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Strategies to Generate Innovation for Profit Gains of U.S.-based Global Retailing

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Strategies to Generate Innovation for Profit Gains of U.S.-based Global Retailing

Businesses

by

Kazue Goto

MBA, Southern New Hampshire University, 2015

BA, San Jose State University, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2022

Abstract

Ineffective innovation strategies can negatively affect profit gains of U.S.-based global

retailing companies (USGRC). Leaders in the retailing industry who fail to use strategies

to generate innovation for profit gains can experience decreased profitability. Grounded

in the dynamic theory of strategy, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was

to explore strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains.

Participants included six USGRC leaders in California, who used strategies to generate

innovation for profit gains. Data were collected from semistructured interviews, company

documents and analyzed using thematic data analysis. Three themes emerged: customer-

centric opportunity identification strategy, differentiation strategy, and firm-level value

creation strategy. A key recommendation for business leaders is to set a workflow to

formulate innovation activities from invention to firm-level culture alignment. The

implications for positive social change include the potential to improve the quality of life

of members of the community by creating new products and services that meet their

needs.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to educators at De Anza College, California, where I sat in classrooms where they demonstrated their passion for teaching and inspired me to take my life in my own hands and raise my living standards by pursuing higher education. I was raised in a town in Japan where many young female students were and are still encouraged to follow a traditional lifestyle without realizing what would be possible in their lives. I was one of them. One day, I realized there could be another way of living if I took a different path. I spent the next few years preparing to become a self-funded, international student and started a program at De Anza College in January 2000. I was influenced to change my academic goals from pursuing a two-year college certificate to a four-year university degree, where I majored in environmental studies with a mathematics minor. The shift has enabled lasting change in my life. With a university degree, I entered a global working environment to help advance social development with data technologies. I was also qualified to enter an M.B.A. program and use this doctorate level opportunity to diversify my options to serve others in global communities.

I dedicate this work to young people not only in Japan, but also any countries, who were born and raised in the environment where pursuing higher education is not encouraged due to economic, political, or cultural reasons. Finally, I dedicate this work to my parents, Kazuko and Shoichi Goto, who I would also like to thank from the bottom of my heart. They have shown a simple way to get things done through their Zen-based daily living. I have learned self-reliance, hard work, and a beginner's mind approach to life.

Acknowledgments

On my journey, I coordinated a dual career to work full-time and meet financial needs, which was not an easy path. This journey would not be possible without the help from people in my life. I am thankful to them and wish to take a moment to express my highest appreciation.

First, I sincerely thank my dissertation committee. I especially thank Dr. Mohamad S. Hammoud, my Chair, and other committee members for their outstanding scholarly leadership and supervision, as well as Dr. Richard Hay, my academic advisor, for providing his immediate support and insights, which were highly detailed. It has been a real honor and a privilege working with them.

I also deeply thank the interview participants in this study. These leaders voluntarily participated and constructively shared their leadership thinking to support my educational cause. Thank you for your inspiration and leadership influence! To my friends, Eileen and Alan Donaldsons: Thank you so much for your immense support since my first day attending DeAnza College. I am forever grateful for your presence as best friends. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the people in my everyday life across the globe who I relied on and received valuable guidance from, some of whom I met only on a few occasions and was deeply inspired by. I am lucky to have had such wonderful people around me who I could not have done without. To my current employer, Twitter: Thank you for creating the working culture to balance between work and life, within which we have been able to diversify our choices to continue higher education and contribute movements causing positive social change.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Leaders who generate innovation for profit gains can enhance the capacity of business continuity in relentlessly changing market conditions (Christensen et al., 2016; McDonald & Eisenhardt, 2020). In this section, I develop the foundation of the study to explore strategies that leaders of U.S.-based global retailing companies use to generate innovation for profit gains. I address business problems, purpose of the study, interview questions, significance of the study, business and social contributions, and review of the existing literature.

Background of the Problem

Some researchers have depicted the recent market conditions as highly risky and complex using terms such as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous to describe the markets (Schoemaker et al., 2018). Due to the 2020 World Pandemic, leaders in the U.S. Government have changed regulations for supporting safety and economic continuity (State of New York, 2020; The White House, 2020). Many experts perceive retailing businesses to be one of the most affected business segments impacted by the uncertain market (Alikhani et al., 2021; Farren & Makhija, 2021; Reeves & Whitaker, 2020).

U.S. retailing business owners generated roughly 25% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) and the total retail sales grew nearly 22% from 2007 to 2016 (The World Bank, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). In 2021, however, many leaders in the U.S. retailing industry noticed a declining profitability trend (Sides & Skelly, 2021). The declining factor could be the increased operation cost because many leaders had to apply more complex and expensive retailing applications to remain competitive in the

marketplace (Sides & Skelly, 2021). For example, leaders applied several patterns to take

advantage of the digitalization applications to enable customer friendly offerings. One

way to do this was to acquire digital capacities to eliminate middleman layers in the retail

operation for pricing reduction (Jin & Shin, 2020; Sides & Skelly, 2021). Another way

was to offer highly customized products through advanced demand forecasting by

adapting artificial intelligence technologies (Jin & Shin, 2020; Sides & Skelly, 2021).

Therefore, leaders in the retailing industry have and must continue innovate their existing

retailing practices to sustain profitability (Bogers et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2018; Henriksen

et al., 2018; Schoemaker et al., 2018; Teece, 2018). However, many leaders of global

retailing might not create innovative businesses for better profit gains (Cao et al., 2018;

Christensen et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2020).

Problem Statement

Organizational leaders of global companies can fail to enhance corporate

profitability when these leaders overlook innovation practices (Kapoor & Klueter, 2020).

From a leadership perspective, only 50% of innovation practices at global companies are

perceived as profitable (Dobni & Klassen, 2020). The general business problem is that

some leaders of U.S.-based global retailing companies (USGRC) fail to use innovation to

create competitive advantage and improve profitability. The specific business problem is

that some business leaders of USGRC lack strategies to generate innovation for profit

gains.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains. The population was business leaders in six USGRC in California who have used strategies to generate innovation for profit gains. The potential for effecting positive social change is through enabling firms to support local economic development. For example, people in a community might have greater job opportunities because more employment opportunities can be generated from the new retailing practices. People might also have greater access to the products that are manufactured for enhancing social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Nature of the Study

My selected research method was the qualitative method. Researchers use the qualitative method as an inductive research approach to explore social phenomena (Fàbregues et al., 2021; Frandsen et al., 2021) and to develop a deep understanding of management strategies and practices by conducting interviews with open-ended questions (Döringer, 2021). I selected the qualitative method because I wanted to explore management strategies through open-ended interview questions and document review. Researchers use quantitative and mixed methods to focus on testing theory with data (Fàbregues et al., 2021). Because the purpose of this study was to explore strategies and not to test theories, a quantitative or mixed method would not be appropriate. Therefore, I concluded that a qualitative method was appropriate for this study.

Using a qualitative multiple case study enables researchers to address an existing business phenomenon utilizing multiple types of evidence (Yin, 2017). The case study is a valid research design that is used extensively in the field of management (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A multiple case study was a better fit for this research because the purpose of the study was to explore business phenomena, such as successful strategies, employing multiple data sources. As a consideration of other design options, researchers use ethnography to observe cultures in organizations, and phenomenology to describe life histories and the meanings of personal experiences of individuals with phenomena (Walford, 2020). However, these designs are not effective designs to fully understand themes or patterns of business phenomena, including but not limited to strategic choices taken by the USGRC leaders. Thus, I selected a multiple qualitative case study with six cases to develop better evidence for supporting my research findings.

Research Question

What strategies do leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains?

Interview Questions

- What strategies have you used to generate innovation for profit gains?

- What have the drivers of your innovation practices been?

- How have you determined key drivers for enhancing your competitive advantages in the industry and competitors?

- What tools have you used to monitor and control the implementation of your strategies?

- What have the key challenges been to integrate the innovation processes into overall corporate strategy?

- How has your organization addressed key challenges to integrate the innovation processes into overall corporate strategies?

- What other information would you like to share regarding strategies you use to generate innovation for profit gains?

Conceptual Framework

I selected the dynamic theory of strategy as the conceptual framework for my study. Michael E. Porter (1979) built a model of competition in early works before later adopting the model to build the theory of strategy for attaining and maintaining competitive advantage. Porter defined key drivers for studying industry competitors and summarized five-force as key determinants of the industry competition. Threat of new entrants is a driver that causes some changes in market competition in pricing, costing, and funding (Porter, 1991). Additionally, leaders make entry decisions by considering key items such as economic scaling, investment capacity, research and development (R&D), and policy advantages (Porter, 1991, 2008). Bargaining power of suppliers is another driver to determine power levels of suppliers over companies (Porter, 2008). When suppliers gain higher power than companies, costs of the products and services can increase (Pervan et al., 2018). The power of buyers is the driver to determine power levels of customers over suppliers (Porter, 2008). When buyers gain higher power than suppliers, costs of the products and services can be decreased (Pervan et al., 2018). The threat of substitute products or services is also a driver to diminish market share by using

products with similar features (Porter, 2008). Rivalry among existing competitors is a driver that typically causes lowering profitability because of market competition (Porter, 2008). Some of the key competing activities that cause lower profitability are price reductions, increasing costs of marketing campaigns, and service offerings (Porter, 2008).

The theory of strategy was built to provide a clear understanding of the complexities in the organizational competitive atmosphere. Porter (1991) asserted that a competitive advantage model can also be seen as a dynamic system influenced by key determinants. In this system, each determinant is no longer separately expressed; so, the effects of other determinants should be considered to predict overall results (Porter, 1991). Therefore, I expected that the dynamic theory of strategy conceptual framework would provide a means for me to understand the strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains.

Operational Definitions

Ambiguous market. In an ambiguous market, people do not know the next outcome because of unfamiliarity (Cousins, 2018).

Complex market. In a complex market, organizational leaders should internally and externally demonstrate strategic leadership and navigate their audiences in a highly diverse market structure (Burk, 2019).

Uncertain market. Technology, ecosystems, and business models are the key sources of uncertainty in business markets (Kapoor & Klueter, 2020). When uncertainty increases, failure rates of the existing strategy practices increase, and leaders need to raise

individual and organizational capacities to reduce its impact on the organization (Schoemaker et al., 2018).

Unitary form. Unitary form is a business model designed to centralize the organizational structure, which includes functional departments such as manufacturing, finance, sales, and marketing (Fligstein, 1985).

Volatile market. A volatile market is a changing, unstable, or erratic market (Cousins, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs that researchers unconsciously validate based on their sociopolitical values without realization (Bansal et al., 2018). In this study, I made four assumptions. I assumed that I would gain enough trust from participants by sharing how I handled their privacy and confidentiality. I also assumed that the study participants would have the professional expertise earned through developing and using strategies to generate innovation for profit gains. I assumed that the participants would honestly respond to the interview questions. Finally, I assumed that the participants were willing to disclose needed and trustworthy information.

Limitations

Study limitations can be seen as weaknesses of the research that researchers cannot eliminate (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Researchers must acknowledge all the study limitations and help readers understand the research practices truthfully (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). Although many researchers

only present potential limitations, some experts suggested including contexts and alternative approaches to best mitigate study limitations for the benefit of future research efforts (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019). I acknowledged the following limitations in this study. The sample size of six participants could limit generation of the needed data, access to the best knowledge for this study, and generalization of the study's findings. Another limitation was that the participants might have limited communication skills to fully share their knowledge in a detailed manner that could not be reviewed and corrected. In addition, participants might be unable to remember certain information or accurately remember the events.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the study boundaries of the research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Researchers set the boundaries to articulate the scope of the study and highlight the core reasoning and philosophical framework (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In this study, I developed the following delimitations. The first delimitation was the study topic. I selected a topic regarding strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains. The second delimitation was the study location, which was California. Other delimitations may include age and accessibility, as I selected participants who were at least 18 years of age and had IT capacity to use one of the live communication methods such as Skype, Zoom, or GoogleMeet to share their interview responses.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

Business leaders can use the findings of this study to update strategies to enhance corporate profitability. Some of these leaders may also fail to successfully create innovative business models (Christensen et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2020) because of limited business insights of innovation strategy practices. Business leaders can apply research results when they craft a strategy to improve an organizational culture and catalyze innovative business models for enhancing business profitability.

