model theory helps to evaluate the effects of a firm's competitive advantage and performance (Alexy, et al., 2018). An innovation strategy is a dynamic marketing capability for innovation that leaders of leading firms have used to achieve a higher level of competitive advantage and performance (Alexy et al., 2018). The conceptual framework of this study was Porter's five forces model, which consists of the following primary forces: (a) rivalry among existing competitors, (b) the threat of new entrants/competitors, (c) the threat of substitute products, (d) the bargaining power of suppliers, and (e) the bargaining power of consumers (Grigore, 2015). Organizational sustainability is an objective of leaders (Göral, 2015). I used Porter's five forces model to assist me in exploring the strategies that exchange leaders implement to establish organizational sustainability for the exchange.

In the five forces model, Porter (2008) emphasized strategy as a component of management. In the model, Porter offered a way to understand how competitive forces shape strategy and emphasize other components of management (Grigore, 2015). In this study, I explored the strategies that exchange leaders used to reverse the decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

In their five forces model, Porter (2008) outlined threats to an organization from competitors, consumers, suppliers, new entrants, and substitutes, according to Grigore (2015). By evaluating each challenge to the organization, leaders can better understand the threat level and identify the driving factors (Grigore, 2015). Porter (2008) indicated the following forces as challenges to an organization: (a) the rivalry among competitors, (b) the threat of new entrants/competitors, (c) the threat of substitute products, (d) the bargaining power of suppliers, and (e) the bargaining power of consumers. Grigore stated that Porter's five forces model aligns with the concept so that leaders have a path for monitoring and improving operational activity in an organization. Each of the five elements of Porter's five forces model is essential for an organization experiencing change or threats.

Operational Definitions

Exchange: The exchange serves as an organization with a dual mission: (a) to offer services and quality merchandise at competitively low prices to authorized clients, and (b) to provide earnings from a nonappropriated fund as an additional source of revenue to enhance military morale, welfare, and recreation programs (USDOD, 2019).

Exchange Sales Area Manager (SAM): The exchange SAM leads and guides a team of salespeople. The SAM's responsibilities and tasks often involve the assignment of sales territories and training, quota setting, mentoring sales team members, development of sales plans, and collaboration with the personnel office to hire and fire salespeople (USDOD, 2019).

Competitive advantage: Competitive advantage is the ability obtained through attributes and resources that assist an organization to perform at a higher level than competitors in the same business or market (Mazurkiewicz, 2017; Salvador & Ikeda, 2018).

General manager (GM): The general manager of the exchange organization is the leader of the exchange operation on a day-to-day basis (USDOD, 2019).

Main store manager (MSM): The manager at a military installation who provides retail merchandise and services to authorized customers serves as the MSM. This individual approves maximum merchandise stock assortments (Kumar, 2018; USDOD, 2019).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Researchers use assumptions to frame and conduct a study (Feller et al., 2017; Hoover et al., 2018; Leonard & Maulding Green, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2018). Three assumptions existed for this study. My first assumption was that participants were reliable and were interested in the organization, so they would freely contribute their knowledge. My second assumption was that the leaders of the exchanges would be interested in the results of the study as indicators for how to gain a strategic advantage. A third assumption was that the leaders would be honest and that their degree of honesty would help create validity and reliability.

Limitations

Limitations are potentially uncontrollable actions that may have a significant impact on obtained data, interviewee participation, or unforeseen circumstances (Cho, 2020; Marshall & Rossman, 2018). This study might have had the limitation of the reduced availability of exchange leaders for participation during the interview as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Exchange leaders change assignments during the year; therefore, it was essential to ensure data reliability for the study during the interview process. T. J. Walker et al. (2017) pointed out that limitations include leaders' experiences and beliefs that could affect a study's results. The exchange leaders who participated in the interviews were leaders of a single exchange located in the Northeast United States which could present a limitation.

Delimitations

Delimitations define barriers for controlling biases through bound inclusion criteria at all levels of experience, including offering participants repeated study opportunities (Giorgi, 2020). Delimitations included binding the case to a single site from which to obtain participants for interviews and to obtain documentation review. The objective of this study was to determine what strategies exchange leaders used for organizational sustainability. I conducted the research with participants of an exchange located in the Northeast United States. All selected participants were responsible for implementation of strategies to sustain the organization. Leaders could generate discussions about the operation to provide a better understanding of the organizational process (Rogiest et al., 2019).

Significance of the Study

Determining the strategies that exchange leaders use for organizational sustainability occurred in this study. The results could be valuable for exchange leaders who want the organization to operate more profitably. An organization’s leaders are the primary interpreters of how the organization’s sustainability links to its systems (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017; Rosenbaum et al., 2017). Study findings could contribute to the business by providing retail practices that can effect the families, soldiers, and veterans using an exchange; the leadership strategies were essential in identifying the approaches for organizational sustainability that resulted from a decline in profits.

The results of this study could provide the exchange leaders with the organizational knowledge and background to support the service members, their families, and the retiree population in maintaining the local exchanges. The research findings could prove useful for future leaders in decision-making and could provide leaders with alternatives that will sustain the financial performance and social status of the exchange organization. The humanitarian benefits of improving organizational performance could include pay increases, job retention or creation, and sustainment of the organization (D. Wang et al., 2017; Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2020). The exchange provides support to the military members, their families, and the veterans of the Army and Air Force who have defended and will continue to provide security for the United States.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to understand the strategies that some exchange leaders have used to reverse the trend in profit declines in order to remain sustainable. The central research question for the study was as follows: What strategies do some exchange leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable? The central question was appropriate for the study because it helped to identify the strategies that exchange leaders used to sustain the organization’s financial performance by identifying approaches for organizational sustainability resulting from a decline in profits. I selected Porter’s (2008) five forces model as the conceptual framework that is appropriate for this study as Porter’s (1980) generic strategies include strategic group membership and organizational performance. Researchers primarily consider organizational sustainability for determining organizational effectiveness which depends on various factors. Of these factors, the decline in profits can be the most challenging for an organization (Schuckert et al., 2018).

For this literature review, I have examined peer-reviewed journals, government websites, and seminal sources of scholarship. The literature review includes peer-reviewed sources from several databases: ABI/INFORM Complete, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Dissertations, SAGE Premier, Walden University Online Library, Emerald Management Journals, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, and the DoD Army and Air Force exchange database. The keywords and phrases for the database searches include the conceptual framework model, Porter's (2008) five forces model, and the following five forces : (a) the rivalry among competitors, (b) the threat of new entrants/competitors, (c) the threat of substitute products, (d) the bargaining power of suppliers, and (e) the bargaining power of consumers. Other searches in the literature were for key strategies and practices that business leaders use for organizational sustainability including the following: *communication strategies, human resource management, leadership practices, leadership strategies, leadership style*, and *organizational strategies.*

The majority of the sources for this proposal are from peer-reviewed journals published since 2017. Of the 303 total sources in this proposal, 289 (95%) have publication dates that have met the expected requirements of the chief academic officer's (CAO) approval. Eighty-nine percent of all of the sources are peer-reviewed. Table 1 shows the sources for the proposal.

Table 1

Synopsis of Sources for Entire Proposal

Reference type	Number of sources	Peer-reviewed articles	Number/% of peer-reviewed articles	Number/% of sources published from 2017 to 2021
Peer-reviewed journals	275	275	275/100%	261/95%
Government sources	6	0	0	6/100%
Seminal books	22	0	0	22/100%
Total	303	275	275/91%	289/95%

Porter's Five Forces Model

In the selection of Porter's (2008) five forces model as the study's conceptual framework, I had a way to understand how competitive forces shape strategy as a component of management. I investigated the strategies within organizations such as the exchange, where a relatively closed system of government sponsorship is undergoing transition resulting in pressures from suppliers and a reduction in profits. In the model, Porter (2008) outlined forces that threaten an organization including the following: (a) rivalry among existing competitors, (b) the threat of new entrants/competitors, and (c) the threat of substitutes, (d) the bargaining power of suppliers, and (e) the bargaining power of consumers (Grigore, 2015).

Porter’s (2008) five forces model is a tool for analyzing a variety of organizations in the same location, given certain modifications to the boundaries of the product, services, and the impact of the main components that determine the overall impact on the model (Göral, 2015). In carrying out the analysis of an organization’s competitiveness, it is important to define the boundaries of the organization. According to Porter, the boundaries of an organization consist of two primary dimensions: the scope of products or services and the geographic area. As the definition of an organization affects the analysis of the organizational structure, the definition also results in strategy errors as an organization analyzes the basis of its strategy (Porter, 2008).

Porter (1985) suggested that one of three strategies could address challenges resulting from the five forces: (a) a cost leadership strategy, (b) a differentiation strategy, or (c) a focus strategy. As a pioneer of strategic management, Porter has had a significant impact on how business leaders view strategy and value chains and on how to sustain profitability (Erkina, 2020; Ghalib, 2017; Tsarenko et al., 2018).

Porter’s ideas remain at the center for competitive strategies and competitive advantage as well as central to many business plan curricula (Erkina, 2020; Ghalib, 2017). Torres and Augusto (2019) suggested that the five forces model is simple, adaptable, and flexible but often difficult to operationalize. Tsarenko et al. (2018) noted that Porter’s (2008) five forces model aligns with the value chain concept that provides a path for operational activity in the organization. Each of the five elements of the five forces model is essential for an organization experiencing change or threats. The five forces are as follows: (a) rivalry among competitors, (b) threat of new entry competitors,

(c) potential development of substitutes, (d) bargaining power of suppliers, and (e) bargaining power of consumers.

Rivalry Among Existing Competitors

Competitive rivalry covers areas like price, discounts, product improvement, and advertisements (Porter, 2008). Competitive rivalry drives the profitability of an organization, and when the competition is intense, the profitability decreases. Ambroise et al. (2018) demonstrated that the competitive forces of an organization are rivalries with competitors. The intensity of the rivalry among existing competitors is the most evident of the five forces in an organization and tends to specify the extent to which the value created by an organization will dissipate resulting from head-to-head competition (Grigore, 2015). Grigore (2015) also explained that while significant, the rivalry is only one of numerous forces that determine an organization's attractiveness. An organization competes not only with traditional competitors but also with substitutes and the bargaining power of customers (Saleh et al., 2018; H. Yang et al., 2018).

Threat of the New Entry/Competitors

The threats of new entrants are high when the new organization can compete with the existing organizations. The primary procedure is to analyze the threat of new entrant competitors (Grigore, 2015). Even when the threats of new entrants are small, the new entrants could affect the profit of the current organizations. Grigore (2015) found that the existence of new organizations may limit other organizations from joining the business but may also increase the rivalry among existing organizations. Torres and Augusto (2019) noted that competition occurs when organizations obtain a strategy to increase resources to gain a marketplace advantage in the financial performance for organizational sustainability. The leaders can form and use plans whenever profits and adjustments occur resulting from the cost of capital to gain organizational sustainability. Grigore (2015) maintained that competitors influence the organization's profitability as new entrants join the market. According to Grigore, entry barriers occur whenever it is difficult or not economically possible to replicate an existing organization's position. Grigore also explained that except for natural physical or legal obstacles, the most familiar forms of entry barriers are usually the scale and the investment required to enter the organization as an effective competitor.

Porter (2008) stated that a threat occurs when a substitute for industry products plays the same roles as the products of the industry. Porter confirmed the existence of substitutes to a product as an external threat to the profitability of the product. A product that does not have the same role as an existing product often does not constitute an external threat. Porter reiterated that the low switching cost when going to a substitute product could affect the profitability of the existing products. Products could also be retailers, experiencing the threat of substitution from new or existing competition within a market.

Competition for market share is the primary reason for competitors among organizations (Contu, 2018). Competitive threat is an external force affecting organizations positively and negatively. Townsend et al. (2017) stated that competition is related to the rate of organizational growth, product or service characteristics, fixed costs, capacity, height of exit barriers, and technology. Competition among existing competitors takes the form of jockeying to improve market share. Competitors use tactics like price competition, advertising battles, product introductions, and increased customer service (Caiazza & Volpe, 2017). In most organizations, competitive moves by one firm affect competitors (Porter, 2008). D. J. Clark and Nilssen (2020) and Lisbona et al. (2020) stated that an organization with competitive advantage is more profitable than the businesses without advantages. The implementation of a given competitive strategy relies on relating the organization to the environment in which it conducts its business. H. Yang (2018) found that organizations that deliver benefits and configure them for differentiation strategies take advantage of competition in the same business. In competitive markets, organizational leaders use new tools and techniques to adhere to the demands to remain profitable (Braun & Peus, 2018; Picken, 2020). Thus, organizational leaders must stay informed on new strategies and tools to gain a competitive advantage.

Grigore (2015) found that Porter's five forces present challenges to business profitability: (a) threats of new entrants, (b) bargaining power of buyers, (c) bargaining power of suppliers, (d) threats of substitutes, and (e) competitive rivalry. Leaders use these five forces to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. Porter's (2008) five forces model provides guidelines for the development of organizational strategies. Business owners and managers must understand and react to the external forces within an industry to determine an organization's level of competitiveness within a business (Grigore, 2015).

Potential Development of Substitutes

According to Grigore (2015), a challenge to an organization's profitability exists when customers veer to substitute products or services for basic requirements. The price-to-performance ratios of the substitutes affect the organization's challenge. In an environment of uncertain development, the leader's use of response strategies enables organizations to manage the emergent and unexpected operational changes (Levovnik & Gerbec, 2018; Pynnonen & Takala, 2018). The threat of substitution is also affected by switching costs such as the costs of retraining, retooling, and redesigning that take place when shoppers select different products or services (Grigore, 2015). According to Grigore, the substitution process starts slowly as few trend-setters risk experimenting with the substitute. Then, if other companies follow suit, substitution increases and levels off when leaders have exhausted nearly all of the economic substitution possibilities. Leaders have an opportunity to substitute products and select alternative products to sell in each market.

Bargaining Power of Suppliers

The bargaining power of suppliers is the mirror image of buyer power. As a result, the analysis of supplier power typically focuses first on the relative size and concentration of suppliers with industry participants and then on the degree of differentiation in the inputs supplied (Grigore, 2015). Grigore (2015) explained that the ability of leaders to avoid charging customers dissimilar prices because of differences in the created value for each buyer usually indicates that the market has high supplier power. The suppliers' merchandise and the power of the producers and distributors who supply the items are essential to add to the performance of an organization (Kaufman & Wagner, 2017; Lanier et al., 2018).

Grigore (2015) claimed that other factors can influence the bargaining power of suppliers when using Porter's (2008) model. According to Porter's model, a supplier's role is significant, especially when the supplier controls the supply of materials and labor to an industry. The inability to pass on the cost of additional charges from the suppliers or the supply charges given directly to the consumers affects the business (Laari et al., 2017). Porter posited that the bargaining power of the suppliers is high when there is a monopoly in the supply of an organization. Porter explained that high bargaining power stems from the inability of the organizational leaders to switch suppliers and the lack of substitutes for the products. The substitute products are directly opposed to the bargaining power of buyers where the size and number of the suppliers determine the influence on the business. The leader bases the choice of supplier on the supplier's implementation of processes or tools to ensure the optimal operation of manufacturing and distribution of the merchandise (Findikli, 2019; Kaufman & Wagner, 2017). In a declining market, suppliers may have additional power because retailers have ordered reduced quantities.

Bargaining Power of Consumers

The concept of bargaining power of consumers is one of the two major forces that guide value creation in an industry. Important elements of buyer power are the number and concentration of the customers. Determinants include how knowledgeable buyers are of the competitors' concentration or differentiation in the market (Grigore, 2015).

Retailers must make the shopping experience pleasant and develop tactics to adjust to customer requirements and expectations (Müller, 2019). Potential buyer power should be distinguished from the purchaser's willingness or motivation to use that power, primarily derived from the risk of failure linked with a product's use (Kanyane, 2019). Customers with higher buying power want better prices, but this then affects an industry's profit according to Müller (2019). However, consumers' priorities shift in the desire for better prices. For example, when consumers have less time to shop, they make a selection on the basis of convenience and better customer service in the anticipation of a more positive experience.

An issue for organizational leaders is the highly competitive and unpredictable economic environment. When given less time for shopping, customers are more likely to select convenience and better customer service (Rao, 2017). Customers often try to pay less for products. However, customers also make choices as a result of the industry's profits and the final price according to Rao (2017). Porter's (1980, 1985) competitive strategies model gives reasons for organizations to consider business practices and strategic alternatives.

Strategies have become the procedure for addressing current and unstable environments (Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Levovnik & Gerbec, 2018). Organizational leaders are sometimes forced to move aggressively to reduce employment, address restructuring issues, review pricing, and reduce liabilities to ensure the organization remains operational as Keegan and Rowley (2017) and Levovnik and Gerbec (2018) maintained. Leaders have to manage assets during a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable (H. Li et al., 2019). Leaders should concern themselves with the development and identification of several strategies for overcoming unpredictable environments.

The actions needed to implement an organization's strategies differ from business to business, and the individual plans for each business are also different (Porter, 2008). Porter (2008) evaluated the cost leadership method and determined that cost reductions, operational management issues, and fixed costs impact advertising, sales, research, and other sectors of the business. Leaders use organizational strategies in an exploratory process to reverse a decline in profits so that a business is sustainable.