Implications for Social Change

Positive social change is the process of shifting patterns of an individual or group of individuals to produce beneficial outcomes that are positive for themselves and their living environment (Freudenreich et al., 2020). When more retail leaders master strategies to adopt innovative business models, they can further enhance their contribution to economic, social, and environmental improvements through their business practices. For example, when more retail leaders advance the existing business models, greater financial rewards can be expected, and more economic resources can be available for local community development. These business improvements can be perceived as catalysts for positive social change. People in communities might have more significant job opportunities because more jobs can be generated from the new retailing practices. People might also have greater access to the products that are manufactured to enhance social, economic, and environmental values.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains. From a leadership perspective, only 50% of innovation practices at global companies are profitable (Dobni & Klassen, 2020). Most existing innovation strategies will improve (Pantano et al., 2018). This qualitative multiple case study was designed to assess the fundamental question: What strategies do leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains?

In a literature review, researchers acquire in-depth knowledge of the specialized topic (Paul & Criado, 2020; Snyder, 2019). Researchers tend to think certain review tasks such as scoping, analysis, synthesis, and discussion are challenging (Paul & Criado, 2020; Snyder, 2019). However, researchers gain awareness of the linkage between the literature review, the research question, and the support information for other sections of the paper, which justify the review process (Paul & Criado, 2020; Snyder, 2019). Researchers study key items (i.e., scopes, goals, perspectives, coverages, organizations, and audiences) in existing literature, gain diverse perspectives, and identify primary issues, including methodological problems of the topic (Nakano & Muniz Jr., 2018; Paul & Criado, 2020; Snyder, 2019).

Literature Review Strategy

In this literature review, the resources were both digital and nondigital formats of academic and professional journals, books, databases, and websites; most of the resources for the literature review derived from the Walden University Online Library. The main

databases utilized included ABI/INFORM Complete, Business Source Complete, Emerald Journal Management, Google Scholar, SAGE Premier, and ScienceDirect. The keywords used to search the literature included *innovation, competitive strategy, business model innovation, retailing innovation strategy, retailing value chain, retailing transformation, retailer profitability, US retailing, global retailing,* and *organizational culture for innovation*. Eighty five percent of the cited references were from peer-reviewed journals, and 82% of the references were published between 2018 and 2022.

This literature review included six themes that can help address the research question: What strategies do leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains? The six themes were conceptual framework, relevant theories, theory of strategies, innovation, U.S.-based global retailing market, and strategic choices used by USGRC to generate innovation. Information synthesis and conceptual reasoning can help build perspectives and primary issues for addressing the research question.

Conceptual Framework

Researchers should manage complex tasks when finding study results. The conceptual framework can be a structure, which researchers adopt as an existing approach to organize the research items such as topic discovery, research design, data collection, analysis, and rationalization (Frandsen et al., 2021). These researchers also gain a specific angle of understanding to further formulate research processes and questions to produce in-depth knowledge (Frandsen et al., 2021). The dynamic theory of strategy, which was selected as the conceptual framework for this study, was chosen to help facilitate understanding of the strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate

innovation for profit gains. This section contains a literature review discussing and elaborating on key factors of business environments such as organizational and industrial conditions. The review contained two issues of the existing framework, as well as some root causes of the issues.

Business leaders might experience failure as a result of their business practices without considering industry competition in the relevant business environments, largely because they lack relevant information in their strategic practices. Some researchers view competition as a critically important concept (Ghemawat, 2002; Porter, 1979). When leaders consider competition, these leaders tend to elaborate key factors of a business, strengthen their strategic practices, and improve their profit in a highly dynamic and complex environment (Ghemawat, 2002; Porter, 1979). Some researchers adopt competitive aspects to organize the research findings and identify useful business practices to produce depth knowledge.

During the industrialization of the nineteenth century, some leaders who considered a market competition applied a large-scale production model and increased the profits based on the firm theory (Kay, 2018). These leaders practiced various economic models such as economies of scale and scope to increase their advantages over competitors by scaling the production, lowering the costs, and gaining higher profits (Ghemawat, 2002; Kay, 2018). When more leaders adapted these cost-focused economic approaches, the early adopters of those economic approaches could no longer maintain the financial advantage over their competitors (Ghemawat, 2002; Kay, 2018). The

researchers, who considered competition as a factor, could angle the needs of alternative approaches in the business practices.

More business leaders adapted global operations to gain profits in the international market in the postwar boom in Asia and Europe after the 1950s (Ghemawat, 2002). In the international realm of competition, some leaders differentiated their business practices, whereas other leaders continued to rely on the cost-focused economic models (Ghemawat, 2002). More leaders adapted a multidivisional form (M-form) to manage diverse product units in international locations and decentralized their existing operations (Fligstein, 1985; Ghemawat, 2002; Kay, 2018). Some leaders adapted horizontal and vertical diversification, ultimately combining the economic and business models in their business practices (Fligstein, 1985; Teece, 2010).

Many researchers valued competitive thinking in the research communities as a critical concept for assessing business profitability as a corporate strategy practice (Fligstein, 1985; Ghemawat, 2002; Porter, 1979; Teece, 2010). Some researchers introduced new concepts considering the competition for studying business phenomena, especially elaborating key factors of business environments, including organizational and industrial capacities. A review of some existing concepts (i.e., distinctive competence, competitive advantage, the five-force framework, and the dynamic theory of strategy) facilitated learning some competitive thinking in the research practices.

Selznick (1949, 1952, 1957) introduced the term *distinctive competence* to identify a set of unique abilities such as strengths and weaknesses of organizations. For example, a US military operation can highlight an example strategy based on distinctive

competence. The U.S. military operated based on the decentralized structure for managing military units (i.e., the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force; Ghemawat, 2002). After World War II, military leaders had excessive military resources and had to reorganize their operational structure. The military leaders identified two operational strategies to take advantage of the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy (Ghemawat, 2002). The U.S. Army shifted to a labor-intensive operation, whose operational capacity was heavily dependent on the individual military performances because many U.S. Army staff and officers had to be highly specialized for handling large numbers of complex machines and equipment (Ghemawat, 2002). Alternately, the U.S. Navy was shifted to a systematic operation, where the operational capacity was less dependent on the individual military performances because the majority of the Navy operations were simple processes utilizing fewer technical skills (Ghemawat, 2002). As such, the leaders built engineering and technological capacities to systematically manage the large numbers of the Navy militaries (Ghemawat, 2002).

Andrews (1971) applied distinctive competence to identify unique organizational capacities beyond strengths and weaknesses. Andrews (1971) viewed distinctive competence as a way to identify a set of unique organizational abilities relative to the market competition. Researchers tended to talk about general and unique capabilities to discuss competitive thinking ideas (Andrews, 1971). However, many researchers could not formally articulate general and unique organizational capabilities due to a lack of evidence (Snow & Hrebiniak, 1980). Instead, some researchers applied qualitative research to elaborate on the meaning of distinctive competence. For example, Stevenson

(1976) studied organizational strengths and weaknesses by determining key variables
such as organization, personnel, marketing, technical, and finance. Stevenson (1976)
articulated exceptional general capabilities as unique and they could be used in business
goal settings or operational process weaknesses in the organizational practices. General
capabilities could be levels of positions (manager or executive) and organizational
attributes, including structures, cultures, technical maturities, production efficiencies, and
growth patterns in the general capabilities (Stevenson, 1976). Although Stevenson (1976)
elaborated the meaning of distinctive competence through a case study on the six
organizations, some researchers considered the six data points were too small to formally
accept the findings.

Porter (1979) used the competitive advantage to further elaborate on the
exceptional organizational capabilities in the competition, noting that competitive
advantages can be identified when a firm has capacity to operate certain activities at
lower costs than rivals, or adding differentiated values to give a premium price (Porter,
1991). Porter (1979) outlined a competition model, a five-force framework to assess the
organizational and industrial competitive factors' key determinants. The five-force
framework systematically addresses the general and unique organizational capacities
relating to the competition (Porter, 1979). According to Porter (1979), distinctive
competence views advanced some of the mainstream business research practices.
Economics researchers at Harvard University widely practiced the structure-conduct-
performance framework without distinctive competence views (Kay, 2018). Some
researchers developed qualitative findings more structurally by adapting the five-force

approach, and academic and business experts began viewing those findings more objectively (Ghemawat, 2002, 2016). Business experts in management consulting firms also started applying the five-force framework and developing new insights that could not develop through traditional methods such as economic models (Ghemawat, 2016).

Researchers used the five-force framework to elaborate distinctive competence in organizational practices. Researchers can study drivers that determine competitive capacity in pricing, costing, and funding relative to the market emergence (Porter, 1991). These researchers can explore key items such as economic scaling, investment capacity, R&D, and policy advantages to outline the competitive capacities of the organizational activities (Porter, 1991, 2008). Researchers can also address drivers that determine competence levels in the supply chain conditions; explore organizational competencies against suppliers considering products and services costs; and determine the competence levels of customers over suppliers (Porter, 1979). Additionally, researchers can study organizational competencies against buyers considering products and services sales and drivers that diminish market share due to new products or service offerings; that are associated with past and existing products or services; that lower profitability in the rivalry among existing competitors; and that are associated with price reductions, increasing costs of marketing campaigns, and service offerings (Porter, 1979).

Researchers kept applying and improving the five-force framework and other traditional and nontraditional framework practices (Kay, 2018). Some researchers were concerned using the five-force framework would not support logical, theoretical, and empirical assessments in the business management research (Ghemawat, 2016; Kay,

2018; Porter, 1991, 2008). In response, Kay (2018) suggested a limitation of using the

five-force framework to explain a specific case to determine distinctive competence.

When the firms performed differently under the same five-force conditions, researchers

did not have enough information to explain the performance differences with the model

(Kay, 2018). Instead, Porter (1991) argued primary application issues of the five-force

framework.

      The first issue was a lack of clear definitions for success in strategic works of

literature (Porter, 1991). Business experts often use the term *success* to describe

improvements of various businesses such as finance, sales, human resources, and

operation in organizational practices. In contrast, researchers identify the term success

and describe the details of the improvements; however, those unidentified definitions

specifically compare the works of literature (Porter, 1991). For example, those business

improvements generate within a certain timeframe, and the level of improvement changes

from time to time. Without a clear definition of success, researchers cannot measure and

present the business improvements. Also, when researchers built the existing theory, they

set scope to consider specific business improvement activities (Porter, 1991). If

researchers apply this existing theory for overall strategy analysis, they might

inadequately conduct the strategy analysis. Researchers need to view an improvement of

a business as a product of overall strategy practices rather than a single business activity

(Porter, 1991). In response, Porter (1991) summarized a formulation of success in

organizational scale such as (a) aligning goals across organizations of a company, (b)

formulating those goals concerning organizational and industrial competence, and (c)

building corporate strategies to enhance distinctive competencies of the company. To consider the overall strategy practices, researchers need to identify and gather the entire improvements of the business practices (Porter, 1991).

The second issue was a lack of consideration of the market competition relevant to organizational and industrial conditions. Although Porter (1979) viewed competition as a critical concept from which to elaborate key factors of business environments, most researchers failed to consider market competition in their theory practices (Porter, 1991). Many researchers took a modeling approach to build theory for strategy analysis (Porter, 1991). In building a model, many researchers developed assumptions, isolated variables, and created further models. Then, they developed a conclusion by evaluating the significance of the models, summarizing findings, and developing a theory. In this modeling approach, the researchers tended to keep tractable information and not consider external factors such as market competition (Kay, 2018; Porter, 1991).

There were root causes of the issues identified in the existing literature. For one, Porter (1991) described the simplification of variable selection of model development as a critical issue. Some of the variables that would determine competitive aspects are not noted in those economic models. Porter also described applicability as another critical issue. Researchers cannot apply the models to many of the case studies because very few or none of the researchers have such studies; thus, the model could not be applicable, and the cases could not fit the assumptions of those models (Porter, 1991). Porter (1991) viewed that researchers, who used the existing theory of strategy, as lacking the variables to explain successes and failures of the strategic practices.

To overcome the existing challenges and limitations in the theory practices, Porter (1991) suggested a dynamic theory of strategy as a new approach to theory building in research communities. Organizational competition is a dynamic system where key determinants and levels of influences are closely related, and each determinant is not separately expressed in this system; thus, researchers should predict overall results by considering other effects of the determinants (Bogers et al., 2019; Porter, 1991). The dynamic theory can explain the strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains.

The dynamic theory of strategy enhanced a clear understanding of complexity in the competitive organizational atmosphere. Ghemawat (1991) suggested the term *dynamic* as commitment, which is the key cause to deepen theory-building practices. Porter (1991) modeled a dynamic system containing determinants of factors, conditions, industry environments, and firm strategies. All these determinants are located in a chain of causality within the system that activates. Further, the chain of causality is mutual dependency, complex relationship, and information flows across the determinants (Porter, 1991). The dynamic system enables greater ability to gather information in multi-dimensional aspects, which might contain competitive advantage factors in strategic practices (Porter, 1991). Researchers who used the dynamic theory gathered information on continuous interactions of variables, depth of understanding of organizations, market conditions, and finding the strategic alternatives (Bogers et al., 2019; Eriksson et al., 2022; Porter, 1991). Hence, those researchers provided a clear understanding of the complexities in the competitive organizational atmosphere. More researchers use the

dynamic theory to understand the continuous changes in management studies (Eriksson et al., 2022).

Relevant Theories

The primary purpose of using a conceptual framework is to gain a specific angle, formulate a research process, and questions for producing depth knowledge (Frandsen et al., 2021). Other theories such as economic theories of the firm and Mintzberg Five Ps seemed inappropriate for this study. This section discusses other theories relevant to the dynamic theory of strategy.

The literature review commenced with the major economic theories of the firm. The central idea of these theories is to define the business as the set of legal agreements (Kay, 2018). Researchers developed the economic theories in the 1900s to conceptualize business entities and view the emergence of large corporations such as General Motors, Exxon Mobil, and DuPont (Kay, 2018). Some of the key established theories are neoclassical, principal-agent, and transaction cost economics (Hart, 1989).

Neoclassical theory, the most common theory, has been used to view the firm as a unit of production plans and optimal incentive practices to produce certain values (Hart, 1989). Many researchers have applied neoclassical theory to study key players who manage inputs and outputs of value productions to maximize the firm assets (Hart, 1989). As for strengths, researchers who apply neoclassical theory can produce mathematical models and conclude by analyzing key variables such as strategic choices concerning external factors like wages, sales taxes, and pricing (Hart, 1989). However, these researchers may lack details of the firm operations because those variables and factors in

the models are not enough to explain how the firm is producing certain business outcomes (Hart, 1989; Mueller, 2018; Porter, 1991)

Principal-agent theory, suggested by Ross (1973), is also used to view the firm as a unit of production plans. This theory captures interest conflicts among actors (Hart, 1989; Mueller, 2018; Ross, 1973). In a general example, buyers who lack product knowledge wish to pay less to receive better products; however, sellers wish to charge higher to earn better incentives (Mueller, 2018). In organizations, a shareholder is a principal, and a manager is an agent (Mueller, 2018). As strengths, researchers who use the principal-agent theory can capture the managerial strategic choices concerning the economic benefits of shareholders and managers (Hart, 1989). The researchers using the principal-agent theory can improve neoclassical theory because these researchers can explain managerial choices for producing certain business outcomes (Hart, 1989). However, these researchers who use principal-agent theory still lack meaningful information to explain why they produce certain business outcomes (Hart, 1989; Ross, 1973).

Coase (1937) introduced transaction cost economics to view a firm as a set of costs associated with planning and contracting activities. This view translates to a phrase: make-or-buy (Williamson, 1979). As for strengths, researchers who adopt this approach capture the managerial performances of business transaction practices, whereas the researchers who use neoclassical theory and principal-agent theory lack to address (Coase, 1937; Hart, 1989). As for weaknesses, these researchers often find it difficult to

formalize their findings because the transaction network associated with the firm is very difficult to define (Hart, 1989).

The review also includes Mintzberg Five Ps. Henry Mintzberg (1987) developed the Five Ps for strategy, created based on a structure-conduct-performance (S-C-P) approach. Some researchers created models to address the weaknesses of those economic theories (Kay, 2018). S-C-P approach is one of Michael Porter's approaches to developing Porter's five-force framework to enhance qualities of strategic practices (Kay, 2018; Porter, 1979; Venkatraman, 1989).

Researchers apply the Five Ps model for the strategy to view the firm as a set of business activities and address primary activities of Five Ps: plan, ploy, pattern, position, and perspective (Mintzberg, 1987). As for strengths, researchers who use the Five Ps model gain an in-depth understanding of strategic practices based on the five important Ps (Mintzberg, 1987). Those researchers can study business activities by mapping the five categories. For example, some conventional organizations might associate some Ps in the course of planning to generate patterns (Mintzberg, 1987). Some other leaders who enable new strategies might associate those Ps differently: plan new strategies by addressing existing patterns (Mintzberg, 1987). The researchers who use the Five Ps model can address various combinations to address relevant business practices. On the other hand, researchers who use the Five Ps cannot capture in-depth insights into the market competition by comparing the five-force approach (Porter, 1991). The researchers who adapted the Five Ps model might automatically limit their options to Five Ps and eliminate some other options that might be important business factors.

Finding a correlation between existing approaches to organizing the research items (i.e., topic discovery, research design, data collection, analysis, and rationalization) facilitated the conceptual framework selection. The selection of a conceptual framework facilitated the exploration of strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains. After conducting reviews of the economic theories and Mintzberg Five Ps, applying these theories was not very useful for generating meaningful information.

The economic theories such as neoclassical, principal-agent, and transaction cost economics were for viewing a business entity as the set of legal agreements containing planning, costs, and relationships with major players. Researchers who apply these theories lacked detailed information and explain the business outcomes. For example, the researchers who apply neoclassical theory tend to develop variables and factors that are not enough to explain how they produce certain business outcomes (Hart, 1989; Mueller, 2018; Porter, 1991). The researchers who use principal-agent theory might also lack meaningful information to explain how they produce certain business outcomes (Hart, 1989; Ross, 1973). Researchers who consider transaction cost economics might find it difficult to formalize their findings because the transaction network associated with a firm is very difficult to define (Hart, 1989). The Five Ps theory assesses business based on a plan, ploy, pattern, position, and perspective (Mintzberg, 1987). Researchers who used the Five Ps cannot capture in-depth insights into the market competition or any other factors beyond considering those five factors. The economic theories and the Five Ps theory might not precisely explain the strategic choices, details of innovation practices,

and profit gains. These theories would not apply to the conceptual framework of this study.

Theory of Strategy

Strategy is a management theory (Andrews et al., 1965; Porter, 1996; Stevenson, 1976). Strategy is also a set of choices to aim for a target (Caves, 1984; Porter, 1996; Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). It integrates key components such as market opportunity, corporate capabilities, shareholder interests, and social values into organizational development (Andrews et al., 1965; Porter, 1996; Stevenson, 1976). Many leaders often confuse strategy with operational efficiency. When leaders improve business profitability, many of them look into operational efficiency. Porter (1996) clearly stated that operational efficiency is not a strategy. Leaders can improve business profitability with effective operational practices. It means those leaders performed better than others in similar business practices (Porter, 1996). However, these leaders would not necessarily find different business practices for improving business profitability. Leaders can use strategies for defining and formulating business practices, including positioning, marketing, and other business activities (Porter, 1996). The strategy theory clarifies the complexities in the competitive organizational atmosphere (Porter, 1979, 1996, 2008). This section includes the following topics: (a) a competitive model, (b) strategy theory, (c) dynamic theory of strategy, and (d) five Ps. The theory of strategy and the selection of the dynamic theory of conceptual strategy framework apply to this study.

Porter (1979) built a model of competition and defined primary drivers for studying industry competitors and summarized five-forces as key industry competition

determinants. The threat of new entrants is a driver that causes some changes in market competition in pricing, costing, and funding (Porter, 1991). The threat of new entrants can be high when more leaders can quickly and easily enter the market with new business offerings at lower costs. Leaders make entry decisions by considering key items such as (a) economic scaling, (b) investment capacity, (c) R&D, and (d) policy advantages (Porter, 1991, 2008).

Based on these key items, researchers can explore in-depth insights by developing study indicators such as (a) economies of scale efforts (supplier), (b) benefits of scale efforts (networking difficulty), (c) switching costs, (d) capital requirements, (e) incumbency benefits, (f) distribution channel access, (g) government policy impacts, and (h) anticipated incumbent response (Melton et al., 2020). The bargaining power of suppliers is a driver to determine the power levels of suppliers over companies (Porter, 2008). When suppliers gain higher power than companies, the costs of the products and services can increase (Pervan et al., 2018). Researchers can acquire deep insights from study indicators, such as bargaining position, raising the price, or reducing the product quality (Pervan et al., 2018).

The power of buyers is the driver to determine the power levels of customers over suppliers (Porter, 2008). When buyers gain higher power than suppliers, costs of the products and services decrease. Researchers can explore depth insights by developing study indicators such as buyer order volumes, buyer information, backward integration risk (buyer elimination), industry products, buyer switching costs, overall costs, buyer profitability, or product/ service impacts (Pervan et al., 2018). The threat of substitute

products or services is the driver to diminishing market share by using products with

similar features (Porter, 2008). The threat of substitute products or services can be high

when more buyers or consumers prefer the products or services produced by competitors.

Rivalry among existing competitors is a driver that typically causes lowering profitability

because of market competition (Porter, 2008). Some of the key rivalry competitions that

cause lower profitability are (a) price reductions, (b) increasing costs of marketing

campaigns, and (c) service offerings (Porter, 2008). The strategy theory clarifies the

complexities in the competitive organizational atmosphere (Porter, 1979, 1996, 2008).

Porter (1991) outlined a system to integrate the model of competition in organizational

practices. In this system, each determinant is no longer separately expressed, so the

effects of other determinants predict overall results (Porter, 1991). The integration goal is

to tie all the activities to a firm success (Porter, 1991). In this way, a firm's value chain

contains the firm's activities conveying the most important drivers such as scalability,

cumulative learning, connection across activities, capacity to share the activities across

business units, working flow developments, financial decisions timing, vertical

integration, policy impacts, and internal rule operation (Porter, 1991). Porter (1991)

suggested that organizational competition is a dynamic system where key determinants

and levels of influences were closely related. Ghemawat (1991) suggested the term

dynamic as commitment, which is the key cause to deepen theory-building practices.

Dynamic capabilities enable integrating competencies and resources into organizational

practices and advancing the overall organizational performances (Bogers et al., 2019;

Pervan et al., 2018; Porter, 1991; Schoemaker et al., 2018). Omnichannel activities in

digital practices are also reflecting some of these capabilities (Eriksson et al., 2022)

Porter (1991) designed the dynamic theory of strategy to identify key variables

related to market conditions and any other complexity elements in the competitive

environment. Researchers who used the dynamic theory gathered information on

continuous interactions of variables, depth of understanding of organizations, market

conditions, and finding the strategic alternatives (Bogers et al., 2019; Eriksson et al.,

2022; Porter, 1991; Schoemaker et al., 2018). Hence, those researchers provided a clear

understanding of the complexities in the competitive organizational atmosphere.

Mintzberg (1987) developed a Five Ps theory based on a structure-conduct-

performance (S-C-P) approach. Some researchers created models to address the

weaknesses of those economic theories. S-C-P approach is one of the approaches which

Porter adopted to develop his five-force framework (Kay, 2018; Porter, 1979;

Venkatraman, 1989). The Five Ps strategy is used to view the firm as a set of business

activities and defined by addressing primary activities of plan, ploy, pattern, position, and

perspective (Mintzberg, 1987). Researchers who use 5Ps gain an in-depth understanding

of strategic practices based on the five important Ps (Mintzberg, 1987). They cannot

capture in-depth insights into the market competition by comparing the five-force

approach (Porter, 1991).

Innovation

Innovation can be such an important practice to enhance corporate profitability.

Some leaders including those of Apple and Pepsi who used strategies to support

innovation practices outperformed the S&P 500 by more than 200% throughout a 10-year time period (Dobni & Klassen, 2020). However, organizational leaders of global companies can fail to create an innovative business (Christensen et al., 2016; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020). From a leadership perspective, only 50% of innovation practices at global companies can be profitable (Dobni & Klassen, 2020). For these reasons, some researchers considered unclear innovation practices as a cause of those failures (Christensen et al., 2016; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021; Thompson et al., 2020). Researchers often use the term *innovation* to describe a type of business phenomenon, and more business leaders adopt innovation in their business practices. Ávila-Robinson et al. (2022) highlighted diversity of innovation topics by outlining 11 innovation themes with 28 subthemes by exploring an innovation research trend in the past 20 years. The innovation themes included *product & service innovation, entrepreneurship, Innovation and geography, R&D policy,* and *knowledge flows.* The subthemes for product & service innovation were *new product/ service development, innovation diffusion and adoption, project management and portfolio,* and *customer-centric innovation* (Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022). The subthemes for entrepreneurship were *entrepreneurial activities* and *finance and top management* (Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022). Business leaders might further benefit from their innovation practices when they gain a better clarification of innovation (Christensen et al., 2016; Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Gault, 2018).

In this section, I reviewed innovation from three angles. The first angle was common definitions of innovation. I reviewed the literature to address general and

specific definitions of innovation. The second angle was the meaning of innovation. The additional review included the innovation elements to have a deeper look and clarified innovation from other concepts such as invention and creativity to capture a depth of meaning. The third angle was a recent trend of leadership approaches to innovation practices. After reviewing the literature, some strategic choices trended to increase profitability when leaders approach innovation practices emerged.