Organizational Strategies

Organizational strategies support service requirements, and the decision-making process assists leaders in consideration of options (Agarwal, 2018). Leaders implement organizational strategies to provide the necessary data for making strategic and operational decisions. Leaders are responsible for analyzing the business requirements within the framework of the organization. In Porter’s (2008) five forces model, a leader’s use of organizational strategies assists them in developing a relationship with other capacities of the business to bring efficiency and effectiveness to an organization. The leader views organizational strategy as an exploratory or descriptive strategy during systems planning. Leaders use the organization’s strategic planning to assist in the development of strategies.

The leaders who facilitate organizational networks provide propositions explaining how leadership processes evolve between organizations (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018). Consequently, leaders need to define the values and norms of an organization.

Leaders who explain the cultural values and norms of an organization prevent other leaders and the employees from engaging in unfair practices. The leader’s use of organizational strategies affects the practices and contributes to employee performance.

The workforce comprises a multicultural work environment throughout the world. Leaders who oversee a multicultural work environment gain an understanding of communication practices, cultural values, and other realities for organizations. A primary responsibility exists in organizations to ensure that leaders conduct themselves professionally when working with multicultural groups. When a multicultural environment is identified, a significant advantage is the training and coaching of the workforce because of cultural changes in the organization’s practices (Cunha et al., 2018; Hunt, 2017). Particular leadership styles and approaches to leadership may not be successful with all cultural groups.

Leaders use an organizational strategy to analyze the relationship of performance measures within the work environment (Lopes et al., 2017). The leaders address performance by implementing performance measures, and the selection of which measures to choose depends on the geographical location and the work environment. The factors that influence change readiness in the model are the leaders’ implementation of system-wide change and knowledge management (Archer-Brown & Kietzmann, 2018; Gigliotti et al., 2018). Leaders are responsible for having a working knowledge of the managers and employees within the work environment.

Leaders who are committed to improving the performance of the organizations should use organizational strategies that are measurable and have an economic impact on the organization. Organizational strategy is the result of the mission and vision statements as well as the values of the organizational sustainability strategy of the senior leaders (Gagné, 2018; Hussain et al., 2018). The use of organizational strategies is essential to a leader's performance and their strategic development of business practices.

Leaders must understand organizational sustainability strategies, but the employees also need to understand these strategies (Agarwal, 2018). The senior leaders should communicate the values of the organization, the expected behaviors, and the results that will occur in the work environment (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018). It is the senior leader's responsibility to initiate and implement action plans for improving performance in the work environment to achieve organizational sustainability (Lopes et al., 2017).

Leaders develop the culture of the organization from a corporate perspective of the organization. According to the USDOD (2019), the leaders' use of organizational strategy is an essential variable in an organization such as the exchange and in the characteristics of the culture of the organization. Organizational performance evaluation and leadership performance occur in strategic thinking. Therefore, Porter's (2008) five forces model provides leaders of an organization such as an exchange with strategies that have contributed to the performance of the organization.

The organizational leaders are responsible for having a working knowledge of the managers and employees within the work environment (USDOD, 2019). A model is needed for understanding the influence of change readiness in knowledge management and knowledge management effectiveness (Kalmykova & Solovova, 2019). Working knowledge of the employees within the primary area of responsibility has provided leaders with an advantage when developing and implementing change in the workplace. Having a working knowledge of the employees also makes a difference in the effectiveness of communication and interaction between managers and employees related to organizational change.

A leader who manages organizational knowledge provides the organization with a view of the state of the employees and the level of organizational effectiveness. An exchange leader should use the performance measures to evaluate the current, as well as the future, performance of the organization (USDOD, 2019). Leaders who are thinking strategically facilitate an organization's use of construct indicators such as cause–effect relationships and performance evaluations to measure organizational performance (Rabetino et al., 2017). For example, in the case of an exchange, leaders must have the necessary data to make strategic and operational decisions to ensure the organization reaches the forecast profits that the leaders in the corporate office have projected.

The organizational model was applied to the case of the exchange as its framework pertains to the mission of the exchanges: (a) design and business performance, (b) emphasis on consumer needs, (c) service requirements, and (d) discussion of the design process generated to assist the field (Agarwal, 2018). The leader is responsible for analyzing the business requirements within the framework of the organization. Thus, in the case of the exchanges, exchange leaders can view these requirements as an exploratory strategy during system planning. The organizational models have some characteristics that can relate to systems thinking regarding communication. The leader’s strategic thinking is necessary for organizational performance and leader performance in the work environment. The exchange leaders should understand that these factors have an impact on the performance of the organization (USDOD, 2015). A leader’s implementation of an organization’s policies and procedures should ensure that senior leaders are involved in the sustainability strategy in the development and the implementation of the economic state of an organization (Cummings et al., 2018). An exchange leader makes choices regarding the implementation of organizational sustainability strategies to review the broader context as well as the organization’s economic status. Leaders use these processes and procedures to encourage sustainability performance, improve consumer reactions, and provide financial benefits to an organization.

According to Dotolo et al. (2017), the leader’s use of organizational strategies can assist the organization’s leadership in response to a changing economy. For example, the leaders of an exchange needed to sustain the financial performance of the organization despite the changes in organizational structure. The leaders have to plan and develop strategies to meet the economic and consumer requirements of the organization (Dotolo et al., 2017). Leadership, social innovation, and technology transfer in organizational development are essential to the sustainability of the resources required for an organization (Alexander & Lopez, 2018; Cingöz & Akdoğan, 2019). An exchange leader’s ability to generate profits at an exchange was critical for strategic growth in promoting and sustaining the financial performance of the organization. The leaders of an exchange should annually evaluate and plan the process for the organization’s success.

Generating new revenue might seem overwhelming and impractical. The process for generating new revenue must be timely so that the new revenue remains an essential element. Exchange leaders should evaluate the interconnected organizational strategies for the enhancement of financial performance as Dotolo et al. suggested. It was necessary for the exchange leaders to take advantage of the market, competing organizations, and the military dependents residing within the organization's boundaries. Thus, an exchange needs to be financially viable for the organization to program and sustain its economic performance.

Organic types of organizational strategy serve as strategic resources to influence marketing effectiveness and performance in a growing economy (Jones & Matusik, 2018; M. Yang, 2018). Leaders have implemented the marketing efficiency and performance strategy in an emergent economy to assist them in planning, forecasting, and budgeting in competitive environments. According to Jones and Matusik (2018) and H. Yang et al. (2018), leaders need to know that cultures that are dominant in emerging-nation organizations have a competitive advantage and enhance the performance economy. However, leaders have to evaluate the primary work environment as well as the operational performance of other competitive organizations. A leader's implementation of organizational strategies influences the activities of the organization and provided evidence for management to demonstrate performance.

A leader of an organization, such as the exchange, should network within the organization to build knowledge of the organization's culture. According to Matthews (2018) and Obeng (2019), the culture within an organization is a strategic resource that defines the nature of the firm. The organizational culture also provides evidence and the opportunity to perform the organizational mission (Matthews, 2018; Obeng, 2019). An exchange leader's perusal of the organizational culture of an exchange leads to enhanced performance which results in the growth of the organization.

Leaders use the organizational culture to influence the decision-making process both within and outside of the organization. Leaders develop organic cultures to explore market responsiveness while confirming the roles of market responsiveness and product change in the performance economy (Jones & Matusik, 2018; M. Yang, 2018). The relationship between leaders can have a direct impact on the performance of an organization; it is best for leaders and employees to understand each other and the culture of each other's environments (Kremer et al., 2019). Leaders should understand that cultures in an uncertain economic market continue to change and develop during the change process. Employees and junior leaders are the firsthand sources for generating expressions of their culture (Matthews, 2018; Obeng, 2019). Matthews (2018) and Obeng (2019) found that the individual's culture can improve the organization's responsiveness, but the combination of culture and performance does not necessarily enhance market responsiveness to the economy.

Leadership Strategies

The leaders' use of leadership strategies allows them to make strategic decisions regarding the organization. According to Porter's (2008) five forces model, a leader's use of leadership strategies assists them in improving the organization's effectiveness as the leader is educating the employees about the values of the organization (Gill & Caza, 2018). The leader’s use of leadership strategies can assist managers in programming annual budgets and establishing sales goals (Hechanova et al., 2018). A leader’s use of leadership strategies affects organizational performance while job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been linked theoretically and empirically to organizational effectiveness. The leader’s use of leadership strategies can provide a positive or negative relationship between an organization and an employee, depending on the types of leaders (Kaur, 2017). A leader’s implementation of leadership strategies can affect employees’ performance in an organization both directly and indirectly through the empowerment of leaders.

Leaders use strategies to investigate the relationship of leadership, job satisfaction, and work environment to organizational commitment. The leader’s use of leadership strategies can assist in relationship building by developing positive rapport and by preventing a negative work environment (C. M. Clark & Harrison, 2018). Leadership strategies are used to examine the impact of leadership styles on the employees’ views of the organization (Mohanty, 2018). A leadership strategy can be viewed as an instrument for leaders in identifying traits that influence organizational commitment (Ceri-Booms et al., 2017). Leaders need to implement strategies to investigate how to develop employees’ organizational commitment.

The leaders’ ability to sustain operations has been determined through multiple actions and processes that include analyzing the positions of an organization. To achieve sustainability, leaders often need to reduce the number of employees within the organization (Harrell-Cook et al., 2017). Leaders’ ability to plan strategically is essential to understanding leadership styles throughout the United States and indispensable to organizational practices (Malila et al., 2018). Sustainability is becoming essential to the workforce; it can contribute to the current and future success of an organization (Cadieux et al., 2017; Harrell-Cook et al., 2017). Establishing sustainability involves trend analysis, strategic thinking, and long-term planning.

Leaders need to consider employee decision-making when creating a plan and developing strategies. Leaders should examine employee decision-making in response to information concerning functions in financial markets (Megheirkouni, 2017). For this reason, leaders demonstrate how organizations can structure the field of action during transformation toward sustainability. Leaders should also examine employee decision-making in response to information concerning functions in financial markets (Megheirkouni, 2017). This approach proves useful for leaders who are the decision-makers because it provides an example of how the organization should function. Strategic leadership and organizational sustainability come together resulting from the emergence of top management team (TMT) positions with committed organizational sustainability responsibilities (Ruben et al., 2018). Ruben et al. (2018) reported that newly added TMT positions, commonly referred to as lead sustainability officers, have found themselves in the upper level of the world’s largest organizations by serving at the executive level. Engaging more leaders in decision-making for developing operational strategies and acting as change agents for the transformation toward sustainability is a thriving, global trend.

Organizational sustainability senior management teams prompt their organizations to consider strategic leadership and frameworks. The leaders and the TMTs are responsible for the performance and the operation of the organization (Bosse et al., 2017). The leadership positions are installed to respond to a crisis at the organization that is a challenge in terms of workforce sustainability. These leaders address the requirements that directly affect the employees and staff within the work environment (York, 2017). Senior leaders use the work environment as a mechanism for demonstrating ethical leadership to enhance organizational performance (Shirey, 2017). Senior leaders can relate to the foundation of the framework that concerns organizational sustainability within an organization, according to which processes and performance markers impact sustainability.

A researcher's analysis of the organization should include the leaders' use of the leadership strategy of performance and design. In Porter's (2008) five forces model, a leader's implementation of leadership strategies assists them to improve the success of an organization. Organizational leaders develop a structure to evaluate the techniques of analyzing the organization's framework. Leaders introduce systems in order to evaluate performance, make a comparison with competitors, and plan future requirements (Schatteman & Waymire, 2017). The approach in Porter's model is derived from the framework as it relates to an organization.

Leadership strategies provide the leaders with the means to operate within the policies and procedures that assist in governing the operation daily. Leaders can use strategies to evaluate, analyze, and determine the best business practices for the organization. In using an organization's leadership strategies, a leader can encourage or discourage adherence to a work ethic and commitment to employee involvement in the work environment. The directives of leaders provide an understanding of how different leadership styles affect employees, especially in a multicultural work environment (Lorinkova & Perry, 2017). Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that they conduct themselves professionally when working in a diverse work environment.

Leadership strategies should be clear, and their impact should influence the goals of the organization. In using leadership strategies, leaders make an impact on the development and the performance of an organization. Leaders have a primary role in employee development, and this requires an operative approach comprised of numerous strategies to manage the workforce (Johnsen, 2018). The ability of leaders to network with other leaders, managers, and senior executives should enhance performance. The leadership network provides the required information for the leaders to obtain and, then, use to evaluate the organization. Senior leaders should develop and maintain a plan concerning the future direction of the organization (Walumbwa et al., 2019). This suggestion applied to the exchange in that an exchange leader reviews plans for serving the United States Armed Forces and for implementing organizational structural changes. Organizational leaders should select products to meet customer needs and manage resources to exploit opportunities. The leaders' product selection should also illustrate the network's characteristics and their influence on the development of the organization.

Knowledge management in organizations is used to identify gaps in the current body of knowledge and to justify future research directives (Buers et al., 2018; Mihalcea, 2017). The leaders of the exchange organization use historical data to manage and support the men and women of the armed forces who shop at an exchange. However, there are fundamental differences between change readiness and the knowledge management process (Greenleaf et al., 2017). According to Greenleaf et al. (2017), managing organizational knowledge provides the organization with a view of the state of the employees and the level of the organization. To manage organizational knowledge, leaders have to monitor operations, engage in knowledge management, and transfer these procedures to the work environment. A leader’s objective is to provide the workforce with a greater understanding of knowledge management of the organization.

A leader is responsible for supporting an organization’s members, clients, customers, contributors, sponsors, and patrons, in other words, their stakeholders. Mwai et al. (2018) maintained that organizational leaders have to prioritize the stakeholders involved when making decisions in the organization. Similarly, the exchange leaders who are responsible for supporting the organization’s military members and their dependents who are their customers have to prioritize their stakeholders when making decisions in the organization. Organizational leaders should use a structural approach to identify the performance-based economic measurements (Boamah et al., 2018). Organizational leaders need to demonstrate the effort in the development, performance, and improvement of professionals with the right strategy to enhance the work environment (Hope, 2017). Improving performance throughout the public sector of organizations remains a challenge for leaders as their responsibility is to determine the best course of action for the customers in order to meet the organization’s financial objectives.

The use of leadership strategies assists leaders in developing an organization's ability to enhance fiscal sustainability through careful budgeting. The leaders evaluate the sustainability level of a manufacturing organization considering various factors required to ensure sustainability (Archer-Brown & Kietzmann, 2018). Leaders employ the sustainable manufacturing process to establish the operation of the organization. Sustainability makes a direct impact on sales, service, and operations. A leader's use of organizational leadership strategies can cause a difference in the organizational environment (Ramanan, 2017). When applying these sustainability principles to the case of the exchange, exchange leaders should use organizational strategies that emphasize the merchandise price points in order to remain competitive with other organizations (USDOD, 2015). Sustainable manufacturing makes a difference in the financial results of an organization's annual statement. Organizational sustainability often involves complex economic, environmental, and social concerns (Iankova et al., 2018). A leader's application of the sustainability model assists organizations in the various aspects of sustainability within the organizations and the work environments for future advancement (Boamah et al., 2018). The sustainability model provides tools and sustainability measurements to assist leaders.

Leaders who implement strategies in an organization show that they use business practices to provide a more detailed understanding of the leadership's available techniques. The strategic leader should evaluate potentially problematic situations in the work environment to enable other leaders to implement the organization's policies. Organizational leaders can conduct research to investigate their concerns, which then leads to decision-making for how an organization performs (Boamah et al., 2018). A leader's role in strategic planning requires leadership skills, judgment, and values that impact the success of the organization (Hu et al., 2018; Matthews, 2018). Investment in social networking should help organizational leaders to identify employees who are essential to the communication flow and recommend them for promotion of better organizational effectiveness (Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2020). Strategic leaders should utilize contemporary methods to disseminate policies and procedures to improve the performance and the financial results of the organization.

A purpose for implementing leadership strategies is to achieve external legitimacy with stakeholders in the hope that top management and board members will support the internal goals of the organization. Strategic leaders are necessary for defining the responsibilities of employees and for selecting and implementing responsible leadership practices in the organization (Silvius et al., 2017). For example, from a strategic leader's standpoint, development and sustainability of an organization's technological capability are essential for an organization (Alberti & Varon Garrido, 2017). Strategic leaders should mentor and develop employees working in different areas of the organization to create future leaders.

Leadership strategies are used to ensure that professional leadership practices take place throughout the organization. Scholars often investigate the leadership style and analyze how leaders frame messages when interacting with employees (Schatteman & Waymire, 2017). The upper-level executives and regional managers visit branch exchange facilities regularly to observe and evaluate the behavioral practices of staff. The senior leader visits and keeps the exchange leadership, as well as facility managers, informed of expectations and corporate change. Overall, leaders must generate change in an organization and identify strategies to sustain the organization's financial performance (Lee et al., 2018). It is essential for the leaders to ensure that employees are regularly informed about and trained in organizational policies. The organizational leaders should also evaluate promotion guidelines related to the employees' willingness to enhance organizational performance.

Strategic leaders enhance the performance of an organization. The leaders' use of leadership strategies in an organization can assist them in the development of the employees who form the organization (Mainella, 2017). Leader and employee development is a primary requirement for the sustainability of an organization. It is essential for the senior leaders to conduct annual training and development for the employees working in different areas of the organization. Leaders should include building organizational collaborative capacity and identifying challenges for leaders (Hu et al., 2018). The performance of leaders and employees has a direct impact on the financial performance of the organization.

The strategic leaders manage the operation in various regional locations and facilitate the organization's needs and functions at each level. The leaders are responsible for the direction of the organization. Leadership development is a responsibility of the leaders of an organization; the leaders have to oversee the leadership processes, training, development, and future direction of the organization. These responsibilities also apply to the leader of an exchange and are essential for the performance of the exchange and the customers associated with the organization (USDOD, 2015). The leaders should give examples of issues that challenge responsible leadership (Wright, 2017). A leader's experience of challenges assists in the development of responsible leaders and future plans for an organization's objectives. The leaders are responsible for the decisions made within an organization. Given recent economic trends, leaders are focusing more on employee expectations and the performance of the organization (Zigarmi & Roberts, 2017). An analysis of an organization's leadership serves as an indication of how responsible leaders can perform research in an organization. Through research, an organizational leader can observe how the organization is performing, assess the management with operations and with staff, and help facilitate successful outcomes.

Having an understanding of the extent to which leaders are willing to work for the organization's objectives is important. Organizational leaders must ensure that employees are trained properly on the objectives throughout the organization. For example, leaders of a retail organization such as an exchange are responsible for training employees on paying attention to the objectives, one of which is to provide services to consumers. Leaders should explore the effectiveness of the organizational commitment at all organizational levels, consisting of the following: turnover rates, performance, and employee behavior (Young, 2017). The strategic leader needs to determine methods for enhancing employee performance and for reducing the turnover rates in the organization. Leaders should use leadership strategies as a set of indicators by which to evaluate the performance of employees and the organization overall. An organization's leader can improve the performance of an organization through developing a positive approach.

Strategic leaders and the outcomes of employees' activities indicate positive or negative relationships between leaders and employees (Cheng & Liu, 2017). A leader's positive approach to educating employees on the objectives of an organization increases organizational commitment through an employee's willingness to comply with the operational requirements.

In using organizational strategies, leaders create opportunities to encourage employees at all levels to demonstrate their ability to mentor subordinates. A leader's use of organizational strategies facilitates the development of benefits for leadership, which include shared values, feelings, trust, commitment, and energy toward the enhancement of job performance (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018; Wei et al., 2019). Leaders also need leadership strategies to foster the economic and financial state of the organization. A leader's performance has a direct impact on the financial performance and economic growth of an organization. The use of organizational strategies helps leaders develop the path toward economic growth in order to compete with other organizations. Based on the organizational requirements, leadership development should be expected at all levels with critical forms of sharing and value-focused leadership (Wei et al., 2019).

Leaders help provide the organization's framework through the development of the mission and vision statements (Ek, 2017). For example, in some organizations, the leaders rotate to assignments all over the world to help ensure that the mission and vision are sustained. The rotation of leaders also enhances the leaders' and the organization's work environment and exposure to different cultures. Thus, the organization's framework for developing the relationship between employees and leadership strategies should relate to the mission of the organization (Boddy, 2017). Having the ability to develop and sustain the relevance of an organization has assisted leaders in improving the performance of the employees.

An organization's leaders must establish and implement strategies for overseeing organization structure. The leaders of an organization must define the functionality of the organization and view the social structures at the strategic level (Stock et al., 2017). The profits of a business show an organization's leader's ability to make decisions on strategy for overseeing the organization's structure. Leaders of organizations must implement strategies to develop economic systems as well as programs offering education and training for the workforce (Westling et al., 2017). The organization's stakeholders evaluate the effects of a leader's decision-making on the organization's structure. A leader's decisions affect the future of the organization as it pertains to goals and objectives. The leaders should be involved in the decision-making process for how to oversee the organization's structure and for determining the direction of the organization.

A leader should implement leadership strategies to maintain existing services that align with the processes, structures, and the organizational environment. Specifically, the leaders of the exchange organization should ensure that policies and procedures adhere to the guidelines of the installation or post of the exchange's location. Leaders can also implement leadership strategies to ensure that professional leadership practices occur within the organization.

Leaders should apply the strategic management framework to the performance of public agencies (Laureani & Antony, 2017). In utilizing strategic management in organizations, leaders can establish a platform for reviews. The strategic management framework is applied when reviewing an organization provides evidence for the association of the organization's objectives with the various strategy types including strategies for developing a structure. The strategic behavior of an organization includes the environment of the economy, planning for the future, and the productivity of the organization (Vince, 2018). However, no empirical evidence is provided for the alignment of strategy, structure, process, and the environment. A leader's implementation of strategies is enhanced when addressing the operational requirements in maintaining the provision of services to the consumers.

Leaders often use strategies to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. Porter's (2008) five stages model supports that leaders make a difference in the planning and practices of the organization. Certain elements are universal in organizational change (Alibašić, 2018; Bansal et al., 2018). Social factors impact organizational change and are crucial. Exchange leaders had to focus on other retail organizations in the industry in order to be competitive and profitable. These are some of the challenges facing organizations as well as making changes in the marketplace. Economics involves the production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services of the organization (Gibson, 2017). Leaders need to be involved in the policies and guidelines of the organization. The objective of a leader in an exchange is to enhance the organization to meet the requirements of the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. Knowledge of leadership strategies was an appropriate means to explore the strategies exchange leaders used for organizational sustainability.

Communication Strategy

A primary objective in any public or private organization entails communication. Leaders are gaining insights on how to mitigate adverse effects by employing communication strategies that emphasize organizational values or highlight additional organizational services (Giambra et al., 2018). In Porter's (2008) five forces model, effective communication helps strengthen employees' relationships with others in the organization for efficiency. The improved relationships can directly affect an organization with better communication practices and improved knowledge of cultural values, which are essential for an organization. When employees understand the identity of an organization, a significant advantage exists in the practices in a multicultural environment (Gwebu et al., 2018). Particular styles and approaches to leadership may not be successful with all cultural groups without effective communication. Leaders are responsible for ensuring that, regardless of geographical location, the organization conforms to its mission. In the work environment of the organization's multicultural workforce, leaders need to understand the various groups, successfully communicate with them, and maximize the effectiveness of multicultural work environments. A leader's leadership style can affect the participation and contribution of members and inclusion within multicultural groups. Leaders must communicate to a workforce that currently comprises a multicultural work environment throughout the world. When making decisions related to an organizational strategy, a difference occurs in the communication and interaction between leaders and employees (Giambra et al., 2018). Overall, leaders in an organization need to carefully consider communication strategies.

Leadership Style

A leader's leadership style can empower career satisfaction in the work environment (Greenleaf et al., 2017). One way that leaders empower employees occurs through the organization's training programs (Park & Jo, 2018). A leader's choice of leadership style opens opportunities to lead and manage other people at various levels within the organization. In Porter's (2008) five forces model, a leader's leadership style creates situations and conditions that benefit the performance of an organization. When employees have an opportunity to lead and supervise others, it is rewarding for both the employee and the organization. Employees demonstrate higher career satisfaction when they perceive higher order values, competence, self-determination, and empowerment in leaders in the work environment (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Leaders often train and develop other leaders and transfer employees to various assignments throughout the world. When leaders train and develop other employees, it is beneficial for both the organization and the employees by use of self-determination and empowerment during operational practices (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Leaders have in-group orientations and review situational conflicts that relate to organizational interests and ethical values (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). An exchange leader uses performance measures to evaluate the current as well as future performance of the organization (USDOD, 2015). Leadership style includes the relationship between leaders and their value to an organization.

Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) is the department in which leaders implement strategies to ensure that the workforce understands the goals of the organization towards innovation and excellence. In Porter's (2008) five forces model, human resources, when used strategically, give organizations competitive advantages (as cited in Crespo, 2018). Crespo explained that HRM leaders oversee the channeling of resources to develop or refine ways of managing employees to have a competitive advantage. Leaders who are in HRM are responsible for ensuring that the organizational policies are clear to the employees. Employees receive training regarding the expectations of behavior in the firm. Effective leaders in the HRM department contribute to the operational and financial improvement of organizations (Yap & Chua, 2017). Leaders need to realize the importance of the economic performance of an organization and the requirements of the HRM department.

Leaders in financial and manufacturing organizations examine a moderated pathway connecting strategic roles for HRM organizational financial performance (Park & Jo, 2018). The strategic functions of the financial performance are essential for the fulfillment of the organization according to Park and Jo (2018). Human resource practices include the strategic roles, performance, and support for the implementation within the work environment (Cherono, 2017; Park & Jo, 2018). Leaders need to develop a financial strategy for organizational programs annually; however, it is also important for the leadership to evaluate the organization throughout the year. Leaders must have programs that they can manage (Hammad & Hallinger, 2017). The leaders' ability to understand the available tools and methods so that they can use them effectively in the organizations has made a difference in operations. Leaders make a connection between innovation and sustainability and provide a platform for HRM. The employees sustain the workplace relationships by reinforcing positive employee relationships to adhere to the human resource practices within an organization.

Leaders should employ a coherent leadership strategy to resolve some of the primary challenges that organizations experience in the workplace. As a result, the HRM as a department within an organization is responsible for addressing requirements for leadership selection. Leaders in the HRM department should discuss the increasing challenges that organizations are facing. These challenges lead to studies on HRM practices, ethical climates, and sustainability (Deskins, 2018). The human resource department workers establish policies and conduct training to assist the organization's leadership with meeting the challenges. The ethical climate is an essential aspect of the status of an organization. The leader's use of an organizational strategy is necessary for the work environment. Leaders demonstrate the relationship between ethical and unethical leadership practices in the work environment (Schatteman & Waymire, 2017). Leaders should foster a positive relationship between motivation-enhancing practices and the work environment.

Leadership Practices

The internal and external leadership styles affect employees and the organization's success or failure (Wirth, 2018). There is a relationship between leadership styles and the behaviors related to employees' inability to lead (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018). Organizational leaders use resources, time, and effort in the development of current and future leaders for the organization's success. According to Porter's (2008) five forces model, leaders' use of leadership practices assists them in enhancing the effectiveness of an organization. A leader's leadership style has a direct relationship to the performance and annual results of an organization. A leader's leadership style differs based on the context of the work environment. The annual programming is used to evaluate the effects of leadership styles and organizational results. Investigation of a leader's leadership practices was a method for exploring the strategies exchange leaders use for organizational sustainability.

Sustainability. Sustainability is a complex concept (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017). Leaders are accountable for the success or failure of the economic processes and the sustainability of the organization. The results give authority to the formulation and implementation of human resource guidelines and policies that bring effective change in the performance of the leaders and employees (Hayashi et al., 2019). Leaders can predict complex issues, engage groups in dynamics, and observe the emotional intelligence associated with the organization. As a result, leaders must have knowledge of and must participate in the organizational practices and must understand guidelines during organizational decision making. Leaders should evaluate and interpret how the sustainability of the organization links to the systems within the organization.

The leaders benefit from the performance of the organization and the reduction of risks for the leaders. To discern a possible risk, the researcher can apply the resource dependence theory to analyze the competing models of the potential stakeholders: sustainment supply chain management (SSCM) and the organizational sustainability performance relationship (Modak, 2017; Pratima et al., 2018). A leader's consideration of these sustainment measures is essential for informing leaders who are responsible for the work requirements of an organization. The leadership team's ability to balance its members' self-interests and the team's interests is essential for the fitness of the organization (Anand, 2017). The leader's objective is to evaluate the brand image of the organization and its competitors and influence the organization to make its supply chain more sustainable. The SSCM leaders are primarily reactive as they explore the external pressures on the organization. SSCM leaders' use of practices and their application of policies contribute to the performance and success of an organization. The leaders benefit from the performance of the organization and the reduction of risk to themselves.

Engaging support staff in leadership develops leaders' roles informally and complements the work of leaders. The addition of senior assistants in the leadership, the support of leadership participation, and enhanced leadership roles lead to improved leadership (Lamm et al., 2018). For this study, support staff included senior executives who made operational decisions at an exchange. The leaders of an organization should focus on creating an environment conducive to participation in decision-making for leaders (Anand, 2017). There is a positive correlation between leadership styles and leaders' modes of resolving conflicts in the organization (Schurr et al., 2017). By involving the support staff, leaders also more effectively communicate the operational requirements throughout an organization.

Communication. The leaders have a requirement to communicate effectively in the management of the organization. Global-organizational-cultural dimensions are indicators of the relationship between the emotional intelligence of middle managers and their ability to communicate with other leaders of the organizations. Organizations with effective leadership, communication, and decision-making are more likely to perform at a high level (C. Liao, 2017). The leader realizes communication satisfaction correlates with the intellectual abilities of managers (Schroeder, 2017). An effective leader must identify the components of emotional intelligence and global-organizational-cultural dimensions because these are vital to the performance of the organization.

Leaders recommend management standards for the implementation of information and communication in an organization. Management leaders update and change the information and technological communication standards to remain compliant with technology. According to Noon and Hallam (2018), the conceptual implementation model involves the implementation of best practices and use of methodologies for observations and analysis to develop an integrated system compatible with the requirements of nonprofit organizations. Exchange leaders should invest resources annually to ensure that all the leaders of the organization and the leaders of exchanges are operating and communicating efficiently in this competitive information and technology-driven environment. One of the most important services that leaders provide is the management of information and communication support to maximize the efficiency of service within an organization. Leaders need to communicate the vision and values to establish a sense of purpose for the organization to achieve employees' understanding of the objectives of the organization (Uprichard & Dawney, 2019). Implementation of information and communication standards ensures the integration of primary aspects of corporate culture with the rules and regulations to maximize the quality of service, efficiency, and availability. A potential exists for thoughtful leaders in creating and communicating a moral and considerate organization. The workforce at the exchanges needs to provide efficient and effective support for the service members who are the primary consumers (USDOD, 2019). Porter (2008) found that leaders who use leadership practices create a moral and more effective organization. The exchange leaders need to ensure creation of a moral and considerate organization. Caring leaders enhance collective performance in the workplace (Louw et al., 2017). To generate this enhancement of collective performance in the workplace, leaders need to empower, encourage, and support the involvement of the employees in adhering to the mission of the organization. Leaders are responsible for including communication of messages, visions, and values that assist employees to better understand their roles in the organization (Kaur, 2017). Leaders should create a common good for the organization to enhance the moral confidence and develop a sense of community in the work environment.

***Financial Performance*.**

An organizational leader's objectives and sustainability initiatives positively influence financial performance. Employee responses to organizational social responsibility can affect the productivity and success of financial services organizations (Filip et al., 2017; Raja et al., 2018). Frontline employees have essential roles in daily operations. Observable changes in employee behavior inform leaders of the method of identifying frontline employees (Raja et al., 2018). The customer service, central checkout, and cashier cage employees represent the leadership and the organization when serving the customers. Employees for whom corporate social responsibility (CSR) is essential to the workplace are more likely to become frontline employees. A leader's experience with power struggles reduces the team communication and the performance of employees (Cingöz & Akdoğan, 2019). Factors such as CSR, team communication, and employee performance rely on the response of other team members to the leader's behavior and the effects of this behavior when the leader holds a formal leadership position.

Leaders should focus on sustainability and ethical leadership in an organization to improve the financial performance. The leaders were responsible for sustaining and monitoring the financial performance of the exchanges. In 2019, the federal government had been planning to reduce the number of armed forces and change the organizational structure of the exchanges within the next few years (USDOD, 2019). An organizational change could affect the financial results of the organization if the senior leaders were not accurately projecting the performance. However, leaders need to sustain the organizational performance and ensure professional practices throughout an organization (L. Ali, 2019). A leader's ability to incorporate strategies with organizational culture can impact business practices (Linder & Foss, 2018). The leaders' use of organizational performance and professional procedures to ensure that they are adhering to policies, guidelines, and the moral requirements of the installations should prevent audits of the organization (Y. Wang et al., 2018). A leader's attention to sustainability and ethical leadership are significant for the financial performance of an organization.

Leadership Development

In organizations, leaders should explore the social learning theory of leadership to encourage employees' leadership development. Leaders need to train, coach, and develop employees during the self-leadership periods of each employee's career. Leaders' facilitation of leadership development consists of the leader's development of the moral and ethical judgment of an organization (Mandal, 2018). Senior leaders must be involved in leadership development as employees of the organization (Basile et al., 2018). Leaders need to set an example for employees regarding the decision-making practices of the organization. This development of employees is essential for the success and performance of individuals in the work environment.

Leaders' choice of leadership style and the institutional and CSR practices of an organization are related. The leaders' choice of leadership styles is essential to the accomplishment of the mission of the organization. Influential leadership is an extension of the transformational-transact. A leader's choice of leadership style can often influence the work environment of the organization (Harrell-Cook et al., 2017; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017). A leader's leadership style choice can influence the business practices of an organization (Ceri-Booms et al., 2017). The leaders' application of leadership styles is important for organizations, and leaders and managers need to develop and learn to lead with limited supervision. A leader's conscientious choice of leadership style benefits both the organization and the individuals involved with this process.

Organizations' decision-makers are installing new leadership positions in response to an internal crisis regarding workforce sustainability. These leaders address the requirements that affect the employees and staff within the work environment. H. J.

Anderson et al. (2017) provided an account of a mechanism with which senior leaders demonstrate ethical leadership to enhance organizational performance. The senior leaders can relate to the establishment of the structure dedicated to organizational sustainability within the organization through which processes and performance indicators influence sustainability.