The first angle was common definitions of innovation. Some researchers view innovation as a combination of invention and action (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Schatzberg, 2020). Some others view it as adopting new ideas into existing processes (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Si et al., 2020). OECD researchers published a set of global innovation management guidelines called the *Oslo Manual* (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Gault, 2018). The manual includes a global definition of innovation as the better or newer product or process which functions significantly different from the previous ones and is available to be adapted (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Gault, 2018).

Researchers developed additional innovation types by considering innovation patterns. The OECD researchers discussed the four types of innovation: product, process, organizational, and marketing (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Gault, 2018). Product innovation assesses innovation practices around goods and services. Researchers can consider extending the goods and service practices such as knowledge and design thinking efforts (Gault, 2018). Process innovation captures operational flow, including distribution, information, and communication systems around production practices (Gault, 2018). Organizational innovation addresses administrative and managerial

practices. Researchers can associate the key organizational practices separated from the operational practices (Gault, 2018). Marketing innovation studies the general marketing practices, including presales, postsales, and other customer-related activities (Gault, 2018).

Some other researchers also discussed new types of innovation practices, including routine, architectural, radical, and disruptive practices (Leavy, 2019; Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). These researchers applied measurement models and identified some innovation patterns. Leavy (2019) used a two-by-two matrix with four parameters, such as existing business models, new business models, existing technical competencies, and new technical competencies. Sheth and Sinfield (2022) applied four dimensions such as objectives, scope, advantages, and flaws and identified patterns in innovation practices.

Routine or modular innovation does not require new business models or the new technical competencies (Leavy, 2019; Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). Business experts can develop innovation items by leveraging existing business models and technical competencies (Christensen et al., 2018; Leavy, 2019; Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). Architectural innovation enables new business models and new technical competencies (Leavy, 2019). Some researchers see a strong linkage between architectural innovation and disruptive theory (Christensen et al., 2018). Disruptive innovation can be measured with an industry-specific dimension (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). It requires new business models with existing technical competencies (Leavy, 2019). Business experts tend to perceive disruptive innovation as a theory to consider competitor responses (Christensen et al., 2016, 2018; Jin & Shin, 2020). Radical innovation requires a new technical

competency with existing business models (Leavy, 2019). Breaking through an existing technical capacity to enable a new technical capacity is the key difference between radical and disruptive innovation (Christensen et al., 2018; Leavy, 2019).

Some other researchers use these parameters to further identify new innovation types. Open innovation was one of them, and it was a crucial approach to advance innovation practices with internally and externally available innovation processes, and the idea evolved since 2003 (Bogers et al., 2019). Leaders view open innovation to coordinate their innovation practices based on key factors: ownership (proprietary strategy or non- proprietary strategy) and accessibility (in-house research and development or external resources) (Bogers et al., 2019). Open innovation related topics were intensively researched in 2007–2011(Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022).

The second angle was the meaning of innovation. Business leaders might further benefit from deepening their understanding of innovation when distinguishing it from invention and creativity. Researchers often use invention or creativity to describe a type of business phenomenon, which occurred to generate something new in the market. To be specific, some researchers view invention as a process of creating new ideas (Edwards-Schachter, 2018). Some others view creativity as a thinking process of finding new ideas (Schatzberg, 2020). To further distinguish innovation from invention and creativity, some literature clarified the meaning of invention and creativity.

The invention is a term people commonly use to create new ideas (Edwards-Schachter, 2018). The invention originated by Greek-Roman philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero, who developed an inventio invention method (Dodd, 2020). Inventio was a

method to enable and process new thoughts often interpreted as invention or discovery (Dodd, 2020; Henriksen et al., 2018). Traditionally, Greek-Roman philosophers used inventio for building new ideas and improving their communication with others about those new findings (Henriksen et al., 2018). Those philosophers could effectively identify some gaps in the existing knowledge and present new knowledge as an invention (Dodd, 2020).

Creativity is a term people commonly use to express a thinking process finding new knowledge (Henriksen et al., 2018). Aristotle introduced *Topoi*, a rule to organize ideas (Carter, 2021). The Greek-Roman philosophers used Topoi to characterize thoughts by topics or places, and it was useful to capture the gaps between existing and new knowledge (Carter, 2021; Henriksen et al., 2018; Sloane, 1989). Aristotle viewed the term topics as a critical expression to drive the initiation of creativity (Carter, 2021). When philosophers used Topoi in their inquiries, these philosophers had more opportunities to rethink existing knowledge to create something new (Carter, 2021; Henriksen et al., 2018).

Many researchers associate the meaning of innovation, invention, and Topoi in creative practices when they address a new idea creation process. There are at least two examples. One example is to consider invention, discovery, innovation, and intuition as key steps to complete a creative process (Henriksen et al., 2018). This approach enables researchers to articulate meanings of each step, so the researchers can view each step as a part of creative processes (Henriksen et al., 2018). Another example is to consider invention and discovery as the key elements in the first stage of the innovation (Edwards-

Schachter, 2018; Schatzberg, 2020). This approach enables researchers to categorize the

activities of invention and discovery into the innovation stage, which is considered the

first step of a creative process (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Schatzberg, 2020).

      The third angle was a recent trend of leadership approaches to innovation

practices. The literature review outlined some trends in strategic choices for increasing

profitability in innovation practices. Leaders may not make profits through a simple R&D

practice such as commercializing one product built around a patented technology which

was seen profitable in the industrial economy (Teece, 2018). Leaders may use acquisition

strategy to gain new market positioning, new product strategy to leverage a new market,

and R&D strategy to develop new opportunities (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022; Teece, 2018).

Leaders who chose the acquisition strategy focus on performing better in acquisition

management, which can lower investment risks (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). These leaders

seek to capture their capacity uniqueness and determine the impacts of the innovation

adaptation for generating additional value for their customers and internal capacities

(Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). Leaders who chose the new capacity option focus on gaining

resource investment and accessing multiple industries and customer segments (Sheth &

Sinfield, 2022). These leaders tend to seek advantages through aligning the new values

internally to approach the market and compete based on valuable, rare, inimitable, and

non-substitutable traits (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). Leaders who choose the R&D option

prefer taking the lowest risk among all options and higher added values to aim for long-

term growth (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). These leaders seek advantages through innovation

integration into the existing organizational practices (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022).

Leaders might want to take a portfolio approach combining internal approaches like R&D and an external approach like acquisition and open innovation for better profitability (Bogers et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2020). In internal R&D, leaders apply internal resources and produce highly customized outcomes to enhance competitive advantage because no other company can own the same capacity (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022; Thompson et al., 2020). Leaders gain some advantages in the internal R&D to generate innovation outcomes suitable for operations because internal experts consider the existing system, deployment, and adaptability to ease product acquisitions (Sheth & Sinfield, 2022; Thompson et al., 2020). In external approaches like acquisition and open innovation, leaders might generate outcomes with shorter durations and meet the business needs promptly (Bogers et al., 2019; Sheth & Sinfield, 2022; Thompson et al., 2020).

Some leaders might have noted lower return on investment (ROI) in innovation practices because of a lack of full value capturing capacities, no defined market approach to enable new technologies, lower profitability in licensing, and higher complexities in business model innovation including ecosystem and platform value creation activities (Teece, 2018). As a result, these leaders have reduced their investments in R&D practices and explored new approaches (Teece, 2018). An innovation portfolio is one example of balancing multiple factors to seek higher profitability (Chavez & Chen, 2022; Thompson et al., 2020). More leaders cut half of the traditional innovation budgets and allocate it to new types of innovation resources. For example, in 2012, they tended to allocate 10%, 20%, and 70% of budgets in transformational, semitransformational, and incremental innovation projects, respectively (Thompson et al., 2020). At the same time, 70% of

business leaders likely adapted existing innovation practices from single resources in existing partners (Thompson et al., 2020). Leaders in 2018 tended to allocate 30%, 35%, and 35% of budgets in transformational, semitransformational, and incremental innovation projects, respectively (Thompson et al., 2020). Only 17% of the business leaders likely adapted existing innovation practices from single resources in existing partners, and 75% of the leaders likely adapted multiple innovation resources, including nontraditional expertise available at academic research institutions (Thompson et al., 2020).

Leaders have at least two entry options: the first to the market approach for capitalizing on new opportunities or the wait-to-see approach for avoiding being a frontier to increase the risk of failing (Chavez & Chen, 2022). The first-to-the market approach is known as first-mover-advantage and the leaders who enter the market first would access greater advantages than the later entrants' but these leaders tend to gain a higher risk of failing due to the greater innovation challenges such as internal resistance and disinterests of the innovation practice (Chavez & Chen, 2022). First-mover-advantage can be captured through a business mechanism around licensing and patenting (Teece, 2018). Leaders must enable an industry standard integral to better strategic decision-making (Teece, 2018). Leaders who take the wait-to-see approach enter the market later and might have access to smaller advantages than the early entrants', but these leaders might gain a lower risk of failing to increase innovation success (Chavez & Chen, 2022).

Researchers suggested the importance of integrating innovation into corporate strategy. Organizational innovation considering business model innovation can be a recent emerging trend in innovation research because the number of the studies exploring the topic has significantly increased in the past 5 years (Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022). Christensen et al. (2016) suggested innovation activities from the point of the business model framework. When some leaders identify new market demands, they enable new business units to serve the market demands for growth (Christensen et al., 2016). The leaders should not isolate innovation practices from existing business operations, including financial performance reviews (Christensen et al., 2016). Christensen et al. (2016) suggested a relationship between innovation stages and business model maturity stages. A business model matures in three stages: (a) enabling, (b) developing, and (c) growing, whereas an innovation stage is composed of three stages: (a) creating, (b) sustaining, and (c) adopting (Christensen et al., 2016). Each business stage enables different innovation foundations such as value proposition, resources, profit formula, and processes (Christensen et al., 2016).

Leaders must also consider the aspects of innovation practices such as business models and technical competencies to formulate their innovation activities with organizational strategy (Christensen et al., 2018; Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). A common theme of innovation can be a change that is made from the existing practices to new practices (Gault, 2018; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021). One way to better lead the changing practices can be to enable a culture supportive of innovation practices (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Gault, 2018; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021; Leavy, 2019). Several

researchers suggested that leaders must communicate the meaning of the change in the innovation practices (Christensen et al., 2018; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2020, 2021, 2022; Leavy, 2019). Christensen et al. (2018) traced different interpretations about innovation used by people in the market. People tend to assume a typical innovation culture as supportive of failure outcomes and the failure caused by the incompleteness or lack of disciplines (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Leavy, 2019). Leaders should ensure the resources, appropriately used for generating the outcomes whether it fails or succeeds (Leavy, 2019). To maximize profitability, more leaders look into a cross-stakeholder innovation ecosystem to generate innovation-driven enterprise through partnership (Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022; Budden & Murray, 2022; Hänninen et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2019).

Hunsaker and Knowles (2022) suggested a set of effective philosophies leading the change. Leaders might draw a map to forecast issues due to the internal and external changes and have a prioritized vision of their business directions. Then, they develop a mindset to commonly share the value and communicate the message (Hunsaker & Knowles, 2022). Leaders might shape the vision, mindset, and messaging by strengthening their current organizational strategy, Adapting new ways to pursue the strategy, and shifting the directions (Hunsaker & Knowles, 2022). Leaders might want to use a framework to consider three forms of change such as strengthening the existing strategy, adapting new capacities in addition to the existing strategy, or taking a different strategy (Hunsaker & Knowles, 2020). These leaders can evaluate the relevance of the change and can enable new values that fit the purpose and generate comparative

advantages (Hunsaker & Knowles, 2020). Leaders should focus on the sifts from the existing to new market opportunities as well as the broader stakeholders associated with the new opportunities (Hunsaker & Knowles, 2020).

U.S.-based Global Retailing Market

Market researchers have outlined trends of the U.S.-based global retailing market. Some researchers estimated an increase of 25 – 40% on online shopping sales because of COVID-19 (Grewal et al., 2021a; McKinsey, 2021). There was a review of a basic trend such as market sizes and retail operation models such as store-based and online-based. This literature review contains another review of leadership perspectives in some global retailing companies as well as economic and emerging trends.

The retail market is one of the large industries in the United States. The retailing owners generated over 4.8 Trillion U.S. dollars in 2016 sales (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Because the U.S. GDP was 19 Trillion U.S. dollars in 2016 (The World Bank, 2018), the retailing business owners generated roughly 25% of the U.S. GDP, which grew nearly 22% from 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). There are two primary retailing models: store-based and online-based. In store-based retailing, the owners generated roughly 4.4 Trillion U.S. dollars in the 2016 sales, which was 92% of the retailing market in the United States and grew 16% from 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). In online-based retailing, the retailers generated 389 Billion U.S. dollars in the 2016 sales, which was 8% of the retailing market and grew 185% from 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). They also generated 519 Billion U.S. dollars in 2018 and 791 Billion U.S. dollars in

2020. The online retail market grew from 9.9% to 14% between 2018 and 2020

(UNCTAD, 2021).

The market outside the United States has higher growth rates in online retailing

sales between 2018 and 2020 (UNCTAD, 2021). For example, the growth rate in six

countries, such as Australia, Canada, China, South Korea, Singapore, and the United

Kingdom produced 1.25 Trillion U.S. dollars in 2018 and 1.70 Trillion U.S. dollars in

2018 (UNCTAD, 2021). The online retail market in these countries grew from 16.7% to

23.1% between 2018 and 2020 which is nearly 3% to 4% higher than the US growth rates

(UNCTAD, 2021).

This section also includes an outline of the market size by the types of industry

for store-based and online-based-retailing models. For the market size in store-based

retailing, the top three industries were automotive, food and beverage, and general

merchandise stores (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The sales were 1.1 Trillion U.S. dollars,

698 Billion U.S. dollars, and 676 Billion U.S. dollars, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau,

2018). By considering the market growth between 2007 and 2016, the top three industries

were health care, electronics, and food/ beverages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The

growth was 38%, 31%, and 28%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The top three

online retailing industries were clothing, electronics, and building equipment (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2018). The sales were 332 Billion U.S. dollars, 32 Billion U.S. dollars,

and 7.8 Billion U.S. dollars, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). For the market

growth, the top three industries were clothing, building equipment, and electronics, with a

growth rate of 450%, 251%, and 215%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

   Many business leaders pay strong attention to the global consumers because the consumer behaviors have significantly changed in the past decade. One of the significant changes is a digital evolution among the customers. They have been adopting smartphones and online services, which improve various aspects of their daily life activities, including shopping and entertainment (Hänninen et al., 2019; Sides & Skelly, 2021; Torres de Oliveira et al., 2020). Over 85% of the people in the United States owned a smartphone in 2019, while only 35% owned a smartphone in 2011 (Pew Research Center, 2021). Some experts suggested that almost all consumers most likely own a smartphone near future, which will cause the customer shift from existing to newer retailing models such as online-based retailing (Hänninen et al., 2018, 2019, 2021; Sides & Skelly, 2021; Torres de Oliveira et al., 2020). Leaders must consider adapting to online-based retailing for sustaining long-term economic stability (Hänninen et al., 2018, 2019, 2021; Jocevski, 2020; Sides & Skelly, 2021; Torres de Oliveira et al., 2020).

   Business leaders and researchers noticed declining profitability in the retailing value chain in recent years (Deloitte, 2019; Sides & Skelly, 2021). An expert study indicated customer acquisition cost increased by more than 60% from 2013 to 2018 because of the increased operation costs (Sides & Skelly, 2021). Leaders in store-based retailing organizations invest in digital practices for improving their organizational capabilities, such as analytics and online application channels for acquiring and retaining customers (Sides & Skelly, 2021). However, higher costs are required to achieve these improvements (Sides & Skelly, 2021). These researchers observed the rise of customer acquisition costs due to intensive competition (Deloitte, 2019). For example, leaders need

to invest over 20% of their operating costs in sustaining their business in the long-term (Huang et al., 2019). Declining earnings explains with earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT). Leaders might lose 20% to 30% of EBIT when 5% of sales shift from store-based to online-based retailing (Huang et al., 2019). Some leaders in store-based and online-based retailing are already taking some actions and complimenting their strengths and weaknesses. Amazon acquired Whole Foods for $1.4 billion U.S. dollars and strengthened its physical store retailing capacity in grocery shopping (Grewal et al., 2017). Walmart acquired Jet.com for $3.3 billion U.S. dollars and strengthened its online retailing capacity (Grewal et al., 2017).

Researchers discussed some of the emerging trends in consumer activities. Some researchers outlined a consumption pattern associated with new middle-class behaviors and new IoT practices. Consumers in the new middle-class have discretionary consumption and personal values (Cavusgil et al., 2018). The new behaviors and values theoretically were expressed as types of beliefs, motivation, and attitudes (Cavusgil et al., 2018). Although some experts found the middle-class growth rate slower between the mid-1980s and mid-2010s (OECD, 2019), many market experts continue to apply the middle-class indicator to discuss the potential consumer market (Short & Martínez, 2020). Researchers estimated that the world middle-class size would increase from 3,000 million people in 2015 to 5,400 million people in 2030 (Short & Martínez, 2020), so the buying power of consumers can also be relationally growing. These new middle-class consumers prefer a relatively new concept, such as collective consumption (CC). People share assets instead of owning them (Barykin et al., 2021). The recent technological

advancement, particularly internet accessibility, made more consumers enter the CC

business (Park & Joyner Armstrong, 2019). The customers in the CC business are to save

money whereas the society can save resource consumptions (Park & Joyner Armstrong,

2019). Some examples are Zipcar for car rental, Lyft for ride service, and Waze for

carpooling (Park & Joyner Armstrong, 2019). Some other examples are Rent the Runway

and Mine for Nine for short-term cloth rental and RealReal for cloth resale (Park &

Joyner Armstrong, 2019). Due to this new trend, existing apparel brands such as Ann

Taylor and Express started to rental business (Park & Joyner Armstrong, 2019).

Strategic Choices by USGRC to Generate Innovation

The market drastically changed and leaders are expected to align their strategic

choices with the new market conditions. Leaders in the S&P 500 sustained their

companies for over 60 years in 1958 and 20 years or less in the current market (Hunsaker

& Knowles, 2021). Consumer behavior changed during COVID-19 and enabled a new

market (Grewal et al., 2021a, 2021b; McKinsey, 2021). However, many leaders might

still assume economy and industry boundaries stabilized in the long-term, or they still

apply tools including GE/McKinsey and the BCG Growth-Share matrices in their

strategic practices which were created for more stable industry makeups (Hunsaker &

Knowles, 2021).

This section included a review of resources to understand some strategic choices

trends to generate innovation practices in USGRC. The focus was to review the history of

retailing innovation, trends of existing strategy, and leadership perspectives concerning

innovation practices. The history of retailing innovation strategies in the three time

periods: up to 1990s, 1990s – 2000s, and after 2010 helped address the key retailing

innovation themes and highlight the market shifts in those periods. An examination of

trends of existing strategies and issues was helpful to understanding the business sectors.

Because the business environment has constantly been changing, it was useful to capture

the strategic practices that evolved accordingly. Leadership perspectives could correlate

with innovation practices. Researchers can assess leadership perspective and outline the

future retailing outlook.

Retailing Innovation Strategies in the Three Time Periods

A trend shifted from local stores serving local communities to a self-serve

shopping model like department stores (Hänninen et al., 2019). After the 1950s, more

leaders applied growth strategies based on traditional economic theories such as

economies of scale (Ghemawat, 2002; Montes & Olleros, 2019). Many business leaders

entered global operations to gain profits from the postwar boom in Asia and Europe

(Ghemawat, 2002). Many retailing leaders manage physical stores and expand operation

capacities by building new stores and offering new products (Montes & Olleros, 2019).

After the 1960s, more leaders considered taking differentiation strategies (Ghemawat,

2002). Many leaders were motivated to differentiate their business rather than the cost-

focused economic approaches (Ghemawat, 2002). Some of the major retailing innovation

cases are a barcode system in the 1970s, T.V. shopping system in the 1980s (Grewal et

al., 2017).

The internet began in the 1990s. More leaders in the retailing industry are

interested in topics related to physical store operation, franchising, supply-chain, and

global retail (Hänninen et al., 2019, 2021). More researchers suggested the importance of supply chain management considering customer loyalty, and leaders implemented an effective supply-chain strategy that reduced 3% to 20% of their operating costs (Hänninen et al., 2021). Some leaders started shifting some investments to online retailing innovation, and online retailing trends began to emerge (Grewal et al., 2017; Hänninen et al., 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). More leaders considered both physical stores and internet-based businesses (Hänninen et al., 2021). Leaders in Walmart gained a higher competitive advantage due to their advanced information technology capacity in supply chain practices (Hänninen et al., 2021). Some retailing entrepreneurs established a new business model such as Amazon and eBay (Grewal et al., 2017; Hänninen et al., 2021).

The new retail model was enabled by e-commerce and smartphone innovation in the 2000s (Hänninen et al., 2019, 2021). Many leaders in the retailing industry experimented with online retailing services and explored better strategies to integrate online and physical store channels (Hänninen et al., 2021). More leaders searched for effective strategies and developed better multichannel retail offerings to improve customer loyalty and retail profitability (Hänninen et al., 2021). Leaders in H&M and Zara developed effective strategies to remain competitive and continue global business expansion (Hänninen et al., 2021). Some researchers view multichannel retailing capacity as a performance differentiator to determine success and failure in the digital consumer market (Hänninen et al., 2021).

In the 2010s, leaders view digitalization strategy as an important choice (Hänninen et al., 2021; Mostaghel et al., 2022; Sides & Skelly, 2021). Leaders in store-based retailing organizations had to invest in building new digital retailing solutions such as analytics and online application channels for innovating their existing retailing business models (Hänninen et al., 2021; Mostaghel et al., 2022; Sides & Skelly, 2021). Some leaders who grew their business implemented a business model innovation, and they tended to select key drivers as trial-and-error experimentations in new solution building (Mostaghel et al., 2022). These leaders also focused on customer voice integration in their solutions (Mostaghel et al., 2022). Nordstrom, a large retailer based in the U.S., enabled hybrid retailing through online and offline options to meet diverse customer needs (Jin & Shin, 2020). Leaders in Nordstrom developed online applications and added a new online channel to enable purchase options on Instagram and text applications (Jin & Shin, 2020). These leaders also created new retail transactions such as product pick up, return, and exchange of the purchased items, so their customers could have their preferred shopping methods and increase the satisfaction of their shopping experiences (Sides & Skelly, 2021).

Many leaders in the past chose existing strategies and established strategic practices to take advantage of the past market conditions. Because the business environment has constantly been changing, leaders have to consider new market conditions in their business practices (Sides & Skelly, 2021). The leaders who choose existing strategies without considering strategic nonalignment relative to the new market might reduce their effectiveness (Hänninen et al., 2021; Sides & Skelly, 2021). For

example, when business owners open stores, the traditional approach can either own stores or rent spaces in malls (Berman, 2019; Frishammar et al., 2018). Some researchers suggested strategic differences between the traditional and new value-chains for improving profitability (Feng & Fay, 2020; Teece, 2018). When business owners individually own a physical store, these operations identify as a part of the traditional value-chain model (Berman, 2019; Frishammar et al., 2018).

In the traditional value-chain model, products sell from suppliers to customers, and the inputs and outputs can enable a linear relationship (Feng & Fay, 2020; Hänninen et al., 2021). These owners sell products in their own inventory (Hänninen et al., 2018, 2021; Mostaghel et al., 2022). In a new value-chain model, owners would rent a space in a mall, and they would operate the stores as a part of a new value-chain, often called a platform (Frishammar et al., 2018; Teece, 2018). Platform-based firms tend to outperform traditional firms by gathering products and customers for creating a new retail ecosystem (Frishammar et al., 2018; Montes & Olleros, 2019; Teece, 2018). The store owners can share a part of mall facilities and reduce costs by not owning individual stores (Teece, 2018). These owners might also sell new types of products created by a new partner alliance in a recent digital ecosystem (Hänninen et al., 2018, 2021; Mostaghel et al., 2022). Some owners work together with diverse partners including competitors to generate additional values in the new value chain for enabling better competitive advantage (Hänninen et al., 2018; Mostaghel et al., 2022).

Business owners have a choice to open an online-based store on an online platform. It further advances the new type of value-chain model and generates the need in

adjusting to the online market environment (Berman, 2019; Frishammar et al., 2018; Hänninen et al., 2021). Leaders who apply digital platforms can achieve industrial scaling with significantly smaller resources because leaders could build scalable and adaptable business models by linking multiple resources in a new ecosystem in which people generate and exchange new values (Montes & Olleros, 2019). For example, an online platform such as Amazon scaled their platform capacities and small retailers gained advantages to enter national and international retailing businesses in cheaper, easier, and faster ways (Mostaghel et al., 2022). The value chain on web-based platforms also enabled diverse value exchange across actors in different industries. For example, products can be sold not only from suppliers to customers but also from customers to customers like eBay (Hänninen et al., 2021). Economies of scale and scope are insufficient to be used in the new retailing market because the online business models tend to increase higher risks in the initial investment due to uncertainty associated with the new market (Montes & Olleros, 2019). Leaders who adjust their strategies in the new value chain might increase the profitability.