The senior leaders of an organization are responsible for the establishment of the procedures and processes that can enhance the performance of the organization. The transformation of leadership practices can challenge leaders to identify new pathways for development of subordinates (J. Walker, 2018; Wei et al., 2019). The transformation of leaders is an essential requirement for an organization and its leadership development practices. Leaders provide opportunities for employees to demonstrate their ability to manage others. A leader's implementation of sustainable development benefits from shared leadership and includes collective values, feelings, trust, commitment, and energy toward regional networks (Wei et al., 2019). The leaders' performance impacts the financial performance and economic growth of an organization. The choice for an exchange leader is to develop a path toward economic growth and to compete with other organizations. Exchange leaders should develop an increasing awareness and should anticipate more sustainable progress on a basis of local qualities in an exchange located in the Northeast United States. The leader's use of captivating forms of shared, value-driven leadership for sustaining regional advancement is essential for an organization to thrive (Wei et al., 2019). Leaders who apply the sustainability framework to an organization's operations also apply the responsible leadership framework (Saxena et al., 2018). The leaders' ability to develop and sustain the relevance of an organization should assist them in improving the performance of the employees. A researcher's application of management's traditional leadership models cannot explain the leader's ability.

Organizational Practices

The leader of an organization must implement organizational practices to define the functionality of the organization. Stakeholders should be involved in making the decisions. However, the leaders of the organization have to establish and implement these characteristics. The financial results will demonstrate the external and internal decision makers' abilities as leaders (Ghalib, 2017). The organizational structure from a corporate perspective is essential to the exchange. Leaders of organizations use organizational practices to develop economies as well as programs to offer education and training for the workforce (Atkins et al., 2020). The senior leaders are the primary stakeholders in the organization. The decisions these leaders make have a direct effect on the future of the organization as it pertains to the goals and objectives. For this reason, leaders should participate in decision-making processes and better determine the organization's direction.

Organizational leaders are searching for new approaches to maintain existing services that align with processes, structures, and the environment. The leaders need to ensure that policies and procedures adhere to the guidelines of the installation or post of assignment. Leaders who use management strategies in organizations establish a platform for performing critical reviews. Laureani and Antony (2017) stated that leaders who employ management strategies in public organizations provide evidence for the relationship to prospecting, defending, performance, and relationships between strategy types to include developing a structure.

Multicultural organizations have a direct connection with federal employees. The leaders’ strategic behavior indicates their view of the environment of the economy, the future acceptance, and the active mission of the organization (Burmaoglu, 2018). However, no empirical evidence provides the alignment across strategy, structure, process, and the environment (Mamatha & Geetanjali, 2020). In the case of the exchange, senior leaders’ use of strategies in addressing the operational requirements for maintaining the services the exchange provided to men and women serving in the military also benefitted the exchange.

Leaders’ facilitation of organizational change affects organizational practices. Rahman and Kholidi Hadi (2019) and Damoc (2017) claimed that leaders make a difference in the planning and practices of an organization. According to Porter’s (2008) five forces model, a leader’s facilitation of organizational change assists them in the practices and performance of an organization. The objective of the leaders of the exchange is to continue to enhance the organization to support the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. According to Sayar and Er (2018) and Wu et al. (2019), researchers believe that certain elements in organizational change are universal. Organizational change is a demonstration of the distinctiveness of the research (Song, 2018). Wu et al. demonstrated that social relationships have a major impact on organizational realities and, therefore, are crucial in organizational change and should not be underestimated by the practitioners in the process. Leaders must learn to focus on other retail organizations in the industry to remain competitive and profitable for organizational change. Profitability involves the production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services of an organization (Drabo, 2017; Gibson, 2017). The exchange leaders should involve themselves in the policies, practices, and guidelines for the development of the organization.

Transition

Section 1 was an introduction to the study. The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to understand the strategies that some exchange leaders used to reverse the trend in profit declines in order to remain sustainable. The section included the purpose statement, nature of the study, research question, conceptual framework, significance of the study, and review of the literature. The literature review provided an understanding of the processes, social constructs, and motivations essential to the study's organization, the exchanges. In my examination of Porter's (2008) five forces model, I outlined the threats to an organization by competitors, consumers, suppliers, new entrants, and substitutes.

In Section 2, I will describe the research approach, including the population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, data organization, and reliability and validity. The section will also include the research process which consists of several roles including recruitment of potential participants and facilitation of data collection and dissection. In Section 3, I will present the study findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research, reflections, and conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to understand the strategies that some exchange leaders used to reverse the trend in profit declines in order to remain sustainable. The target population was approximately 15 exchange leaders, including GMs, MSMs, sales and merchandise managers (SAMs), operations managers (OPMs), and branch managers (BMs) at an exchange located in the Northeast United States. These leaders successfully used strategies to reverse the trend in profit declines for the organization to remain sustainable as evidenced by the sales data for the exchange. The implications for positive social change could include the effect on workers in the exchange and the level of service to military families and veterans who depend on exchange services. The economic benefits of improving organizational performance could include pay increases, job retention or creation, and sustainment of the organization (Hazim et al., 2018; Mullet, 2018; Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017; X. Wang & Zeng, 2017). Leaders of financially successful organizations provide communities and employees with secure employment opportunities and may decrease unemployment rates (Hazim et al., 2018).

Role of the Researcher

The role of a qualitative researcher is to collect, evaluate, translate, and understand data to make meaning of a phenomenon (Abdalla et al., 2018; Leinonen et al., 2017). Researchers use a qualitative case study to offer an in-depth analysis that allows for the review of multiple viewpoints regarding the problem (Gammelgaard, 2017; D. M.

Walker et al., 2017). The research questions and purpose of this study were representative of the researcher's focus on exploration of the strategies exchange leaders used to reverse the trend in profit declines for organizational sustainability. Yin (2018) stated that a qualitative case study involves the researcher's participation as the data collection instrument (Buljan et al., 2018). Similarly, Cypress (2017) stated that besides being the primary tools for data collection, qualitative researchers interpret data through their lens.

The research process consisted of several roles including recruitment of potential participants and facilitation of data collection and dissection. As the researcher, I selected the research methodology and design, recruited potential participants, and collected and analyzed data. The population for the study was exchange leaders assigned in the Northeast United States. During the exchange data collection process, I ensured that my professional ideas did not influence the answers provided by the participants. Participants are at an increased threat of exposing themselves to risks, often without recognizing the benefits that result from them participating (Bansal et al., 2018). Potential participants should understand their voluntary role to participate in research. The participants needed to have an awareness of the risks, the impact of the risks, and the benefits of reversing the trend in profit declines in order to remain sustainable. I did not use any organizations that have an association with my employment. Even though I was never an exchange MSM, I held previous leadership positions with other organizations. I performed member checking to confirm data and mitigate bias. It was important for the researcher to rely only on the information from the data collection process, and I carried out member checking by giving the participants the opportunity to review the results of the interviews.

The reviews allowed the participants to confirm the data or to challenge an error in the theme identification.

Papagiannis et al. (2018) outlined the methodological challenges and ethical considerations. I navigated the methodological and ethical contests in research processes for this study on leaders at an exchange located in the Northeast United States. For example, one methodological challenge is that the researcher must validate the data. Song (2018) maintained that the researcher’s use of data triangulation of data sources adds to the credibility of data. I used data triangulation to validate the data collected from multiple sources within the study. One ethical consideration was to show respect for the participants. According to van Gils and Horton (2019), a researcher’s process of designing a study and collecting, investigating, and understanding data includes various ethical challenges for researchers, especially those with insider information or association with participating organizations. I complied with the research thoroughness and the ethical criteria of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University. Compliance with the IRB requirements was necessary to respect the rights of participants in all stages of the research process. I did not conduct data collection until after each participant provided their written consent and confirmed that they have read and understood the informed consent form that complies with the research subjects’ rights under *The Belmont Report* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979), which occurred after IRB approval.

Standard research protocols were essential for the study. Researchers must adhere to *The Belmont Report's* ethical principles and guidelines for research involving human subjects (NCPHSBBR, 1979). The authors of *The Belmont Report* outlined the following ethical principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice. *The Belmont Report* includes guidelines for the boundaries between biomedical and behavioral research and accepted routine practices for research (NCPHSBBR, 1979).

The authors of *The Belmont Report* also indicated the need for risk assessment and appropriateness of human research subjects, definitions, and informed consents (NCPHSBBR, 1979). Participants received consent forms that described their rights, the protections built into the study, and the study's voluntary nature. I maintained ethical principles by respecting all of the study participants, protecting their identities by assigning codes to them, and providing the participants' confidentiality. I respected the opinions of the participants without question. Lancaster (2017) reiterated that researchers should establish trust with the participants during the interview process and will endeavor to do so during the introduction of the study. I ensured the confidentiality of the participants during the interview process and showed consideration for their leadership positions in the organization.

A researcher must mitigate biases to the participants' responses by avoiding the viewing of data collection from a personal perspective (Burton-Chase et al., 2017). I conducted member checking by providing the participants with the opportunity to review my interpretations of their responses to the interview questions for conformity and accuracy with their intended opinions. Endrejat et al. (2017) asserted that researchers should ensure the independence of participants when providing information. The researcher should ensure that the participants are free to express their views during the interview process by not asking leading questions (Endrejat et al., 2017). I respected the leadership position of the participants while maintaining transparency during the interview process; to this effect, I used a scholarly interview procedure.

Gill and Caza (2018) explained that the importance of the interview protocol is to ensure that the researchers address the intent of research in the interview questions. As the researcher, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) during the interview sessions to ensure that my questions are not misleading the participants. Researchers should provide adequate time for participants to respond to questions (Gill & Caza, 2018; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). I did not rush the questions allowing the participants the opportunity to express their opinions. After the interviews, I reviewed the organization's documents to help corroborate the responses. The organization's documents that I reviewed included the policies and procedures highlighting the performance of the organization. Some of the documents that the leaders shared with me were promotional materials, sales trends reports, and if publicly available, financial statements and profits and losses statements.

Participants

Researchers ensure the eligibility of research participants to make findings applicable to the study group. Each researcher establishes standards for the criteria, which define the eligibility of the participants (Mullet, 2018; Todd, 2017). Eligibility criteria are specific to each study (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). My goal was to identify the strategies that exchange leaders used for organizational sustainability. Dahlia et al. (2018) claimed that participants' experience with the study topic is an important eligibility criterion. The participants for this research were exchange leaders who were assigned to an exchange facility, an exchange, located in the Northeast United States, and who had used strategies to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. The participants were exchange leaders representing both the military and civilian population. To be considered eligible as a member of the population, the participants successfully used strategies to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable as evidenced in the sales data of the exchange where they worked. To determine the prospective participants who met the criteria, I selected exchange leaders who had 5 or more years of experience as a leader in an exchange where public records provided sales data to support that the leaders had used strategies to reverse the decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

Gaining access to research participants comes with an ethical and trust issue in that the task needs proper handling without harming the participants (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Morsiani et al. (2017) and Rather (2018) noted that researchers should respect participants' privacy during the collection of information. Riese (2018) suggested that gaining access to participants allows for assessable, collaborative, and logical interviews. To gain access to potential participants, I contacted the HRM office of the exchange and requested the contact information of the exchange leaders located at an exchange in the Northeast United States. Prospective participants received letters of invitation (see Appendix B) through email. The letters of invitation contained the research details, objectives, participation criteria, assurances of confidentiality, and researcher contact information. In this email, I also sought their consent to participate in the study. In addition to expressing interest, prospective participants confirmed that they had 5 or more years of experience and had successfully reversed a decline in profits. In a follow-up email, I explained that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without prior notice by email, phone, or text. I selected exchange leaders, including the GMs, MSMs, SAMs, OPMs, and BMs, from the list of individuals who replied to the invitation. Then, I sent a follow-up email to the four participants who qualified to confirm the day, date, and time of the scheduled interviews.

Researchers should demonstrate commitments to building relationships with participants, which is a part of the ethical review (Trace & Kolstoe, 2017). Stockbridge and Wooffitt (2018) noted that relationships exist in formality and structure between researchers and participants. A formality relationship is when researchers and participants agree on how to explore study topics, and a structure relationship is when the structure varies from the type of interviews that suits the participants (Bundy, 2017; H. Kim et al., 2017). Consequently, I established a working relationship with the participants based on trust by explaining to them the objective of the study. As K. R. Clark and Vealé (2018) found, establishing a relationship starts with winning the confidence of the participants by creating a welcoming atmosphere of openness and interaction. I explained to the participants the purpose and benefits of this study. It is essential for the researcher to ensure the confidentiality of the process, participants' interests, and the recording to encourage participants to divulge information without regret K. R. Clark & Vealé (2018).

Research Method and Design

Researchers must select a research method and design conducive to understanding the phenomenon of interest. Yin (2018) claimed that the case study design meets the needs of a study for exploration of problems lacking treatments, interventions, and predictable outcomes. The researcher's choice of research design and method should serve to combine the components of research into a workable plan for evaluating questions and developing a conclusion about a particular topic (Heugten et al., 2017). With the three common choices for research methods being quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method (Oludayo et al., 2018; Yin, 2018), the method with the best alignment for the study's purpose is qualitative.

Research Method

A researcher's use of a qualitative method allows them to focus on the individuals' lived experiences of the phenomena (Goertzen, 2017; Mokrova et al., 2020). The strategies that exchange leaders used for organizational sustainability were studied in this project. Key elements of qualitative research include research occurring in a natural setting and in-depth exploration of experiences from participants' perspectives (Filip et al., 2017; Vogl et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers emphasize reality, holism, flexibility, exploration, understanding, and meaning making (Jeanson & Michinov, 2020; Kwiek, 2017). Felix et al. (2017) and Yin (2018) explained how qualitative researchers explored marketing strategies used in nonprofit professional membership organizations. Qualitative research was an appropriate way to explore the strategies exchange leaders used to reverse the decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

Decuypere (2019) and Sanders (2018) indicated how a quantitative research study uses numerical data to examine the phenomenon of interest. Quantitative research includes the use of predetermined categories that participants' answers have to fit; participants are not able to express their personal experiences or feelings regarding the phenomenon outside these parameters (Yin, 2018). One of the primary goals of quantitative research is to collect data to either confirm or refute a theory (Vogl et al., 2018). The quantitative research method was not a good selection for this study because the method would not have allowed participants to share their experiences through the expression of feelings and their direct involvement with the phenomenon.

The third type of methodology considered for this study was mixed method. Mixed-method researchers combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer difficult questions (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017; Wallace et al., 2018). Mixed-method researchers combine both knowledge and theory (De Block & Vis, 2018; Uprichard & Dawney, 2019). Mixed-method research thus consists of the mixing of quantitative and qualitative concepts, methods, and data (Caniëls et al., 2018). In mixed-method research, researchers use both qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 2018). This study would not have included hypotheses or variables, which precluded the use of quantitative or mixed method. Because the goal of this study was to explore the strategies exchange leaders used to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable, the use of mixed-method research did not meet the purpose and needs of this study.

Research Design

A qualitative researcher uses specific research designs to explore the research question. Some research designs widely used by researchers are case study, narrative, ethnography, and phenomenology (Z. Ali & Mehreen, 2019; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). A case study design involves the collection and review of data, bound by time and space, limited to a specific case such as a business (Bansal et al., 2018; Nowell et al., 2017; Weller, 2017). Case study design can involve a single distinctive case or multiple case studies involving several identified cases (Comert, 2018; Levitt et al., 2017; Onwuegbuzie & Weinbaum, 2017). Consequently, a single case study design is the most appropriate design for this study because of the ability to determine the strategies that the exchange leaders implement for organizational sustainability. A single case study design research is the optimal design for exploring critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal cases in a real context (Vera et al., 2019; Yin, 2018). The use of a case study design aligned with my purpose to answer the research question: What strategies do exchange leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable?

A qualitative researcher uses specific research designs to explore the research question. Several qualitative research designs exist that were less appropriate for this study. The narrative design includes only a few participants with the goal of understanding potentially complex meanings and contexts from a plethora of stories from the past (Heath et al., 2018; Roth & von Unger, 2018). The use of a narrative design allows researchers to explore research questions by gathering narratives from participants' interviews (Guest et al., 2017; Song, 2018). Narrative design researchers rely on personal chronological storytelling (Luck, 2019). The narrative design did not meet the needs of this study because personal chronological storytelling was not the focus.

Ethnography was also a design for consideration in this study. The use of an ethnography design involves researchers' open or undisclosed participation in people's daily lives to explore their beliefs and feelings and the meanings of their relationships as they interact with their cultures (Lichterman, 2017). In ethnography, researchers provide a cultural understanding of entire cultures (Yin, 2018). The significance of the representative ethnographic value concerns the common denominator of a shared cultural experience (Bansal et al., 2018). Reyes (2017) explained that ethnography involves the formal study of people in their native habitats. Using ethnography requires the researcher to spend an extended amount of time conducting the research (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2018). An ethnographic design was not used because it would not have been practical to conduct the research given the available time.

The third design that I considered was phenomenology. Phenomenology involves a researcher's exploration of individuals' perceptions and interpretations of experiences (Onofrei et al., 2017). A qualitative researcher uses interviews as the focus of a phenomenological design to explore individuals' lived experiences of the phenomena (Hoonakker et al., 2017; Westmoreland, 2017). A phenomenological design does not meet the needs of this study because this type of design includes exploration of the lived experiences with the intention of interpretation to extract meaning about the essence of those experiences (Alase, 2017; Van Manen, 2017). The use of a phenomenological design did not meet the needs of this study which was to explore the strategies used for organizational sustainability.

The selection of the best research design was essential to align with the purpose of the study and to answer the research question. Yin (2018) stated that a case study design is the appropriate design to present questions and to answer the fundamental questions of a study. Boddy (2017) stated that most situations, especially those in doctorate-level studies, require a defined research design. Adequate sample size is essential in various approaches to qualitative research (van Rijnsoever, 2017). Qualitative researchers view phenomena from the perspective of the participants and investigate selected themes that emerge from participants' accounts of their experiences (Ramadan, 2017). Single case study design, as with most qualitative research designs, involves the concept of data saturation (S. Kim et al., 2020; Paulsen, 2017). Paulsen asserted that data saturation occurs with the use of more participants, but the determination of data saturation is not subject to the observations, background, and experiences of the researcher. Data saturation occurs when the researcher does not discover any additional new information and when the data are repetitive (Nelson, 2017; Ramadan, 2017; van Rijnsoever, 2017). A single case study was the best approach for exploring the strategies exchange leaders used to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. I used a single case study design because the use of this design would help answer the research question and aligns with the purpose.

Data saturation is required in qualitative research studies. In qualitative studies, researchers use semistructured interviews to collect data for achieving the point in the research process when they are no longer discovering any new information indicating that they have achieved data saturation (Turner-Bowker et al., 2018). The inability to reach data saturation jeopardizes the quality of the research and interferes with validity (Roulston, 2017; Shatu & Yigitcanlar, 2018; Turner-Bowker et al., 2018). During data collection and analysis of the research, the researcher will initiate data saturation by setting the purpose of recognizing the instant at which the data is redundant (Turner-Bowker et al., 2018). Data saturation is the point at which no new information emerges (Aarsand & Aarsand, 2018). Recognition of redundancy stems from the reading and rereading of transcripts of interviews and the attention to the repetitive nature of the data that the researcher has obtained for the study (S. Kim et al., 2020; Yeong et al., 2018). I used a qualitative single case study approach and continued interviewing participants until achieving data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The sampling of participants included confirmation that the participants were from the population of the 15 exchange leaders who had previously utilized strategies to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. I selected an exchange located in the Northeast United States from those with leaders who had been successful in implementing strategies used to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. I used a purposeful sampling technique to select four qualified participants from the target population that consisted of 15 exchange leaders employed by the organization for 5 or more years. I planned to conduct interviews with the four selected participants or until data saturation occurred**.** Upon achieving data saturation, the actual number of participants will be added in Section 3. Although qualitative research involves other types of sampling, purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative single case study research that requires the selection of information-rich informants from a larger population who are willing to communicate their knowledge about the subjects of interest in the study (Fuller, 2017; Sil & Das, 2017).

Out of a population of 15 exchange leaders, this study included an interview sample of 10 exchange leaders. Data saturation was reached before interviewing 10 exchange leaders. This qualitative single case study of the case organization included the population of exchange leaders who had successfully implemented strategies for sustainability operating in an exchange in the Northeast United States. As a result, sampling of the population members was an appropriate strategy for a single case study that includes well-established, clearly defined boundary limitations (Ruel, 2017).

The study consisted of leaders who worked at an exchange within the Northeast United States. The sample size in the case study research could relate to individual choice, but saturation is a concept supported by qualitative research (Ruel, 2017). Saturation is the point at which a qualitative researcher does not discover new information from the additional data selected (Ramadan, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018). Tran et al. (2017) stated that data saturation dialogue validates the analysis of peer-reviewed case study research. According to Bacon et al. (2017), data saturation might not be the best marker of sufficient sample size in all studies.

I scheduled the time of the interview, and I conducted the study at the convenience of the participants. The preference was for in-person (face-to-face) interviews, but I offered videoconferencing interviews to accommodate a participant's schedule or individual preferences. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the selection of the interview locations accommodated the participants' comfort levels and adhered to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. If allowed, I conducted in-person (face-to-face) interviews at a location selected by the interviewees; otherwise, I used videoconferencing interviews. Because of the importance of the interview area, recommendations included a location that allowed participants to communicate privately. I conducted the interviews in an environment that lead to trust. I gave the interviewee time to reflect on and analyze their experiences to provide detailed, meaningful responses to the interview questions, and carefully interpret documents. To achieve triangulation of data sources, I used participants' interviews data, organization's documentation, and member checking (Bacon et al., 2017; Bashir & Marudhar, 2018).

Ethical Research

The interested and qualified participants replied to the letter of invite before the data collection, which occurred only after IRB approval and research certification. Establishing consent was consistent with the mandates for protection of human research subjects recommended by research experts (Chin et al., 2019). I used email (see Appendix B) as the means to introduce the idea of consent to each participant. Following receipt of the email, prospective participants had one week to determine if they would like to participate in the study. Then, after I received the exchange leaders' verbal consent to participate in the study before their interview, I reminded them of the risks, benefits, and purposes of the study. I explained that I would store all of the study's documents and electronic data on a password-protected computer.

The email included the purpose of the study, background information, risks, benefits, and incentives. No tangible incentives were offered or provided. Ridder (2017) and Morgan et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of the voluntary nature of the participants in a case study research. Farmer and Lundy (2017) also discussed the ethical concerns about appealing to research subjects with financial incentives including inducement, exploitation, and biased enrolment. However, each participant requested and received a summary of the findings and a published copy of the study.

I allowed participants to withdraw from the study at any time. To withdraw, the participant was to communicate this desire in writing via mail or email or orally via telephone. Wadams and Park (2018) emphasized the importance of the participants' knowledge that they can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Welch and Piekkari (2017) suggested that following the request to withdraw, the researcher must immediately exclude and delete all of the participant's information from the data and the analysis of the study.

To protect the confidentiality of participants and safeguard the data, as recommended by research experts, all forms and electronic data should remain on a password-protected computer (Welch & Piekkari, 2017). After completing the study, I will have stored the hard copies and the hardware containing the research in a locked safe in my home for 5 years after completing the study. I am the only individual to know the password and possess the key. After 5 years, the electronic data would undergo permanent deletion, and destruction of hard copies of papers will occur by shredding to adhere to the recommendations for the safeguarding of human research participants. I will havewould followed these procedures after completing the study.

Flick (2018) stated that to reduce possible harm to participants, the researcher should not collect sensitive, personal, psychological, or financial information. I have followed this suggestion. Pseudonyms such as Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3 for reporting and publication purposes replaced the identities of all participants. The participants' names and titles as well as the organization's name were not identifiable in the published study. My assurances of confidentiality improved participation rates and the truthfulness of information as a result of the reduced fears or risk of discovering the participants' identities (Fallatah et al., 2017). I used assurances of confidentiality to improve participation rates and enhance truthfulness.

Data Collection Instruments

I served as the main instrument for data collection. Data came from semistructured interviews and documentation from the organization. McGannon et al. (2019) noted that the primary role of the researcher includes collecting and recording data. A researcher's selection of the appropriate data collection method affects the efforts of data analysis (Dent, 2019). According to Caniëls et al. (2018), the interviews and observations will be recorded through note-taking. During interviews, member checking and focus groups are the most common approaches to data collection using qualitative methodology to understand the participants' accounts of the phenomenon. A researcher's use of semistructured in-person (face-to-face) interviews, or videoconferencing interviews along with a review of documentation and member checking is one of Yin's (2018) recommendations when conducting qualitative single case study research. A qualitative researcher uses various methods to collect data. Yin indicated that there are six types of data used in case study research: documents, archival records, answers to interview questions, direct observations, participant observations, and artifacts. For this qualitative single case study, I obtained data from in-person (face-to-face; if CDC restrictions did not apply or if a participant had health concerns or did not have the capability to videoconference) or videoconferencing semistructured interviews and a review of organizational documents consisting of the actual protocols, guidelines, handbooks, manuals, and instructional content from the organizations to assist with organizational sustainability.

Interview protocols are customary in business-oriented case studies (Lancaster, 2017). The interview protocol (Appendix A) included the seven open-ended interview questions that guided the semistructured interviews. The seven questions were an inquiry into strengths that assist the interviewees' identification of the strategies exchange leaders use for organizational sustainability. The last three interview questions pertained to additional information to assist other exchange leaders in understanding the strategies required for organizational sustainability.

I collected interview data through semistructured interviews using open-ended questions with a guided discussion script and an interview protocol (Appendix A). Use of the open-ended interview questions was more appropriate for this qualitative single case study than close-ended questioning. Weis and Willems (2017) stated that open-ended questions allow participants to provide meaningful information about the topic and to make a detailed account of experiences. A set of open-ended questions stemmed from the initial comprehensive review of related literature, which is a recommended approach to preparations for semistructured interviews with open-ended questions (Haines, 2017). A guided discussion script helps to ensure the intent of the interview and to ensure participants do not stray from the topic (FitzPatrick, 2019). These were reasons for the interview protocol for this qualitative single case study.

The participants received a list of the interview questions by electronic mail a week in advance of the interviews. Wheeldon (2018) stated that semistructured interviews with open-ended questions are an acceptable, proper means for gathering pertinent data in case study research. Semistructured interviews begin with a general idea of the initial questions in mind while accommodating additional lines of inquiry as necessary and appropriate to the goals of the study (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017). In conducting the interviews to collect data, I was mindful that establishing reliability and validity of the information was essential.

Preparation and scrutiny of the planned process may lead to changes based on feedback before the implementation of data collection for the formal study (Schmiedel et al., 2018). According to Schmiedel et al. (2018), the initial guiding questions should undergo evaluation and assessment for relevance, appropriateness, clarity, unnecessary intrusiveness, or the possibility of provoking any undue duress or stress.

Following the conclusion of the initial data collection, complete analysis and interpretation with the use of member checking occurred. As a step in member checking, participants had the opportunity to check the interpretation of their responses for validation. A researcher's objective in using member checking is to ensure the interpretation and analysis of the data is accurate enough to yield the information results for identification (Farooq & De Villiers, 2017; Madill & Sullivan, 2017). I collected and analyzed the interview data. Using the data from the interview questions, I used member checking to obtain the participants' perspectives of my initial interpretations of the analyzed data. In member checking, the researcher's preliminary interpretations of the data included review by participants who verified the interpretations or even contributed further information pertaining to the initial responses (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). I was able to substantiate that the initial analyses applied by asking the participants to review and validate the initial interpretations from responses to the interview questions.

Data Collection Technique

In this qualitative single case study, I obtained data from semistructured interviews following an interview protocol (Appendix A) and organizational document review. Using the data from semistructured interviews, I created a verbatim record of in-person (face-to-face) or videoconferencing semistructured interviews based on the participants' accounts and experiences with the phenomenon under study. Bashir and Marudhar (2018) stated that the advantage of relying on interviews is for the data informants to express authentic verbal knowledge, understanding, perceptions, and expertise to an interviewer who can ask for clarifications or additional in-depth information about the topic. The data collection through interviews may include some informants who have difficulty articulating or have poor recall (Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Yin, 2018). Interviews are time consuming and produce considerable data for transcription that results in an extensive procedure before analysis (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions in a guided discussion script were the primary means by which I collected information. The participants received a list of the interview questions by electronic mail before the scheduled interviews. Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions are an acceptable, respectable means for gathering data in case study research (Brown & Danaher, 2019; Mohajan, 2018; Yin, 2018). The documents that I reviewed included the policies and procedures highlighting the performance of the organization.

Another way for qualitative researchers to gather data is to review organizational documents. Moser and Korstjens (2018) noted the advantages and disadvantages of the use of organizational document review in case study research. The noted disadvantages include the possibility that information in the documents may not apply to the study and may be disorganized or outdated. Moser and Korstjens emphasized the possibility of bias stemming from the lack of access to essential documents or the particular nature of the selection process. Moser and Korstjens warned that the collection and review of records are time-consuming as documents are potentially voluminous. However, document review was a relatively inexpensive source of background information. Moser and Kortjens concluded that the collection of documents for review could involve an unobtrusive internal view of data not readily observable, noted, or discovered by other means. In a qualitative research study, the researcher's use of document review enhances the validity of the research.

Advantages and disadvantages exist for the data collection techniques and the semistructured interview process. The advantages of the data collection from the semistructured interviews were that the researcher could observe the participants' reactions while conducting the interviews, discuss the responses, and have the interview questionnaire relate to Porter's (2008) five forces model strategies. The first disadvantage was that participants may withdraw from the research study upon receipt of the informed consent form. To limit this disadvantage, I engaged with participants to answer any questions they had and to contact them at least 2 days prior to the interview to ensure they had all the details needed before beginning the semistructured interviews. However, conducting discussions for semistructured in-person (face-to-face) and videoconferencing interviews had a few disadvantages because of the CDC guidelines' restrictions for meetings. To limit these disadvantages, the exchange leaders had to verbally communicate their responses during the interview process in compliance with CDC guidelines. The second disadvantage was that exchange leaders may not have wanted to conduct a videoconference interview. To limit this disadvantage, I gave the exchange leaders the option to select the method for interviews.

The following steps were part of the abridged interview protocol and included the steps for the data collection from the in-person (face-to-face; barring CDC restrictions) semistructured interviews. However, the alternative was videoconferencing interviews. Prospective participants received a request to give their consent before participating in the interview, which followed the ethical human subject research process recommended by experts in the field (Haszeldine, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Following confirmation of eligibility and interest and after receiving the exchange leaders' acceptance of the invitation to participate through an email response, I did a follow-up contact to schedule interviews. In scheduling the times, dates, and locations for the interviews, each participant and I considered mutual convenience in a quiet, private setting. This follow-up contact helped to ensure that I had informed participants and prepared them for the interview process (Burton-Chase et al., 2017). The use of a qualitative approach allowed me to focus on in-person (face-to-face) interviews or prepare for alternative videoconferencing, if necessary, because of time and meeting limitations of participants; videoconferencing and phone interviews were acceptable alternatives when in-person (face-to-face) interviews were not possible. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the selection of the interview locations accommodated the participants' comfort levels and adhered to the CDC guidelines. The process of listening and responding in a private semistructured interview setting helped participants feel comfortable and helped them to provide open and honest responses (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Additional data from direct observations resulted from thorough note-taking during interviews. These observations were beneficial in capturing data not otherwise available, but they were subject to the bias of the observer.

As part of the abridged interview protocol, the interview involved a technique for voice recording following the participants' consent. The recording device was the Sony ICD PX 440 digital recorder, and the iPhone served as the backup source for recording to avoid any loss of data. Next, I had the recordings transcribed. Burton-Chase et al. (2017) stated that using recorded data assists accurate transcription to text in a word processing document. I used a transcription service to help transcribe the data from audio speech to text, and the transcription service acknowledged a nondisclosure agreement before transcription work began. A detailed written report followed each interview to maintain the integrity of the interview session; this report was part of the process recommended by single case study experts who claim that the process helps retain the data trustworthiness (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). Based on the interviews, the transcription service assisted in the verification and confirmation of the transcribed audio recordings into text. I conducted member checking in reviewing participants' responses. In addition, the participants advised me on whether or not my interpretations accurately reflected their responses. In member checking, the preliminary analysis of the data undergoes review by participants who may clarify their responses and contribute new or additional perspectives on the issue under study (Bakla, 2019; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). I gave participants the opportunity to review my interpretation of their responses to ensure accuracy and to gain additional information.

As the researcher, I collected and analyzed the interview data. I used member checking as a way to obtain participants' viewpoints about the initial interpretations of the data based on the interview questions. The use of member checking improves the dependability of the findings in a qualitative study (Lancaster, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2018). The purpose of member checking was to ask participants to assess and substantiate the initial interpretations, allowing them the ability to confirm that the initial analyses were appropriate in reference to the interview questions. Consistent with the member checking process, the data appeared to be credible by confirming the participants' responses.

Data Organization Technique

Electronic data existed as files in the computer software program Microsoft Word. The scanning of all documents and records collected resulted in electronic files of information. I have ensured the organization of the electronic data into manageable pieces. The organization of data into manageable pieces allows single case study researchers to deconstruct, reconstruct, and reflect on the realities of the data (Yakut Çayir & Saritaş, 2017). I used transcription services, Microsoft Word (word processing software), NVivo 12 (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software), and image preservation to organize and manage information. The transcription data consisting of files from the transcription software such as word processing files, scanned images of records and documents, and computer-aided analysis programs led to well-organized data that was transferred from one program to another as necessary and appropriate. Researchers use single case study databases to develop and maintain an audit trail that research experts recommend (Yakut Çayir & Saritaş, 2017). The audit trail started with information collection and continued through data analysis, leading to the report of results and conclusions.

Conducting semistructured interviews provides the minimum level of structure (Yakut Çayir & Saritaş, 2017). The information from my direct observation of the participants during the interview process on location resulted from thorough notes taken during interviews. Depending on a participant's availability and health concerns, I conducted in-person (face-to-face) and videoconferencing interviews. While I took thorough notes during the interviews, I acknowledged that I could not observe participants during the videoconferencing interview unless they had the technological capability for using internet applications for videoconferencing. I could not directly observe participants during a phone interview unless the participant could videoconference. To ensure sufficient information, I used semistructured interviews to allow the participants to ask questions and to encourage them to give candid responses (Twining et al., 2017). I took extensive notes during the interviews to conduct the type of data collection that case study experts recommend (Kopp et al., 2017; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). However, conducting discussions for both in-person (face-to-face) and videoconferencing semistructured interviews had a few disadvantages because of the CDC guidelines' restriction on participants meeting in person.