Due to the dramatic changes in market conditions, strategic choices of the USGR leaders are getting diverse and complex. The leaders have constantly been updating existing strategies and used a relevant set of strategies to grow their retailing businesses (Hänninen et al., 2021; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021; Sheth & Sinfield, 2022). Some researchers highlighted a need to develop growth strategies and effectively formulate multiple business activities for better decision-making. Kumar and Ramachandran (2021) identified three dimensions: technology adaptation, information management, and

stakeholder objectives. These dimensions are designed to focus on growth activities in multiple decision-making in retailing practices to develop several growth approaches linking with the dimensions (Kumar & Ramachandran, 2021). In this way, the leaders can integrate high-level interests in retail activities to generate outcomes directly supporting overall growth interests (Kumar & Ramachandran, 2021).

Also, leaders localize strategies fully and promptly adopt advanced digital technologies, including data analytics (Kumar & Ramachandran, 2021; Sides & Skelly, 2021). Some researchers suggested three strategies that can be useful to integrate into digital practices. The marketing mix is a suitable strategy considering five aspects: product assortment, pricing and promotion, distribution, location, and atmosphere (Grewal et al., 2017). Multichannel marketing such as multi and omnichannel is useful for managing direct and indirect channels (Eriksson et al., 2022; Grewal et al., 2017). Store-level strategies can also consider locational and customer demographic characteristics (Jocevski, 2020).

Many leaders in the retailing industry might still lack the global perspectives in creating and practicing retail model innovation (Cao et al., 2018; Mostaghel et al., 2022). Those leaders might want to focus on multiple elements to approach the global retail model innovation. Leaders may look into six items to craft a core logic: (a) customizing the brand messaging, (b) accommodating the local needs, (c) aligning with the local stakeholders, (d) sharing existing functions, (e) transferring knowledge to local functions, and (f) emulate the regional competitors (Cao et al., 2018). For technological innovations, leaders may look into three areas of strategic choice: types of innovation (new entrant or

incumbent), entry timing (first or later), and innovation adaptation processes which would contain a different combination of risks, resources, and expected gains (Pantano et al., 2022).

When leaders enter a new global market, they might want to carefully apply an existing theory to choose a type of innovation (new entrant or incumbent) and a target segment (high-end or low-end) (Choi et al., 2022; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021; Pantano et al., 2022). Some existing theories might not work in the same way in different regions, and the known combination of the type and segment can be the wrong option in the different regions and cannot access the profitable customer segments (Pantano et al., 2022). For example, leaders tend to target low-end customers to disrupt the market but it is not always the case (Choi et al., 2022; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021). A study suggested the modification of the segments from low-end to high-end for selling warble devices in the Korean market (Choi et al., 2022, 2022). Another study also indicated Tesla's strategic choice aimed at a high-end market worldwide, and Uber's strategic choice targeted the primary customer segment such as global taxi users for disrupting each industry.

Leadership Perspectives Concerning Innovation Practices

Leaders in USGRC need a new strategy aligned with a new market trend to increase profitability. Three concerns that might change the profitability of retail innovation practices. Some researchers are concerned with C-level leading style and alignment to support innovation practices, and some other researchers are concerned with digital capacities and adapting innovation outcomes for better decision making. Some C-

level leaders lead radical innovation with a strategic ambition to generate outstanding

business outcomes. A strategic ambition can be seen as a strong influence enabling an

inspiring and engaging atmosphere (Binns et al., 2022). The chief executive officer

(CEO) of Nvidia, a multinational technology company, practiced a strategic ambition that

resulted in growing the business and increasing the company stock price by over 8,000%

in a decade (Binns et al., 2022). Leaders who achieve a strategic ambition tend to create a

movement to empower people through rules and guidance (Binns et al., 2022). Then, the

leaders further influence the people to enable a social evolution, which both supports

people to evolve the existing businesses and generates better financial performances

(Binns et al., 2022).

Many C-level leaders might face a dilemma where their expectations,

experiences, and responsibilities would not be well aligned (Whitler et al., 2022). The

leaders are recommended to resolve the gap to more effectively lead the organization

(Whitler et al., 2022). For example, a chief marketing officer (CMO) might be expected

to improve 3% of the store sales next year; however, leaders have to acquire and launch

new technologies in locations that would not be the CMO's responsibility because it falls

under the responsibilities of the chief information officer (CIO) (Whitler et al., 2022).

The CEO will gain a better advantage when CMO and CIO can jointly be accountable for

the retail digitalization to enhance customer's experiences (Whitler et al., 2022).

Customer-first culture is one of the key leadership priorities (Bogers et al., 2019;

Cao et al., 2018; Grewal et al., 2021a, 2021b; Leavy, 2019; McKinsey, 2021;

Schoemaker et al., 2018; Teece, 2018). Leaders are concerned with the digital adaptation

of the new market because consumer behavior changed during COVID-19 (Grewal et al.,

2021a, 2021b; McKinsey, 2021). Some researchers estimated more people shop online

because 76% of people changed their shopping places and 25 – 40% of online shopping

sales increased in 2020 (McKinsey, 2021). A new retail market can be dynamically

formed and leaders must apply a strategic approach to sustain profitability (Grewal et al.,

2021a, 2021b; McKinsey, 2021). Trends in retailing leadership perspective correlate with

innovation practices. For many leaders, a recent trend is to develop strategy by

considering customer orienting culture, often expressed as a customer-first or customer-

centric view (Huang et al., 2019). Grewal et al. (2021a) developed a framework centered

on personalization that can be used to strategize new technology adaptation considering

six aspects: retail place & supply chain, product, pricing, advertisement, demographic,

and appearance. Experts at McKinsey suggested seven steps to formulate a customer

engagement strategy to operate a personalized retail model (McKinsey, 2021). This

seven-step approach also includes the integration of the new model into the existing retail

operations. Those leaders with better digital retail innovation practices ensured business

continuity in the new market before COVID-19 (Hänninen et al., 2019; Montes &

Olleros, 2019; Teece, 2018). However, these leaders also need to review the existing

strategies to adjust to the current market because some practices might not be relevant.

For example, some researchers identified a decreased trend in brand loyalty because the

world's pandemic influenced 76% of customers to switch their stores (McKinsey, 2021).

More customers have been demonstrating higher store attachments including millennials

and young adults who might be interested in identity-enhancing experiences for some

self-expressive benefits which can help them increase stronger store attachments (Badrinarayanan & Becerra, 2019).

Leaders are concerned about profitability measurements to support decision-making in innovation schemes. Some researchers viewed the importance of using unit economics to calculate profitability per unit, simulate different business model options, and make decisions for the best profitable options (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). Leaders can use unit economics for determining key values, better simulating losses and gains, and convince shareholders about short-term and long-term forecasts (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022).

Unit economics can be key determinants to grow a market share. Leaders might be able to identify a lowest pricing option, so they can strategically lower the pricing concerning their cost tolerance (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). Jeff Bezos at Amazon used unit economics to evaluate the Amazon business performance including delivery and fulfillment, and Bezos applied the evaluation insights to review the market assumptions and Amazon stock pricing trends (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). The leaders at Amazon strategically tolerated negative financial outcomes before Amazon business became profitable (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022).

Leaders at MoviePass, a cinema subscription service since 2011, used unit economics to identify the optimal pricing points between growth and profitability (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). When the leaders at MoviePass suffered to gain business growth, they decided to change the priority KPI from revenue to growth (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). MoviePass leaders set a $9.95 monthly subscription

fee whereas they covered the cinema visit cost at $8.97 to $12 per subscriber. These leaders used unit economics and closely monitored the balance between the costs, market shares, and revenue expectations for creating profitable business growth (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022).

Leaders can apply unit economics for strategically managing costs and pricing, especially those difficult scenarios (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). One scenario is changing a pricing strategy to approach customers who are deeply attached to the existing discounts or free pricing and continue to expect the free options. Leaders can use unit economics to monitor the new strategy by placing fewer discounts or non-free pricing for maintaining expected profitability (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). Another scenario is deciding to discontinue existing businesses due to the market change caused by new entrants enabling innovative business models (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022). Leaders can determine the business performances by using unit economics to simulate if they have to exist or the possible best timing to exit (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2022).

Before COVID-19, research experts suggested needing retail model innovation with digital capacities in enabling new practices for disrupting and reinventing the existing models (Deloitte, 2019; Huang et al., 2019). There are four elements, which can be implemented to enhance technical and organizational capacities (Huang et al., 2019). The first element is new sales channels to maximize revenue generation. Some leaders seek to maximize the store selling capacity, online and mobile channels (Grewal et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2019). These leaders apply digitalization and analytic technologies to

expand the existing revenue generation capacities (Grewal et al., 2017; Hänninen et al., 2018, 2019; Huang et al., 2019).

The second element is a new alliance model to create a new market opportunity through business acquisitions and partnership engagements (Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022; Budden & Murray, 2022; Huang et al., 2019). More leaders work together and integrate their business models, expanding a cross-stakeholder innovation ecosystem including public and private sectors to generate innovation-driven enterprise (Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022; Budden & Murray, 2022; Hänninen et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2019). Leaders tend to generate better outcomes when they begin relating ecosystem activities with a strategy defining goals, approaches, and expected outcomes (Budden & Murray, 2022).

The third element is that the new talent management scheme for building the knowledge should align with the business needs (Huang et al., 2019). Leaders are under pressure to hire new employees and retain the existing employees to maintain the needed knowledge to support organizational growth (Huang et al., 2019). Some of the challenges are assessing and maintaining the knowledge because the needed knowledge can be changed time after time based on the fast-changing business environment (Huang et al., 2019). Some business leaders consider university education as a solution to provide needed knowledge to sustain organizational performance. For example, some new venture leaders increased their success rate by providing education benefits such as tuition assistance programs to support skill building of their employees (Boudreaux, 2021). Although more educators in retail business explore effective ways to enable desired skillsets in the retail industry (Grewal et al., 2018), some leaders look into new

opportunities to grow talents. Oh and Polidan (2018) outlined a retail consulting class to enable desired skillsets in the retail industry. Business leaders seek skills, including critical thinking, cross-functional teamwork, data analytics, and leadership combination to approach current opportunities and challenges in retailing activities (Oh & Polidan, 2018). The university class was designed to set up an experimental learning environment where retail business students work with retail professionals to produce business recommendations (Oh & Polidan, 2018).

The fourth element is organizational resiliency to minimize potential retail operations risks (Huang et al., 2019). Leaders are expected to prepare for future crises and adapt to the impacts caused by the crisis (Barasa et al., 2018). Many leaders express the risk operation as risk resiliency and consider improving resiliency in various areas, including investment practices, data privacy handling, and supply-chain management (Huang et al., 2019). A recent expert study indicated board members of over 1000 global companies spent less than 10% of their time considering the business risks, and the attention trend remains the same in the past years (Huang et al., 2019). Regardless of the need to improve risk resiliency among the retail leaders, board members in the retailing industry might not spend enough time to consider the risk aspects (Huang et al., 2019).

Transition

Section 1 included the foundation of the study, the business problem, purpose, and study methods. There were also seven interview questions to generate data for answering the central research question: what strategies do leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains? A multiple qualitative case study with six cases

would guide the study process and a dynamic theory of strategy framework to conceptualize the findings. A review of the past professional and academic literature deepened the understanding of the existing research. The review categories were conceptual framework, relevant theories, theory of strategies, innovation, U.S.-based global retailing businesses, and strategies used by USGRC to generate innovation.

In Section 2, I discussed the researcher role, selection of the participants, research method, and research design. A discussion on the selected population, sampling, ethics, and data analysis were in section 2. In Section 3, I discussed the development of the study findings and presented the application to professional practices and implications for change. Included were recommendations and business actions, so business leaders and research colleagues can potentially benefit from them.

Section 2: The Project

This section's content demonstrates the rationale for selecting a qualitative multiple case study design to explore strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains. I also discussed the relevance of my approach to developing and delivering the research project. The study topics in this section include the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sample, ethical concerns, data collection instruments, data collection technique, data organization techniques, data analysis, reliability and validity, and transition and summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains. The population was business leaders in six USGRC in California who have used strategies to generate innovation for profit gains. The potential for effecting positive social change is through enabling firms to support local economic development. For example, people in a community might have greater job opportunities because more employment opportunities can be generated from the new retailing practices. People might also have greater access to the products that are manufactured for enhancing social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Role of the Researcher

The role of qualitative researchers is to apply an inductive research approach to explore social phenomena with multiple types of evidence developed through open-ended

interviews (Clark & Vealé, 2018). The role of qualitative researchers can be highly participatory, as they are closely involved in data generation processes with participants (Clark & Vealé, 2018). As a researcher in this multiple case study, my role included preparation, implementation, and evaluation considering quality and rigor.