A researcher's use of technology, such as audio recordings of interviews with verbatim transcriptions, will help reduce bias inherent to data collection efforts (Burton-Chase et al., 2017; Kopp et al., 2017). The capturing of participants' interviews and extensive note-taking will occur, leading to the production of a reflective journal recommended by single case study research experts (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). The researcher's use of a transcription service assists them in managing single case study research efforts (Burton-Chase et al., 2017). My generation of a detailed report followed each interview to maintain the integrity of the interview session, and participants could review the analysis. The participants participated in a process known as member checking by examining the analysis of the interview.

I stored the data for each interview from each participant in electronic files labeled with each respective pseudonym (Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3). Use of such files allowed me to read, study, and observe the data. I used NVivo 12 software to label, code, classify, and categorize data, thereby maintaining the organization of data into manageable, meaningful pieces. The data in these electronic files will remain in my password-protected computer for 5 years, followed by permanent deletion. The hard copies of the data will remain in a locked cabinet for 5 years, after which I will have destroyed them, consistent with recommendations for the protection of confidentiality of the individual research subjects as Karagiozis (2018) discussed.

Data Analysis

Several prominent case study experts discussed the use of triangulation to improve the trustworthiness of case study findings (Fusch et al., 2018; Lancaster, 2017; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017; Weller, 2017). Fusch et al. (2018) discussed four types of triangulation in case study data analysis. Data triangulation involves different time, space, and persons. Accordingly, data from more than one informant from more than one company provides a type of informant triangulation. Investigator triangulation involves multiple observers (Fusch et al., 2018). However, in this study, I served as the sole individual collecting data. Methodological triangulation, the fourth type according to Fusch et al., includes the application of numerous theoretical schemas during interpretations. However, the use of various theories is beyond the scope of this qualitative multiple case study. Fusch et al. also presented methodological triangulation as data collection occurring through different within-method or between-method strategies. Therefore, to address methodological triangulation, I collected more than one kind of qualitative data through more than one means.

Methodological triangulation is a way for researchers to validate data collected from multiple sources within the phenomenon (Saks, 2018). According to case study experts, the data occur through both the case and cross-case comparisons with methodological triangulation, which can strengthen the findings and conclusions leading to more practical propositions (Cornish, 2020; Weller, 2017; Zhao et al., 2017). Single case study data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, recombining, and triangulating evidence to draw conclusions guided by prior theory and the conceptual reinforcement of the study (Ridder, 2017; Zhao et al., 2017). Case study data analysis relies on analytical techniques leading to the display of data analysis results separate from interpretations (Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2018). Analytic techniques include investigation of all sets and subsets of the data in order to adequately relate findings across cases and present an approach that aligns with the recommendations by qualitative case study researchers (Lancaster, 2017; Yin, 2018).

The initial steps of the logical and sequential process for data analysis typically involve reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, notes, and relevant documents that can lead to the development of preliminary ideas about categories, coding, and relationships about possible themes (Zhao et al., 2017). Schmiedel et al. (2018) noted the importance of descriptive, topic, and analytical coding in the qualitative data analysis process. Descriptive coding involved the identification of broad issues I planned to develop. Topic coding involved the problems that became apparent during data analysis. Analytical coding was a process of arranging data into abstract form. Following the initial review of data, I applied three coding procedures. Integral to the coding process is what Schmiedel et al. described as the observing, thinking, testing, and revising (OTTR) model where the processes of observing, thinking, testing, and revising are used during case study data analysis.

The OTTR model planned for applications in this research requires that during and after data collection, researchers think about the meanings of data collected; the process of thinking may lead to ideas about additional types of data as are necessary for triangulation and appropriate for confirming existing interpretations (Lancaster, 2017; Schmiedel et al., 2018; Vo et al., 2018; Yin, 2018; Zhao et al., 2017). Schmiedel et al. (2018) described testing that involves the collection of additional data that might lead to subsequent revisions of initial interpretations; those changes may lead to other testing phases. Like the concept of data saturation discussed by Saunders et al. (2018), this process continues until plausible explanations emerge, no unexplained data remain, or further interpretations seem impossible. As previously described in research, the process proceeds until failing to lead to new information or insights (Alberti & Varon Garrido, 2017).

Application of the constant comparative method will assist in the development for the purpose of inductively discovering latent patterns in the words of multiple participants with attention to possible differences in interpretations or reports between case study participants (Nie, 2017). Researchers use comparison as the primary data analysis tool of qualitative data analysis, applied to identify constructs and group them into themes (Zhao et al., 2017). A researcher's primary objective for using the qualitative data analysis is to identify conceptual similarities and differences in the data to reveal processes and patterns that researchers can group into significant themes (Dent, 2019; Zhao et al., 2017). The purpose is to inductively discover latent patterns in the words of multiple participants with attention to possible differences in interpretations or reports between single-case study participants (Schmiedel et al., 2018).

The data analysis process included NVivo 12 software for coding, which can lead to the identification of themes. According to Banjarnahor et al. (2018), the use of NVivo 12 allows for the coding of the data sources in ways that reference specific topics of interest. The use of computer-aided coding brings relevant references together in what NVivo 12 creates as nodes. A researcher's use of NVivo 12's auto coding and query-based coding features allows navigation of large amounts of data more quickly and efficiently. The applications of the NVivo 12 software also include the generation of visualizations along with the creation of reports and extracts that illustrate the patterns in the data to arrive at substantiated themes (Banjarnahor et al., 2018). The focus of analysis remained on identifying the strategies and correlating them with the reviewed literature as well as with the newer studies published after the approval of the research proposal. The explanation of the results interpreted through the lens of the conceptual framework should contribute to the significance of findings and the conclusions (Zhao et al., 2017).

Thus, my consideration of the findings along with taking into account the conceptual framework and previous literature increased the credibility of the study.

Reliability and Validity

Establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research is necessary. The researcher's implementation of reliability and validity checks allows for a consistent and accurate collection of the data (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018). Reliability is a process employed to ensure that data are consistent (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018). A researcher's use of dependable processes for member checking, bracketing, and data triangulation helps ensure reliability (Teoman & Ulengin, 2018).

For the research to be trustworthy, the findings must have credibility. Credibility occurs as a result of validity. Validity is the degree to which findings are true (Smith & McGannon, 2018). The validation of data collected from semistructured interviews can also occur through the researcher's use of member checking, bracketing, and data triangulation (Smith & McGannon, 2018). I ensured the validation of the current study's data which, in turn, helped ensure transferability. To ensure reliability and validity in this study, I consistently followed data collection and analysis processes in using an interview protocol and other data collection and validation techniques.

Reliability

Researchers must establish quality in their work. Reliability in research is the consistency in which the research instrument measures the characteristic of the results and is without error (Abdalla et al., 2018). Dependability of the research occurs when replication of the data from the participants has the same results (Ek, 2017). Reliability or dependability of research happens when researchers standardize the methods for the data collection and the validation technique (Sabar & Ben-Yehoshua, 2017). Consistency in data collection is necessary and validates the researcher's information as reliable and, therefore, ensuring dependability.

To establish dependability, I achieved data reliability through consistently using interview protocols, recording semistructured interviews, transcribing the interviews, conducting member checking, and ensuring consistency in the process. Adherence to a consistent interview protocol can improve the reliability of the study (Fusch et al., 2018). Recording the semistructured interviews and journaling throughout the current study would ensure a consistent process that allows for replication (Iivari, 2018; Yin, 2018). Documenting the data collection process via journaling can ensure reliability (Decuypere, 2019; Iivari, 2018). According to Iivari (2018), implementing these reliability practices also ensures that interview details do not become less relevant over time. I used bracketing and data triangulation to ensure the reliability of the data which, in turn, ensured the establishment of dependability. The use of bracketing can help researchers focus on the research topic and provide consistency during data collection and analysis (Smith & McGannon, 2018). It is important to collect data from different data sources, such as semistructured interviews and organizational documents, to facilitate data triangulation. A researcher's use of data triangulation helps ensure the reliability of the data across multiple datasets (Hsiung, 2018). I outlined the two data sources to provide consistency in the study and enhance reliability and establish dependability.

Additional methods for establishing dependability and credibility include the use of a transcription service and member checking (Dahlia et al., 2018). The transcription service assisted in the verification and confirmation of the transcribed audio recordings (Larrinaga, 2017; Lyakhov & Gliedt, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2018). The researcher's implementation of the member checking process helps ensure that responses capture and represent participants' intents (Denny & Weckesser, 2018; Larrinaga, 2017; Mullet, 2018; Whitley & Massey, 2018). Use of a transcription service and member checking aided in the dependability of the data and was another portion of the triangulation. Ensuring credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation can add to the validity of qualitative research (Moon, 2019). These aspects are essential for the recognition of qualitative research as transparent, reliable, and credible (Pratima et al., 2018). Once a researcher has established the credibility, transparency, dependability, and confirmability of the research, the readers could trust the outcomes of the study.

Validity

Yin (2018) suggested using numerous sources of evidence as a way to ensure validity. Validity is a fundamental component of quality in qualitative research. Hochbein and Smeaton (2018) asserted that validity in qualitative research relates to whether the findings of the study are an accurate measurement of what a researcher intends to measure. Ensuring credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation can add to the validity of qualitative research (Yin, 2018). These aspects are essential for the recognition of qualitative research as transparent, reliable, and credible (Pratima et al., 2018). As a result of using data triangulation of data sources, the researcher can review multiple sets of data thus adding to the credibility of the data (Malinverni et al., 2018; Mullet, 2018). Ensuring credibility was critical in generating trustworthiness so that other researchers could confidently leverage the study findings and transfer the data for their research.

The qualitative researcher must establish credibility with the reader (Yin, 2018). Every piece of data collected throughout the study, including field notes, data summaries, member checking, and analysis procedures provided an audit trail and allow for reflection of the data and study findings. An audit trail allows for proper decision-making and a verification process for key themes (Lowe et al., 2018). The researcher's creation of an audit trail is a useful component to ensure validation (Pratima et al., 2018). Implementation of member checking also allows a researcher to validate data interpretation (V. Anderson, 2017; Hsiung, 2018; Molina-Azorin & Fetters, 2019). To ensure credibility in this study, I performed data triangulation through semistructured interviews, documentation, observation of the participants during the interview process, when possible, and member checking. I used data triangulation to validate the data collected from multiple sources within the phenomenon. Member checking established credibility through validation of the information with the participants for an actual account of their responses.

While I have left it to the reader's judgment to determine if the results will transfer to other research studies, I improved transferability via a clear, detailed data collection, analysis, and reporting process. Adhering to strict protocols and processes throughout the study can allow for transferability (Larrinaga, 2017; Stockbridge &

Wooffitt, 2018). The extent to which findings from the research can apply to other settings or groups is transferability (Oh & Oh, 2017). Accordingly, I adhered to the protocols and processes for data collection, analysis, and reporting described in this study. As Oh and Oh (2017) explained, the trustworthiness of data increases when researchers present data in a way that fosters alternative interpretations, thus improving the potential for transferability. I adhered to the interview protocol, a stringent data gathering process, a formal process for thematic data analysis, and member checking.

Closely following study protocols and processes may allow other researchers the ability to repeat the study (Clarke & Kopczuk, 2017; Minzlaff, 2019; Peditto, 2018). A researcher's establishment of the study's credibility and confirmability can help ensure transferability (Groenewald, 2018; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). In addition to enhancing transferability, I confirmed that the data output was accurate, which has enhanced its dependability and trustworthiness.

Confirmability was established through the use of semistructured interviews to collect data along with the organization's documentation. Ensuring credibility, transferability, confirmability, and data saturation can add to the validity of qualitative research (Yin, 2018). These aspects are essential for the recognition of qualitative research as transparent, reliable, and credible (Pitard, 2017). A researcher's use of confirmability would allow them to validate the participants' data output with the removal of personal bias (Anstiss et al., 2018; H. Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). Confirming the output of the interviews can help remove personal bias by allowing the participants to review the interpretation of their words (Anstiss et al., 2018). According to Daoud

(2019), having an audit trail and the ability to reflect on the study findings should aid in the validity and, in turn, the confirmability of the study's results. In this study, I ensured that the data was confirmable through the implementation of an audit trail.

A researcher's attainment of data saturation and use of member checking validates that the findings are an accurate reflection of the participants' views of what strategies leaders use for organizational sustainability. Data saturation is the point when the data become redundant and clear (de Vries, 2018). Ensuring data saturation is an important step in qualitative research (Daoud, 2019; de Vries, 2018). The researcher's attainment of data saturation validates that the data is redundant and establishes patterns. A researcher must ensure data saturation to help address the research question and the validity of the findings (Nelson, 2017; van Rijnsoever, 2017). My plan was to interview 10 exchange leaders who had qualified to participate in the study unless data saturation occurred before all had been interviewed. When I have achieved data saturation, I would know the number of participants. This number will be reported in Section 3.

Transition and Summary

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to understand the strategies that some exchange leaders used to reverse the trend in profit declines in order to remain sustainable. The following was the central research question for the study: What strategies do some exchange leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable?

The information contained in Section 2 was an explanation of how I conducted research to discover the strategies that some exchange leaders used to reverse the trend in profit declines in order to remain sustainable. The information in this section included an explanation of the process for selecting participants through purposeful sampling. The information was also an explanation of the research through semistructured interviews and the evaluation of organizational documentation. This section contained the primary procedures and plans for organizing and evaluating data. Section 2 also consisted of an explanation of the methods for ensuring reliability and validity to establish the credibility and dependability of the study's findings through member checking. In Section 3, I have presented the themes that I identified from my investigation and exploration of the strategies exchange leaders used for implementing organizational sustainability. I will/have also described how these strategies could potentially apply to the practices of other organizational leaders in the exchange and other retail organizations and how these strategies have created social change. I will have made recommendations for action and further research regarding the strategies exchange leaders used for organizational sustainability in the public sector, implications for social change, reflections, and my conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that some of the exchange leaders use to reverse the trend in profit declines in order to remain sustainable. I served as the main instrument for data collection; the data came from (face-to-face) semistructured interviews, from documentation, member checking interview summaries and reflective journal notes. Three themes emerged from the data analyzed: rivalry among existing competitors, potential development of substitutes, and sustaining bargaining power of consumers. Each of the themes is aligned with the conceptual framework of the study and with the finding in the literature. The results of the study revealed the strategies leaders used to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

Presentation of the Findings

The primary research question for this study was the following: What strategies do some of the retail organization’s leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. Semistructured interviews with (face-to-face) open-ended questions, organization’s social media platform, member checking interview summaries journal notes, and a guided discussion script were the primary data collection means that I used. The code names were used to ensure the confidentiality and the privacy of the participants: P1, P2, P3, and P4.

The three themes that emerged from the data analysis are rivalry among existing competitors, potential development of substitutes, and bargaining power of consumers.

These themes were ranked based on the percentage of the total number of relevant responses from the participants (see Table 2). Rivalry among existing competitors earned 50% of the responses, potential development of substitutes, 30%, and bargaining power of consumers, 20%.

Table 2

Themes

Theme categories	Number of participants	Related responses
Rivalry among existing competitors	4	50%
Potential development of substitutes	4	30%
Bargaining power of consumers	4	20%

Methodological triangulation, member checking, thematic analysis, and NVivo 12 software were used to analyze the data collected. Coding and analysis of interview transcripts, interviewing summaries, the organization's social media platforms, Facebook documents, sales results, and member checking were a part of the all-inclusive data analysis. The data analysis revealed the exchange leaders used these three themes to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

Theme 1: Rivalry Among Existing Competitors

Rivalry among existing competitors was the most frequently referenced theme that emerged from the data including the participants' responses. The participants noted that they were able to reverse the decline in profits and remain sustainable because they were providing the same services as their competitors who were using online ordering to satisfy the needs of consumers. Bruneau et al. (2018) explained that customer engagement occurs when a customer performs an action with a retail organization's website. For example, the exchange leaders' use of the shopmyexchange.com website allowed the organization to maintain their relationship with the customer base (during the COVID-19 pandemic) and successfully increased profits by utilizing strategies for the rivalry among existing competitors including retail organizations such as Amazon, Walmart, and Target. The participants explained how customers' actions consisted of ordering or initiating communication for ordering selected merchandise online. P1 stated, "The online sales platform shopmyexchange.com strategy increased profits for the exchange because it allowed customers to order online." Data such as promotional-advertisement documents, profits and earnings results, and exchange credit card trends along with protocols, manuals, and instructional content demonstrated that the exchange leaders selected merchandise based on the needs and desires of the customer base at their facility. The results of a study conducted by Harrigan et al. (2018) supported that managers' development of relatable content on the retail organization's online shopping media platforms results in high customer engagement leading to an increase in brand awareness and in profits. The exchange customers' engagement stimulated business. Therefore, the online platform assisted the exchange leaders in maintaining profitability over the last 3 years with the COVD-19 pandemic, government, and the government and CDC guidelines imposed on organizations.

The exchange leaders had developed a sustainable relationship with customers based on need and satisfaction. Inviting customers to respond to content posted on the exchange organization's website platforms is a strategy for keeping up with the competition and sustaining profitability stimulated by the rivalry among existing competitors. Thus, the theme of rivalry among existing competitors is associated with how customers respond to content posted on the retail organization's website platforms.