I had no relationship with the study topic. I resided in the San Francisco Bay area in California between 1999 and 2006 to complete my San Jose State University undergraduate study. My undergraduate study topics were environmental studies and mathematics and were unrelated to this study. I was an analytic business manager in a global company and worked with industry experts acquiring retailing analytic solutions. My career background can be useful for keeping a focus on the study topic during the interview communications. Researchers should approach research practices by demonstrating open-mindedness, active listening, and being ethically proficient (Yin, 2017). As such, I have not interviewed any colleagues in the company where I am employed. I had no professional relationship with participants for this study.

Maintaining ethical standards is an important role in qualitative research. Doctoral students at Walden University must follow the Belmont Report protocol as provided by the United States National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The commission created the report pursuant to the National Research Act of 1974. The Belmont Report emphasizes the core ethical principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral

Research, 1979). I applied the Belmont Report protocol in this research to ensure the study met the ethical requirements.

Qualitative researchers must demonstrate both quality and rigor (Johnson et al., 2020), should present and process information objectively, and must eliminate subjective perspectives in all research communication (Johnson et al., 2020). They can strategically reduce personal bias by understanding personal biases, marketing systematic decisions, and being open to learning new ideas and philosophies (Marcelin et al., 2019). I increased my awareness of personal bias and approached the research open-mindedly to avoid bias and prevent personal skewing of data.

Moreover, qualitative researchers must process qualitative information objectively, which requires a systematic process (Johnson et al., 2020). One way to increase objectivity is the preparation of systematic guidelines, such as an interview protocol document (Peterson, 2019). I developed and applied an interview protocol for this study. Additionally, I selected interview participants, outlined the research method and design, developed the interview protocol, and completed the ethical review. During the interview, I followed the interview protocol, conducted six interviews, and collected data. After the data collection, I evaluated data by conducting data analysis, reviewing the data quality, and developing a finding summary report. The interview protocol is included in Appendix A.

Participants

The participants for this multiple case study were business leaders in USGRC in California who have used strategies to generate innovation for profit gains. In a study like

this, participants who can provide the diverse aspects of the relevant knowledge to the study topic are selected (Sandvik & McCormack, 2018). The strategy of gaining access to participants in this study was completed using online methods. Social media sites such as LinkedIn are useful to find career professionals because the site lists their career overviews, including the employers' name, job title, and educational background in their profile (Koch et al., 2018). I used LinkedIn to gain access to study participants who met the selection criteria of being a business leader in a U.S.-based global retailing company in California and who had used strategies to generate innovation for profit gains. I also used email communication to gain access to some study participants. When needed, I used the companies' primary contact page to find study participants who did not register on social media sites, or to leverage people in my network who might know potential study participants. In these cases, I used email communication to gain access to the participants

My approach to establishing a working relationship with participants was by applying an interview protocol. Researchers who use an interview protocol can increase communication effectiveness through clear and articulated questions (Lynch & Rosenfeld, 2020; Ritchie, 2021). The participants are more trusting when they understand the ethical process used to share their knowledge with the research community (Guillemin et al., 2018). I established a working relationship by following the interview protocol, giving instructions, and reassuring confidentiality and ethical practices.

Research Method and Design

This multiple qualitative case study includes six case studies. Research methods and designs are created by applying their research philosophy to understand the truth, reality, and knowledge (Peterson, 2019; Ryan, 2018). There are various combinations to formulate the beliefs and values of philosophical principles in reasoning practices (Ryan, 2018). To ensure in-depth contexts and meaningful evidence, I selected a multiple qualitative case study with six cases to develop better evidence for supporting my research findings. In this section, I explain the research method and research design selected for this study.

Research Method

I selected a qualitative research method as it supports a series of exploratory techniques including explaining, decoding, and translating, which will facilitate the exploration of various phenomena (Rechberg, 2018). Researchers select qualitative research to explore, explain, and illustrate the study topics (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Peterson, 2019). Qualitative research fits this study because the focus was on substantial understanding of a business phenomenon, specifically types of innovation strategies used by leaders of USGRC for profit gains, which fills a gap of unexplored knowledge about the topic.

I selected a qualitative research method over quantitative or mixed methods because quantitative research is only performed with a clear objective to test a theory (Clark & Vealé, 2018). Researchers use quantitative research to present and test a hypothesis, identify facts with statistical evidence, and generalize the findings to the

study population (Clark & Vealé, 2018). I did not select quantitative research for this study because I was not conducting hypothesis testing nor collecting numerical data to validate my assumptions.

Mixed-method research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to produce research findings (Fàbregues et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021). Researchers select mixed-method research because they can use qualitative methods to help explore the meaning of quantitative findings (Fàbregues et al., 2021; Park et al., 2021). Another method that can be used is the mixed method to quantify qualitative data and describe the meanings of the qualitative findings (Aalbers et al., 2020; Yi Zhou et al., 2020). Mixed-method research requires more time and effort for the total research activities, especially the data integrations, limiting the time available for qualitative or quantitative methods to deliver quality outcomes (Yi Zhou et al., 2020). I did not use mixed-method research for this study because I was not testing hypotheses, nor quantifying my qualitative findings. Instead, I needed to focus on the in-depth understanding of innovation strategies used by leaders of USGRC for profit gains.

Research Design

I selected a multiple-case study design. A case study is useful to explain the meaning of empirical findings (Alpi & Evans, 2019). Researchers explore real-world contexts through qualitative inquiries, which can be considered an exploratory practice (Alpi & Evans, 2019). A case study facilitates the development of qualitative data through observations, interviews, focus groups, coding, and analysis (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Bressanelli et al., 2019; Yin, 2017). Researchers can assess in-depth contexts about

the study phenomena and build new knowledge with meaningful evidence (Alpi &

Evans, 2019; Bressanelli et al., 2019). Ávila-Robinson et al. (2022) reported some

significant growth of case study research publications in 2012-2021. Researchers in the

fields of management, marketing, and other business subjects in social sciences select a

case study design for intensively investigating a specific or some phenomena (Alpi &

Evans, 2019).

A multiple-case design is selected to develop multiple types of evidence for a

single study topic (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Yin, 2017), to increase objectivity to support

their findings, and demonstrate the ability to work beyond a single-case approach (Yin,

2017). Other design options such as ethnography and phenomenology are also available.

Researchers select ethnography to explore meanings and manners of group dynamics in

an entire view of culture, and phenomenology is used to capture individual experiences

when exploring individual life stories (Mohajan, 2018). In this study, I focused on a

substantial understanding of a business phenomenon rather than exploring meanings and

manners or capturing individual experiences. Thus, a case study design was more useful

than these other designs.

I interviewed six participants from different organizations to reach data saturation.

There are two types of data saturation: thematic and theoretical (Lowe et al., 2018).

Thematic saturation is achieved when there are no additional themes in the data analysis

(Lowe et al., 2018); alternately, theoretical saturation is achieved when there is no new

information gleaned from the interview participants (Lowe et al., 2018; Moser &

Korstjens, 2018). Sample size does not determine either data saturation because

qualitative designs can change the sample size for the data saturation (Lowe et al., 2018;

Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers should describe the data saturation process,

develop a support document containing a saturation table to trace themes and

observations, and apply member checking for obtaining reviews from research

participants to ensure the data saturation quality (Caretta & Pérez, 2019; Lowe et al.,

2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Thus, I applied member checking and interviewed

participants to reach data saturation.

Population and Sampling

The population in this study included business leaders from six USGRC in

California who have used strategies to generate innovation for profit gains. I applied a

purposeful sampling method to select the participants for this study. The purposeful

sampling method is a strategy which focuses on similarity or variation across a

population to identify accessible research participants (Palinkas et al., 2015). I applied

purposeful sampling and selected possible interview candidates who believed they met

the selection criteria of being business leaders in U.S.-based global retailing companies in

California, have used strategies to generate innovation for profit gains, understood the

study, and wished to volunteer.

I also used snowball sampling because I was unable to identify enough

participants for this study. In snowball sampling, researchers identify participants by

communicating with people in a community to access the participants with target

characters typically inaccessible (Palinkas et al., 2015). Snowball sampling was useful for

this study to identify the six participants with similar characteristics. Business leaders

with the selected criteria could be identified but not all were necessarily accessible to recruit for this study. Thus, I used a snowball strategy as an additional method so I could increase access to the participants with the selection criteria when I could not recruit enough interview participants via purposeful sampling.

The sample size in the qualitative study can depend on the specific scope and nature of the topic (Blaikie, 2018; Sim et al., 2018). Some researchers estimated appropriate sample size in qualitative interview research, whereas others argued the variations of the sample size and lack of rationale supporting the aforementioned sample size estimation (Blaikie, 2018; Sim et al., 2018). An appropriate sample size can be determined during the analytic process by gaining details from collected data and starting to understand the full contexts (Sim et al., 2018). Another way to objectively demonstrate the chosen sample size is by describing the scope and nature of the study topic, interview protocol, and population (Sim et al., 2018). It is equally important to indicate the possible bias due to the smaller sample size as a study limitation (Blaikie, 2018). I tried to meet the data saturation requirement by selecting six participants whose knowledge and experiences align with the study population. I also included those descriptions and limitations to support the sampling size of this study.

Criteria for the participant sampling were the same as the population. The population in this study was comprised of business leaders from six USGRC in California who have used strategies to generate innovation for profit gains. In this way, I increased information-rich data from each interview practice and help identify a common theme in the smaller sample size. Researchers should carefully prepare and provide an interview

setting so that the participants feel comfortable to disclose their knowledge and experiences (Dikun et al., 2021). Videoconferencing system communication methods can be preferred over other methods including face-to-face and telephone for their privacy, cost-effectiveness, and data management benefits (Archibald et al., 2019). Additionally, - participants being interviewed via a videoconferencing system might experience a higher satisfactory experience than alternative methods such as face-to-face or telephone interviews (Archibald et al., 2019). Participants have fewer technical difficulties, fewer security concerns, and higher satisfaction with Zoom than other videoconferencing services (Archibald et al., 2019). I used an online videoconferencing such as Zoom to offer an online interview environment and selected a place where each participant answered my questions without being heard or disturbed by others. I advised each participant to stay private and limit sharing conversation with others to avoid any disruption during the videoconferencing.

Ethical Research

Researchers are the primary instruments to gain access to the research participants, collect data, and conduct analysis (Clark & Vealé, 2018). They must also maintain confidentiality and regard for their ethical components of research practice (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018; Velardo & Elliott, 2018). Additionally, they should ensure both required and non-required ethical items in the research practice. The institutional review board (IRB) provides formal review and approval procedures to ensure the quality of ethical research practices (Alter & Gonzalez, 2018; Lynch & Rosenfeld, 2020). To research human subjects, doctoral students at Walden University must obtain approval of

their ethical research components. I met all the IRB requirements and obtained formal approval on the ethical research components of this study before communicating with all the participants. The Walden IRB approval number for this study is 03-11-22-0650113.

Since ethical research practices are ongoing activities, they might easily occur outside the approval processes, so researchers must demonstrate the best ethical judgments in any research contexts, including researcher-participant communication (Lynch & Rosenfeld, 2020; Reid et al., 2018). An interview protocol is a key data collection tool to be used and demonstrated in the communication between researchers and participants (Braaten et al., 2020). In my communication with the participants, I followed the guidance included in an interview protocol to demonstrate my ethical practices. In the interview protocol, I stated what I do and say to outline the communication with participants during the videoconferencing.

Doctoral students at Walden University use a consent form to protect participants respectfully. After obtaining the IRB approval, I sent a consent form to participants and explained their role and responsibilities in participating in this research. Participants had one week to review the consent form, ask questions, and inform their decision on participating in this study. In the consent form, I included the following items to ensure ethical research practices. The interview participants were voluntarily participating in this study, and each participant could withdraw at any time during the interview process. I did not give any incentives for participating in the research.

Additionally, I informed participants about privacy handling, including the data storage planning to demonstrate ethical practices in data security. I have stored the data

securely for 5 years and protect the confidentiality of participants. I saved the data files in primary and secondary storage with password protection for storage access. Primary storage is the hardware attached to a personal computer with password protection for computer access. Secondary storage is Google Drive storage, and I am the only person to access to the data file. When I stored the data, I gave an identification number to each participant and replaced the participant's name with the identification number to maintain data confidentiality. I created a table with the names and identification numbers, which I saved separately from the stored data. The proposed study did not include names or any other identifying information of individuals or organizations of the participants. The information shared by each participant was in a safe location where only the researcher has access.