In a general statement, P1 mentioned, "At the exchange, we use social media platforms to engage with consumers and to promote the exchange brands." In talking about how they used social media, the participants evaluated the effectiveness of rivalry among existing competitors strategies aligned to customer engagement on using the shopmyexchange.com platform. P1 stated, "The online sales platform shopmyexchange.com strategy increased profits for the exchange because it allowed customers to shop and order online." P1 and P2 indicated that the organization used a number of platforms. P2 stated, "I use shopmyexchange.com, Facebook, and Instagram to post advertisements and upcoming holiday events." Also, P3 commented, "Posting holiday shopping events is a great way to stay in touch with the customers, and it allows them to purchase selected name brands and merchandise." Thus, they used the website platform shopmyexchange.com and other social media platforms to assist as strategies leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

The participants for this study, four exchange leaders in the exchange organization, recognized the benefits of the website platform, shopmyexchange.com, and social media platforms. In addition, the participants accepted technology as an essential resource to achieve their organizational objectives of promoting brand and merchandise awareness. P1 and P2 indicated that Instagram data were beneficial, and P2 stated, “We collect and assess data from Instagram to use in identifying the customers’ commitment to the exchange.” P3 said, “I use the number of people who posted on Instagram and the hashtags of Twitter responses to determine the customers’ commitment.” P3 and P4 used Facebook analytics that displayed link clicks, and P3 stated, “We use link clicks as indicators of customer engagement rates to measure customer commitment.” P4 responded, “By evaluating the sales resulting from the events posted on shopmyexchange.com and from purchases through the website, I can clearly determine the effectiveness of the social media strategy.” The data analysis of Facebook documents and sales results reflected a high number of customer interactions confirming the findings that customer engagement is linked to overseeing effective website marketing, improving profits and sustainability, and managing rivalry among existing competitors.

Dolan et al. (2019) stated that customer engagement is enhanced by using various sources including texting, photos, and videos. The participants agreed that customer commitment was imperative and required continued involvement to find content to maximize effective social media marketing strategies. P1 indicated, “I use Facebook to engage with customers by providing information and advertised events.” The data collected from the organization’s websites showed numerous examples of informational content that consisted of announcements of the organization’s sales, upcoming events, and hours of operation. P1 stated, “The information on shopmyexchange.com gives the hours of operation on a daily basis and during seasonal events and includes announcements for promotional events of the exchange.” P1 also stated, “The use of Facebook provides entertainment for the consumers.” P1 described one of Facebook’s entertaining features, “Facebook conducts polls where customers nominate their favorite seasonal merchandise and events offered by the exchange.” P1 also indicated, “Polling is a fun activity in which customers review the results of the latest poll, and it often involves communicating with other exchange customers.” P1 acknowledged, “The exchange benefits from the polling because the continuous postings encourage a lot of customer interaction on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Google which increases brand awareness.” The participants focused on interactive content as a primary source of customer engagement. Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018) found that a firm's interactive selection of quality content encouraged customer brand engagement. The participants recognized that the development of relatable content contributed to customer commitment. The four participants’ responses related to each theme, and the effectiveness of the content used to engage with customers was confirmed. According to Osei-Frimpong and McLean (2018), an organization’s content determines the customers’ engagement. The participants emphasized that the focus on creating quality content is essential in developing customer relationships and brand awareness. The participants understood the importance of creating an authentic environment that encouraged meaningful interactions between customers rather than only using content that encourages customers to purchase the merchandise. P4 explained, “The goal is to create an online presence where customers have a positive online experience.” All of the participants indicated that creating a positive online presence was essential to gaining the competitive edge over the organization’s rivals, such as Amazon, eBay, Target.com and WalMart.com. P2 explained, “Responding to the postings is a way of showing that the customers are valued and appreciated.” P3 stated, “My staff and I encourage customers to repost in response to the exchange organization’s postings.” P4 indicated, “Updating content ensures a new look and assists in maintaining consumers' interests in shopping at their exchange, and it deters the customers from shopping on Amazon, Target.com, or any other potential competitor’s platform.”

Leung (2019) and Nastišin et al. (2019) stated that postings of visual content such as photos of people enjoying a product contributed to the high volume linked to an increase in customer engagement. The exchange leaders reviewed the photographic data collected from the social media platforms and noted that this data contributed to the organization by involving the customers in the use of these platforms. Lifestyle related visual content provided customers’ corroboration that others supported the products (Ihejirika et al., 2021). This means of customer involvement was a social media activity the participants discussed as a necessary element to encourage customer engagement on their social media platforms. P2 encouraged customers to post photos and videos sharing their memorable experiences shopping in the exchange for merchandise. P2 stated, “We are able to obtain some awesome photos from our customers using our merchandise displays during seasonal events, such as holiday promotions.” According to Pawsey et al. (2018), a “high customer engagement relates to customer satisfaction, seasonal events, and ordering online merchandise.” The participants revealed that customers posting photos and videos enjoying their products were an effective method for generating customer commitment. In analyzing the collected interview and document data, visual content encourages consumers' participation and heightens customer engagement. Overall, the exchange leaders accepted the use of the website platform as a tool to heighten customer engagement because they found it easy to implement and effective in reaching their customers which is done through computers, iPhones, iPads, and social media networks. Nistor (2019) also found that organizations' use of website platforms for marketing influenced customer engagement based on the adoption of technology promotions. In this study, the exchange leaders used customer engagement as a conceptual model to explore how the leaders in the retail organization use the social media platform. The data that were analyzed through collected sources from interviews and documents substantiated that usefulness encouraged the exchange consumers to use the website platform application to provide them with the convenience and the benefit of shopping online.

Theme 2: Potential Development of Substitutes

Potential development of substitutes, a concept from Porter's (2008) five forces model, was the second most often referenced strategy selected from the application findings for this study based on the data and the participants' responses. The potential development of substitutes of the organization is a strategy that the leaders used to reverse a decline in profits. The exchange leaders made a commitment to implement price matching, best price practices, and the savings from the purchase of substitutes. P2 remarked, "The customers value this policy and the sales tax savings associated with their purchase." Organizational leaders' acceptance of the value and implementation of potential development of substitutes as a marketing resource that is essential for leaders to use in reversing a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. P1 and P2 discussed the potential development of substitutes. For example, P1 stated, “I use best price strategy and brand selection by providing customers with an in-store exchange of select brands to purchase at a lower price than the name brand.” Also, all four participants indicated that social media platforms and use of the website for advertising and ordering merchandise were a benefit in increasing profits. For example, P3 stated, “The online shopping website made shopping quicker and more convenient shopping experience.” In addition, P2 noted, “We value the store loyalty resulting from price matching, best price practices, and the purchase of substitutes. These strategies keep customers from going to Target or Walmart.”

Theme 3: Bargaining Power of Consumers

The third professional practice consists of the concept from Porter’s (2008) five forces model, the bargaining power of consumers. Leaders understand that the strategies used to access and implement the bargaining power of consumers are a part of their overall marketing plan and require the use of the website platform strategies, customer engagement strategies, and price matching strategies. Organizational leaders understand that organizational strategies are developed to support the organization’s goals for organizational sustainability (F. Li et al., 2021). Exchange leaders understood the bargaining power of consumers by allowing their customers to provide input for the selected franchises in the mall area of the exchange. The exchange leaders noted that the customers’ suggestions for establishments such as Starbucks, GNC, Bath & Body Works, pharmacy facilities, barbershops, beauty salons, local vendors, and the food court had made a tremendous difference in the increase in profits. P3 indicated, “The selections of the franchise facilities in the mall area were essential in maintaining their customers and the profit success of the exchange.” Therefore, the exchange leaders understood that utilizing the influence of consumers as a strategy supported the goals and improved the sustainability of the exchange.

However, Szolnoki et al. (2018) found that some organizational leaders do not understand how to use the bargaining power of consumers. Similarly, ineffective use of social media marketing strategies damages leaders’ ability to achieve organizational profit goals (Szolnoki et al., 2018). The exchange leaders understood that the use of the online shopping platform improves the execution of the marketing plan that contributes to the organization’s sustainability.

The social media platform themes category and subthemes contribute directly to the strategies that leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. In responding to the interview questions, the participants’ responses referenced the following subthemes: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google (see Table 3). The participants described and discussed each subtheme that emerged from the theme category of the social media platform. Table 3 shows the percentage of the four participants’ responses that were related to the four subthemes and organizes them in descending order: Facebook received 40% of the four participants’ responses, Instagram, 25%, Twitter, 20%, and Google, 15%.

Table 3

Theme Category 3: Bargaining Power of Consumers

Theme categories	Number of participants	Related responses
Social media platform subthemes:		
Facebook	4	40%
Instagram	4	25%
Twitter	4	20%
Google	4	15%

Facebook. Facebook was one of the four subthemes (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google) associated with the main theme of social media platform strategy of the organizational leaders in the retail market. All participants agreed that their primary social media source was Facebook. Facebook is the most common platform that the retail market has used to engage with customers (Pucci et al., 2019). The participants contended that the main benefit of the interactive features of Facebook is to encourage customers' online communication to maximize brand awareness by involving consumers more often on the marketing platform.

P4 stated, "At the exchange, we use Facebook as the primary communication source to encourage customers' postings." According to Klassen et al. (2018), Facebook was the most common platform used for brand postings. In analyzing the data collected from the interviews and documents, the Facebook subtheme emerged in the exchange leaders' responses more frequently than Twitter or Instagram did and best supported their objectives of enhancing brand awareness.

All participants found that the Facebook platform allowed for access to more interactive features compared to the one interactive feature provided by both Instagram and Twitter. In reviewing the participants' Facebook accounts, I noted that P1 and P3 indicated that they have a total of 10 interactive features. P1 indicated, "The features allow communication among customers, uploading photos or videos, and responding to events." P3 indicated more interactive features, "In addition to simply advertising retail merchandise, Facebook gives people an experience: participating in virtual tours, reading and writing reviews, participating in contests and polls, and completing retail postings, and for the exchange, these are valuable tools to connect with customers." P1 mentioned, "The exchange uses Facebook's platform to engage with consumers and to promote the exchange brands." P1 mentioned, "The exchange used social media platform to engage with consumers and to promote its brands." The participants contended that the main benefit of the interactive features of Facebook was to encourage customers' online activity and communication to maximize brand awareness.

The exchange leaders and the consumers enjoyed their use of Facebook and the relationships that resulted in forming an online community. Marketing managers' use of Facebook benefits the development of a brand community that creates a place for participants who are eager to engage with like-minded brand supporters in forming cohesive relationships (Hsu, 2019). For example, P2 stated, "We have a tight Facebook community who regularly post and often attend events together." Strategic use of social media platforms by selecting the most appropriate tool to maximize developing relationships with customers is critical (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2018). Brand community members share stories about their experiences with the brands and develop relationships. Lund et al. (2018) found that social media storytelling is a powerful tool in developing global online social network brand communities. P1 explained, "Facebook is a social media platform used to exchange stories and form relationships with fellow brand supporters." Researchers have conducted studies about businesses' use of Facebook which continues to be the choice of consumers. Singh and Srivastava (2019) found that Facebook is efficient and convenient to use and confirmed the association of the theme bargaining power of consumers from Porter's (2008) five forces model to assessing leaders' and consumers' readiness to accept, and thus adopt, social media platforms. Singh and Srivastava (2019) found that Facebook is useful and easy to use. In this study, the findings supported that the exchange leaders used Facebook because it was easy to manage and effective in gaining access to potential customers and existing customers. In the conceptual framework, Porter's (2008) five forces model aligned with the exchange leaders' decision to use social media platforms that assisted in implementing effective strategies to retain and expand their customer base and, in turn, to increase profits and maintain sustainability.

Instagram. The social media platform of Instagram was the second subtheme. P4 noted, "People taking real-time photos of the store's facilities to post on Instagram has generated immediate engagement among the customers who appreciate the breath-taking photos of the lake and sunset behind the vineyards." P3 stated, "Instagram is great for spreading the word about the exchange." P4 contended, "Customers share photos of themselves shopping at the exchange with their friends on Instagram, and this influences them to use shopmyexchange.com resulting in new visitors to the exchange because of the beautiful and relaxing environment represented in the photos." P4 said, "I was fortunate to be able to showcase our jewelry showcases and soft lines presentation, and that has developed our area as the main tourist attraction at the retail organizations." Organizational leaders have used social media marketing to promote retail tours and have benefitted from the sales of the tours and retail purchases as a part of the social media marketing strategies (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019). P4 indicated, "When the customers share their positive experiences visiting the exchange facilities, it encourages others to tour their site." Researchers have found that social media marketing strategy has a significant benefit because online community members influence one another to act (Alzougool, 2019; Galati et al., 2019; Szolnoki et al., 2018). In analyzing the comments made on Instagram, there was evidence that supports customers are encouraged to visit the retail market because of the posted pictures of the retail organizations. Real-time engagement within the online community is a benefit of Instagram.

Twitter. Twitter allows users to read and quickly respond in text messages called tweets. Three out of five participants responded that Twitter is a useful social media platform. Tweets allowed users to have real-time engagement with one another. P4 said, "Twitter is effective to use for gaining quick feedback within the exchange and in any retail market." P4 noted, "There is a risk with gaining feedback quickly, specifically if the customers are not receptive to the retail merchandise selection." However, P4 added, "There haven't been any damaging postings concerning new releases or promotions." W. Kim and Chae (2018) found that Twitter was useful in developing customer relationships in the hotel industry because it allows hotel marketers to inform, engage, and resolve consumer complaints quickly. The ability of organizational leaders in the retail market to use Twitter as a tool to gain immediate feedback to assess customers' brand reactions is valuable.

Tweets are an electronic platform resulting in consumers obtaining information quickly. Similarly, P4 said, "Twitter is an effective word-of-mouth tool because using it resulted in gaining quick access to customer feedback at a lost cost." P2 stated, "The retail market has debated the pros and cons of using Twitter." P2 explained, "It has been advantageous to incorporate the application into our social media marketing strategy because we were releasing several new products and needed quick feedback from the customers." P4 stated, "I use Twitter to reach customers quickly to remind them of the sales of certain brands and locations of the stores to purchase the products." In analyzing the participants' Twitter accounts, data showed the usefulness of Twitter in promoting retail sales.

According to the participants, Twitter was an appropriate tool in various promotional campaigns. For example, in the review of the retail Twitter accounts, during the holidays and Christmas season, the exchange leaders used Twitter to promote the holiday sales. P2 stated, "Consumers exchanged numerous tweets about where to find the flavored ciders." P1 shared a benefit of Twitter, "Twitter accounts allowed the organizational leaders of the exchange to share information quickly with customers." P1, P2, P3, and P4 addressed the benefits of the use of social media for the exchange customers. For example, P3 explained, "Twitter is being utilized to advertise merchandise and services of the exchange." P4 commented, "Twitter is a useful application for marketers to gain feedback from their customers." P1, P2, P3, and P4 found that the customers' assessments of brands on Twitter allowed them to evaluate the responses and make quick changes to their merchandise selections. P1 noted, "The customers' responses on Twitter and other platforms are also evaluated by the buyers located at Headquarters in Dallas, Texas." P1, P2, P3, and P4 found that customers' brand assessments on Twitter allowed them to evaluate the responses and make quick changes to their merchandise selections. The participants indicated that the challenge of using Twitter was the difficulty to respond to their customers' tweets immediately. Similar to the other three participants, P3 remarked, "Responding to postings on Twitter quickly was necessary to support continued engagement with our customers." P1 and P2 used Twitter as a part of their social media platform strategy. P2, who said that "Twitter was time-consuming," stated, "We lacked time to manage a Twitter account along with managing the tasting room promotional events." According to Sitta et al. (2018), an organization's failure to respond to customers promptly derailed the brand management team's goal to demonstrate their support of customers' valuable feedback. As a result of the continuous engagement, the participants noted that Twitter was another social media platform used by consumers, yet as P3 advised, "It is necessary to avoid the potential risk of customer disengagement by not responding promptly to their tweets." Although time management in posting a response was a consideration in using Twitter, Twitter was a useful platform for consumers. Organizational leaders' acknowledgment of the benefits and risks of using Twitter is an essential consideration in selecting the most appropriate application for meeting the organization's marketing strategy (Alzougool, 2019**).** Overall, the benefits for using Twitter as a search engine are that it provides a news source and a shopping platform.

In this study, the exchange leaders identified that the Twitter social media application was time-consuming. The participants indicated that evaluating the usefulness of Twitter was not an easy decision compared to choosing Facebook and Instagram applications. The data revealed the four participants' unanimous support for the use of Facebook and Instagram, but they were less supportive of the use of Twitter as indicated by the lower percentage of related responses.

Google. In contrast to the assessment of the other two participants, P1 and P2 did not find Google easy to use, so the level of response was lower than that of the previous subthemes in social media marketing. The application of the conceptual framework of the Porter's (2008) five forces model to this study aligns with the themes and subthemes highlighted in this study and addresses the use of Google. In Porter's (2008) five forces model, the concept of the bargaining power of consumers provided a framework for explaining how P1, P2, P3, and P4 recognized Google platforms as useful to consumers as they shop, but only P2 and P4 expressed the value of the use of Google platforms "to evaluate shopping trends" as P2 said and to "assess their effect on profits" as P4 said. For example, the participants all pointed out that they would see customers using Google with iPhones and iPads in and outside of the exchange to research and evaluate merchandise and brands. Therefore, the discovery of the relative reluctance of the exchange leaders to use the Google application was a surprise as reported in Table 3 with Google having accounted for 15% of the responses as compared to 20% for Twitter, 25% for Instagram and 40% for Facebook. Google is an integral part of the social media marketing strategy, and none of the data in the literature review suggested that monitoring the application was time-consuming. The study findings revealed that Google was a related subtheme in relationship to the theme derived from the conceptual framework of the Porter's (2008) five forces model, bargaining power of consumers. The concept derived from the model was associated with the results of this study because of the assiduous planning that all participants performed to communicate with customers, gain access to potential customers, and promote brand awareness. The study participants understood their customers' needs and strategically selected the platform to engage with their customers. Strategic use of the platforms by selecting the appropriate platform aligned to the marketing goal is critical (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2018). The participants acknowledged that having one person to manage the social media marketing strategy was necessary because of the significant time required to manage the platforms. The participants' strategic planning was a successful factor in the effective use of the bargaining power of consumers, a theme from the conceptual framework of the Porter's (2008) five forces model. Customers use social media in the retail market for various reasons. One reason a retail customer uses social media is to gather information to enhance their ability to make an informed purchasing decision (Galati et al., 2019; Szolnoki et al., 2018).

Consequently, the participants agreed that social media platforms were designed to support the exchange of information with their customers. In this study, the data collected from the interviews and the documents including promotional-advertisement documents, profits and earnings results, and exchange credit card trends were analyzed. As a result of the findings, the exchange leaders recognized the use of social media platforms to communicate with customers and to promote brand awareness. Alzougool (2019) acknowledged that organizational leaders overseas used social media as a marketing strategy because they found that the applications are easy to use for communicating and useful in providing information to consumers. The adoption of a social media platform contributes to organizational leaders benefitting from the application's effectiveness as a tool for communicating with customers in the global marketplace.

The exchange leaders' overall use of social media platform strategies was related to the conceptual framework of Porter's (2008) five forces model. Grigore (2015) found that Porter's (2008) five forces model supported the users' commitment to employ the themes because of the efficiency and convenience in using the online platforms. Likewise, the subthemes influenced the exchange leaders' use of the applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google that were elements of their social media platform strategies. The leaders were able to use social media technology easily and found it useful in increasing the customers' brand awareness to maximize competitive advantage. The participants agreed that effective management of social media platforms requires at least one designated exchange leader along with a staff to manage the strategy because of the time-consuming element of implementing social media strategy. The social media platform strategy served as an essential component of the overall social media marketing strategy of the leaders in the retail market in developing growth opportunities. The conceptual framework for this study was Porter's (2008) five forces model. The three themes that emerged from the data analysis are rivalry among existing competitors, potential development of substitutes, and bargaining power of consumers. In this study, Porter's (2008) five forces model was the selected model because its usage helped in identifying the strategies that exchange leaders had used for organizational sustainability resulting from a decline in profits.

Applications to Professional Practice

The results of this study apply to the professional practices of how exchange leaders in the retail industry effectively used the social media platform strategy. The use of social media platforms provided the exchange leaders insight into the benefits of the development of social media platform strategies and the targeting of opportunities in the market. The efficient use of social media platforms supported leaders in the exchange organization in (a) realizing the different characteristics of the social media platforms, (b) selecting the appropriate social media platform, and (c) having a designated staff member to manage the social media platforms (Agarwal, 2018). The findings also provided exchange leaders valuable insight into the use of the social media platform strategies that the exchange leaders utilized.

The first professional practice selected as a theme was the rivalry among existing competitors. The participants in the study used the theme of rivalry among existing competitors to assess website platforms for customer engagement that consisted of developing customer relationships, gaining insight into customers' merchandise needs, and fostering an online community. Chen and Lin (2019) found that an organization's focus on the rivalry among existing competitors such as engaging with customers, providing interactive activities, and advertising online merchandise resulted in enhanced merchandise awareness, increased users' purchases, and a competitive advantage. Leaders' practical application of this study included the use of rivalry among existing competitors with technology to improve the customer engagement resulting in merchandise awareness and to maximize a competitive advantage to reverse a decline in profits.

The second professional practice selected as a theme was potential development of substitutes. The analysis of the findings for this study was the potential development of substitutes, a concept from Porter's (2008) five forces model, as this theme applied to the exchange leaders' use of strategies to reverse a decline in profits. The participants discussed the benefits of utilizing price matching, best-price practices, and no sales tax deals to increase customer satisfaction in their marketing practices. Organizational leaders' acceptance of the value and implementation of potential development of substitutes as a marketing resource was an essential tool for customers to purchase exchange brands at a lower cost to maintain the loyalty of the customer base. P1, P2, and P4 discussed the potential development of substitutes with best-price strategy and brand selection for customers by providing customers with an in-store exchange offering when there was a price comparison of competitors in the retail industry.

The third professional practice consisted of the bargaining power of consumers. The exchange leaders understood that the bargaining power of consumers was a part of their overall marketing plan and required the use of social media platforms and customer engagement. These allowed consumers to compare competitors' pricing with that of the exchange and negotiate best price or price reduction on merchandise and brands. In addition**,** the exchange leaders understood that organizational strategies are developed to support the organization's goals for sustainability. The exchange leaders' positive experience supported the inclusion of the online shopping platform of shopmyexchange.com into marketing plans that they used to reverse the decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. The exchange leaders understood that the online shopping platform of shopmyexchange.com improved the execution of the marketing plan that contributed to the organization's sustainability.

Overall, the application of this study to professional practices adds to the existing literature by providing evidence of organizational leaders' effective use of social media marketing strategies to enhance brand awareness and competitive advantage. The data analysis revealed the themes of how the exchange leaders used customer engagement strategy, social media platform strategy, and targeted marketing strategy to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. As a result of the profits, the study revealed to the exchange leaders that the strategy was effective with the use of online shopping through the shopmyexchange.com platform. This study included the application of Porter's (2008) five forces model as the conceptual framework, which has been used in prior literature to explore the strategies the leaders used to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable that has been a concern of the organization. In the review of the current literature on organizations' adoption of website platforms, the findings expand the scope of the literature and knowledge of organizations' effective use of strategies to reverse a decline in profits.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change include the effect on workers in the exchange and the level of service to military families and veterans who depend on exchange services. The economic benefits of improving organizational performance could include pay increases, job retention or creation, and sustainment of the organization (Hazim et al., 2018; Mullet, 2018; Stoyanova & Iliev, 2017; X. Wang & Zeng, 2017). Leaders of financially successful organizations provide communities and employees with secure employment opportunities and may decrease unemployment rates (Hazim et al., 2018).

The results of this study could provide leaders with the organizational knowledge and background to support the service members, their families, and the retiree population in maintaining the organizational performance. The research findings could also prove useful for future leaders in decision-making and could provide leaders with alternatives that will sustain the financial performance and social status of an organization. The humanitarian benefits of improving organizational performance include pay increases, job retention or creation, and sustainment of the organization (D. Wang et al., 2017; Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2020). The findings can provide support to the retail organizations, military members, their families, and the veterans of the armed forces.

Recommendations for Action

In the era of technology advancement, leveraging numerous channels to disseminate information electronically is integral to a successful business. The internet accounts, the website, and the use of social media have provided business leaders with new opportunities to market and engage with consumers (Sitta et al., 2018). The three themes that emerged from the data analysis were rivalry among existing competitors, potential development of substitutes, and bargaining power of consumers. The study depicted the application of social media as a useful tool for organizational leaders' implementation of effective social media strategies. Based on the findings obtained from data collected through interviews, organizational documents, and member checking, emerging themes included the rivalry among existing competitors, the potential development of substitutes, and the bargaining power of consumers. The three themes directly contributed to the strategies that the exchange leaders used to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

The first recommendation for action is associated with customer engagement. Organizational leaders are identifying means to create content to attract, engage, and retain consumers (Balan & Rege, 2017). Retail organizations' leaders need to understand how to develop relatable content. For example, the study's findings showed that inviting customers to post their photos of their shopping experiences increased customer engagement resulting in the purchase of select brands. According to Tajudeen et al. (2018), social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter allow for a convenient application of content to engage with customers. Social media techniques exist to assist in developing quality content that affects the customers' behavior and encourages customer engagement (Wibowo et al., 2021). The study's findings suggested that leaders should use a software application such as iPhones to assist customers and to develop Facebook content that will result in gaining and retaining customers' attention. Organizational leaders should review this study, assess their business practices, and incorporate the applications that have successfully engaged customers resulting in enhanced select brand awareness and competitive advantage strategies.

The second recommendation for action relates to organizational leaders' management of social media platform strategies. There are three key elements of managing social media platform strategies that organizational leaders in the retail market should consider: (a) realizing the different characteristics of the social media platforms, (b) selecting the appropriate social media platform, and (c) having a designated staff member to manage the social media platforms (Agarwal, 2018). Organizational leaders who are considering producing and marketing retail should review the results of this study on successful strategies that the participants of this study used.

The exchange leaders in the study operationalized and understood the different characteristics of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, resulting in the use of social media platforms as the most appropriate application for reaching their customers. Dolan et al. (2019) found that understanding customers' posting patterns assisted retail leaders in maximizing engagement with their Facebook customers. Organizational leaders in the retail market should increase their knowledge about the different types of social media platforms and select the one that aligns to the most effective resource to engage with customers. According to the exchange leaders, selecting the most appropriate social media platform was a key element in managing social media platforms.

The participants agreed that Facebook was their primary social media application because it allows for longer postings to deliver information and provides customers a means to shop with convenience. Twitter is a great source for posting announcements and photos to gain customers' feedback quickly (W. Kim & Chae, 2018). The four exchange leaders used Twitter to launch and advertise merchandise to ensure customer brand awareness. Organizational leaders in the retail market should utilize the findings of this study to develop effective social media platform strategies that assist in maximizing their promotional objectives and increasing select brand awareness and organizational profits.

The participants maintained that strategic management of social media platforms was a success factor to the development of effective social media marketing strategies. The tasks to identify the social platforms, design content, post content, respond to postings, and monitor the social platforms' networks require time. As a result of the various tasks, the study participants recommended that fellow business leaders assign a designated person to manage the social media marketing strategies. Galati et al. (2019) reported that organizations that are successful in implementing their social media marketing strategies have a designated knowledgeable staff member assigned to oversee the social media platforms. The management of a comprehensive social media strategy includes planning, creating, and controlling messaging. Strategic planning is necessary to ensure effective implementation of social media marketing strategies.

The participants acknowledged that to have an effective marketing strategy, organizational leaders need designated leaders to assist with the management of social media platforms. Organizational leaders in the retail market must assess the benefits of assigning leaders to manage social media marketing strategies leaders can use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

The third recommendation for action is to use targeted marketing strategy and identify the customers who are most likely to become potential customers. Pucci et al. (2019) found that target segmentation was a critical business practice for leaders in the industry to ensure meeting their customers' needs. The participants in this study identified their targeted audience and agreed that developing tailored messages that focused on a specific audience. This strategy allowed the exchange leaders to quickly gain the attention of specific retail markets. Organizational leaders in the retail industry need to identify their targeted customers and understand their needs. The exchange leaders identified merchandise and brand selection to meet customers' demands. The exchange leaders often expanded their product lines to include merchandise to attract and retain customers. The organizational leaders in the retail market should use the findings of this study as a guide to enhance their targeted marketing strategies to increase brand awareness and revenue along with savings from the purchase of substitutes. The study's findings revealed that the exchange leaders used influencers to gain access to new customers and enhance brand awareness. Using influencers is an effective marketing strategy to foster online brand engagement and increase sales (Hughes et al., 2019). The findings in this study supported that influencers were successfully utilized to expand the customer base and to raise awareness about different brands thus reversing a decline in profits and strengthening sustainability. The use of influencers is a targeted marketing strategy that organizational leaders in the retail market can use to expand their customer base and develop a competitive advantage to enhance the sustainability of their business.

There are several methods to disseminate the research study's findings. The participants of the study will receive a summary of the study and research findings. The ProQuest/UMI dissertation database will house the published version of the doctoral study for review. I intend to present the findings at business conferences and training programs in the retail market. One goal is to submit the dissertation to academic publications.

Recommendations for Further Research

The information and findings for this study were derived from asking what strategies some of the retail organization's leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. The study had two limitations. First, this qualitative single case study was limited in that the leaders who participated in the interviews were leaders of a single exchange located in the Northeast United States. The results of this study will be generalizable beyond the exchange organization to include other competitors in the industry. The recommendation is to further study outside of the Northeast region to explore the strategies some leaders use to reverse a decline in profits to remain sustainable.

The second limitation was that the study collected information from the exchange leaders, and some of their responses might include different strategies that leaders use to reverse a decline in profits. For example, T. J. Walker et al. (2017) pointed out that limitations include leaders’ experiences and beliefs that could affect a study's results. Thus, I recommended expanding the study of what strategies some leaders use to reverse a decline in profits to add the goal of remaining sustainable. Researching strategies to reverse a decline in profits might also provide insight to the strategies that leaders use to remain sustainable.

Reflections

After I started my DBA journey, the people around me did not understand my drive or the reasoning for continuing my education. They did not understand why a career military member would want to continue with school instead of planning for retirement, traveling, and planning to enjoy life after the service. However, the DBA journey was not theirs to understand, but mine to achieve. When I started the journey, I did not realize the amount of work, writing, and time required for achieving this goal. This journey has been challenging and demanding yet rewarding and fulfilling. I am proud of myself for being able to persevere, gain confidence, and overcome all of the challenges faced in reaching this milestone in life.

My employment as a manager led to my interest in exploring the strategies that some exchange leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. My research has allowed me to identify the themes involved in developing and implementing leadership strategies needed for organizational sustainability. Leaders are continuously striving to understand the numerous benefits of gathering data for organizational sustainability.

Conclusion

The data collection method in this study was through semistructured interviews and the review of documents from an organization in the Northeast United States. The gathering of the data was to understand the strategies leaders use to reverse a decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. The collection and analysis of the data revealed three themes: rivalry among existing competitors, potential development of substitutes, and bargaining power of consumers. These three themes are related to strategies for the successful implementation and use of competitive advantage strategies for the leadership of the organization.

The results of this study confirmed that the use of competitive advantage strategies is essential to maintaining organizational sustainability. Retail organization's leaders could benefit by identifying and implementing strategies to compete in the rivalry among existing competitors and to achieve organizational sustainability. The participants expressed that communicating directly with the consumers led to a reversal of the decline in profits and improved sustainability. The use of the social media platforms allowed the exchange leaders to evaluate how the strategies that were related to the three themes aligned to customer engagement in using shopmyexchange.com. The use of this social media platform directly led to a reversal of the decline in profits and a strengthening of sustainability.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interviewee:

Time of Interview:

Date:

Position of Interviewee:

I will use a qualitative single case study to research strategies that exchange leaders use for organizational sustainability. The interviewees will consist of organizational leaders who have made decisions concerning strategies used to reverse the decline in profits in order to remain sustainable. The intent of this study is to explore the strategies exchange leaders use to reverse the decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

Interview Questions:

The interview questions will consist of the following:

1. What strategies do you, as an exchange leader, use to reverse a decline in profits?
2. What strategies do you use to sustain profits when considering the existing competition?
3. What strategies do you use to sustain profits with a threat of new entry competitors?
4. How do you assess the effectiveness of the bargaining power of suppliers in order to sustain profits?
5. What challenges do you experience with the development or use of substitute products in order to sustain profits?
6. How do you measure or evaluate the success of the bargaining power of consumers in order to sustain profits?

7. What additional information would you like to provide about strategies leaders use to reverse trends in profit declines in order to remain sustainable?

I will thank each participant and remind them again that no incentive is associated with this study; however; they will be provided a summary of the findings at the initial interpretation stage. I will also advise them that I will contact them in a couple of weeks with my interpretations of their responses, so they can comment on them and provide their input about the relevance and accuracy of the interpretations. During this member checking period, I will ask each participant if there is any additional information that needs to be added to assist with clarity, relevance, or accuracy to those interpretations of the information.

Appendix B: Email Study Invitation and Follow-up

I am David Johnson, a doctoral student at Walden University. I am sending this message to invite you to take part in a research study exploring [identifying] what strategies exchange leaders use for organizational sustainability. Your name and contact information were obtained through the Human Resources office of a local exchange located in the Northeast. I am inviting leaders who have been successful in exploring and identifying strategies that some exchange leaders use for organizational sustainability. Interested exchange leaders must have 5 years or more of experience working for an exchange for which the sales data indicate that its leaders have successfully used strategies to reverse the decline in profits in order to remain sustainable.

If you are willing to participate in the research study as described, reply to this message. I will follow up to schedule an interview location and time convenient for you. I would also be pleased to answer any questions via email or phone.

Thank you for your consideration.

David Johnson

david.johnson10@waldenu.edu

Follow-up email 7 days after initial communication:

Hello *participant name,*

I know how busy schedules can be and the demand for time, so I wanted to follow up in case you are still considering participating in this voluntary research study. If you are interested in participating and feel that you understand the study well enough to decide about your involvement, please send me a response in an email or a phone call stating that you have read the above information and understand the study well enough to decide about your involvement. You will give me your verbal consent at the beginning of the interview, stating that you understand and agree to the terms described above. I look forward to your response.

David Johnson

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