<div align="center">**Data Collection Instruments**</div>

Researchers are the primary instruments to gain access to the research participants, collect data, and conduct analysis (Clark & Vealé, 2018). As a primary data collection instrument, I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions and gathered company documents. Semistructured interviews are widely used to address predetermined questions and gain an in-depth understanding of the study subject (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Miller et al., 2018). Open-ended question selection enables formulating study phenomena, interview questions, and existing knowledge through the participants' communications (Bearman, 2019). Formulating the study phenomena, interview responses, and existing knowledge to develop meaningful information may lead to a deeper understanding of the study phenomena (Bearman, 2019; Miller et al., 2018).

Researchers can also select structured or unstructured interviews. However, these interviews cannot be useful in this study. Structured interviews are used to clarify certain items of the study topic and conduct an interview to collect data that may include repetitive information comparable to data collected through verbal questionnaires (Gill & Baillie, 2018). A structured approach cannot be useful to support a full exploration of human experiences. On the other hand, unstructured interviews are used when researchers are unfamiliar with the study topic, so they conduct interviews with open-ended questions to gain some initial knowledge to lead research audiences (Gill & Baillie, 2018). The unstructured approach cannot be effective in exploring an in-depth understanding of the study phenomena. Therefore, I applied semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which made the most sense for exploring strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains.

I used an interview protocol to follow standard data collection techniques that include ethical research practices. Researchers using an interview protocol have the advantages of generating meaningful data (Bearman, 2019; Braaten et al., 2020). Participants might face difficulty fully sharing their experiences due to the topic's complexity, so researchers should develop well-formulated interview questions and ease participants' responses (Bearman, 2019; Braaten et al., 2020). I designed the interview protocol by following Walden University's IRB guidance. During the interview, I asked the interview questions in the same order listed in the interview protocol and communicated clearly to help these participants respond to my interview questions better. The interview protocol is in Appendix A.

I applied member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collation. Researchers apply member checking to confirm the validity of their theoretical understanding and generalization of raw data (Brear, 2019). In a high-quality member checking, it is of prime importance to carefully review the accuracy of the transcription and interpretation of the contexts described by the interview participants (Brear, 2019; Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Furthermore, the data analysis steps should be carefully reviewed including coding to develop the study findings (Brear, 2019; Caretta & Pérez, 2019). In this way, trustworthiness of this study is enhanced (Brear, 2019; Caretta & Pérez, 2019).

Participants in this study received a transcript including their responses and my interpretation of the contexts via email. The participants had one week to review, comment, or contact me for any questions they would have. I provided a follow-up communication via email to help the participants accurately review these interpretations and provide their feedback. Participants of this study confirmed my interpretations of their responses were accurate. Two participants suggested some changes via email and I updated relevant areas of transcription accordingly.

I also collected company documents as a secondary data source. Collecting data from multiple resources for a single case study might add meaningful trustworthiness to their study (Smit et al., 2021). I conducted online research to extract accessible company documents. I also requested the interview participants share company documents that include or relate to strategies they used to generate innovation for profit gains. The interview participants had one week to send the document via email to me.

Data Collection Technique

Researchers typically have three options of data collection techniques such as observations, interviews, and small group discussions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I used semistructured interviews and document reviews to collect data in a text format. I enhanced the data collection technique by using interview protocol to navigate participants and help them focus on the study topic during the interview. I also used an online videoconferencing system to coordinate a virtual meeting room and keep the environment private. I also used an audio recording to save the participants' responses. After the interview, I used voice-to-text conversion technology such as Otter.ai or Notta.ai transcription tools to develop word-for-word transcripts.

I described several advantages and disadvantages of the interviews. As a primary advantage, researchers using interviews can access in-depth information of the participants' viewpoints, experiences, and motivations whereas other techniques such as observations and small group discussions cannot (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers use a small group discussion and generate data containing opinions and ideas (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I needed to focus on the participants' past experiences in strategic innovation practices, so I was not observing or generating ideas. Thus, taking an interview technique made sense to generate meaningful data for this study.

As a disadvantage, when researchers collect data through interviews, the data quality is subject to the reporting ability of participants (Braaten et al., 2020). There should be high awareness of a chance that researchers might fail to collect relevant

information because participants cannot report their experiences well because of the topic complexity (Braaten et al., 2020).To overcome the disadvantage, structured open-ended questions should be prepared to ease the self-report process for the participants' (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I prepared interview questions, followed each step of the interview protocol, and communicated clearly to help participants respond to the interview questions. Additionally, I respected the interview participant's choice of language. Some participants preferred to respond by speaking in Japanese, their mother tongue, to increase the quality and efficiency of their responses.

As another advantage, these researchers can increase access to targeted participants by adapting a videoconferencing system. Archibald et al. (2019) indicated that 69% of participants prefer a Zoom among other videoconferencing options due to its usability. Many participants rated the Zoom interview as an effective method for saving costs and time (Archibald et al., 2019). However, many participants can also experience technical difficulties such as entering into Zoom conferencing or experiencing poor video or voice connections due to lacking familiarity with Zoom or high-speed Internet (Archibald et al., 2019; Lobe et al., 2020).

I hosted Zoom videoconferencing to interview participants. No participants requested to switch to another videoconferencing method such as Skype or Google Meet. I tried to eliminate the disadvantage of a videoconferencing. Before the meeting, I planned to identify the participant's preferred videoconferencing method and provide support information on the system to minimize potential technical difficulties. However, participants were already familiar with attending a Zoom meeting. Moreover, researchers

using interviews can acquire quality data by audio recording and transcribing word-for-word information (Gill & Baillie, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Transcription software is designed to automate voice-to-text conversion to generate transcription data (Goldenthal et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2020). Using a transcription software such as Otter.ai can increase research efficiency in generating transcripts (Gray et al., 2020) I supported the data collection techniques by using Otter.ai and Notta.ai to develop a word-for-word transcript. I used Google Translate to prepare the first version of the translation and completed the translation manually to produce English transcripts.

I used member checking to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of study data, data interpretations, and analytic findings. Through member checking, researchers can ensure accuracy of data and analytic interpretations (Brear, 2019; Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Researchers can eliminate possible bias or misinterpretation when participants review and share their feedback on the accuracy of the analytical interpretations (Brear, 2019; Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Thus, I shared my data interpretation of the participants' responses with participants to confirm that I understand the information correctly. I offered participants one week and three communication options to validate my interpretations: videoconference, phone, or email.

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative researchers should present data management's trustworthiness and demonstrate evidence of their data understanding (Peterson, 2019). They can record data and apply a systematic process to conduct analytic steps including coding, categorizing, and summarizing (Alam, 2020; Kobayashi et al., 2018). I assigned each participant a

codename and ensured confidentiality to generate data. The codenames were P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5, and the order was based on the interview date. The codename was a unique key and filename to track all data, including the interview audio recording, notes, and company documents. I saved this data in Microsoft Excel files.

I applied Yin's five steps data analysis process to organize my data processing and analytic tasks. I also used a mind mapping visualization technique to present the relationship between study findings and key themes of the research. Some researchers apply a mind mapping method to visualize a complex relationship between contents in data analysis (Mammen & Mammen, 2018).

I aided my data organization with various software tools including NVivo, Otter.ai, Notta.ai, Mind Map, Microsoft Word and Excel, and Adobe Acrobat Reader. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, enables systematic ways to store, process, and analyze qualitative data (Phillips & Lu, 2018). Researchers can access visual aids to explain data and analytic findings in systematic, transparent, and cost-effective ways by using NVivo (Phillips & Lu, 2018). I used Otter.ai and Notta.ai to convert voice data into text data and developed word-for-word transcripts in Microsoft Word files, which were imported in NVivo. I used Mind Map software to develop visual aids and supported data organization between study findings and key themes of the research. I also used Adobe Acrobat Reader to generate portable document format files to record the company documents in NVivo. Finally, I developed a finding summary with Microsoft Excel and Word.

Data Analysis

In this multiple case study, I conducted methodological triangulation and followed Yin's five steps data analysis to systematically and rigorously process data analysis and develop analytic conclusions. Researchers are applying triangulation to increase the reliability of the study findings and applicability to a common phenomenon (Fusch et al., 2018; Natow, 2020). I used NVivo, Microsoft Word and Excel, and Mind Map software tools to aid my data analysis activities along with some other support tools including Otter.ai, Notta.ai, and Google Translate. If Yin's five steps are used, data can be systematically and thoroughly processed and analytic conclusions can be made through the key steps: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017).

Compiling is the first step to processing the qualitative data and extracting meaningful answers to research questions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017). Researchers take primary tasks in the compiling step: transcribe the interview data, apply a consistent and organized data format, and deepen their data understanding (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I compiled data to understand the raw data and assess my research questions in the following steps. In this stage, I transcribed interview data by converting the audio format to text format. I generated word-for-word transcripts in voice-to-text software such as Otter.ai and Notta.ai to generate Microsoft Word document files. I processed two languages to generate the transcripts and interpretations because I received Japanese responses and English responses during the interview. Otter.ai was used to convert English audio data into English texts and Notter.ai was used to convert Japanese

audio data into Japanese texts. I then applied a consistent format to organize the questions and answers of each interview to develop transcripts. I also developed my interpretations for each interview and conducted member checking with all interview participants via email. When a participant suggested a modification, I updated the relevant areas in the transcript to reflect the suggested changes. I then prepared a final version of the transcripts. I translated the Japanese transcript into the English language myself. I then created a project in NVivo and imported all word-for-word transcripts.

Disassembling is the second step in applying a coding technique and developing meaningful data categories (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017). Researchers create codes to detach words and phrases to identify the meaningful patterns, including similarities and differences (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017). They see the coding activity as complex because they need to consider various items, including events, actors and their roles, sequences of the events, explicit and implicit reasoning, and cause of the events (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The coding activity is seen as repetitive because new themes are continually found and refined with no new themes being detected (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Reassembling is the third step to creating themes by associating contexts, codes, and patterns in codes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017). Researchers use codes to clarify the new data categories and themes to detect the patterns among the codes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). They develop thematic analysis results to confirm if the themes are relevant to the research question, a definition for each theme, and contextual data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Many of them use two visual aids: thematic

hierarchies to capture structural relationships among codes and context matrices to demonstrate findings in conjunction with data and contexts (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). These visual aids are useful in self-assessments and assessments with others, such as member checking (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I assessed the relationship between research questions, themes, codes, and contexts. I extracted themes from data and assessed if each theme was relevant to the research question, a definition, and contextual data.

Interpreting is the fourth step to making analytic conclusions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017). Interpretation enables critical values in qualitative research because researchers cannot extract the essential information by reading the raw data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Researchers make interpretations based on data and use the interpretations to make conclusions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). They develop interpretations by analyzing data prepared in the previous steps including thematic patterns and contexts of codes (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Then, they use their interpretations to extract essential information of the phenomenon relevant to their research questions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Researchers who make a series of interpretations must provide details of their interpretations and increase the subjectivity of the research (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017). Some of them develop a thematic map to illustrate the development of analytic conclusions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I made analytic conclusions based on the analytic findings generated in the previous steps. I also used the interpretations to extract thematic patterns and created a

thematic map to illustrate my logic formulation especially the relationship between research questions, interpretations, themes, codes, and contexts.

Concluding is the last step, and researchers aim to make analytic conclusions as responses to the research questions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017). Researchers assess thematic maps and the data generated in the previous steps and develop statements that directly respond to the research questions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). They also include details of their decision-making around coding, interpreting, and mapping the data to articulate the scope of the study (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). On the other hand, mind mapping can be used to increase the effectiveness of research communication and the study's trustworthiness (Mammen & Mammen, 2018). I made analytic conclusions with key details around my decision-making in coding, interpreting, and mapping themes. I developed an illustration to formulate my research question, the key themes addressed in the literature review, the conceptual framework, and the findings generated in the data analysis.

Researchers advance their disassembling practices because software tools can enable additional capacities such as faster coding, depth analysis, and multiple graphical creations (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Phillips & Lu, 2018). I used NVivo to create a set of codes, develop new data categories, capture definitions of codes, and prepare graphical charts if relevant. I used NVivo and Excel to develop thematic hierarchies and context matrices.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are products of the verification process and are used to demonstrate qualities of qualitative research to ensure rigor (Hayashi et al., 2019; Spiers et al., 2018). In the verification practices, researchers consider criteria such as internal and external validities, reliability, and objectivity to attain rigor (Yin, 2017). Verification strategies improve the reliability and validity of data (Hayashi et al., 2019). Verification strategies include methodological consistency, sampling adequacy, a dynamic relationship between research questions and data analysis, and theoretical findings (Fusch et al., 2018). Developing verification strategies increases the reliability and validity in the multiple stages of the research development (Hayashi et al., 2019). Therefore, the ability to repeat the reliability and validity process can be gained in each stage for adjusting and improving the quality of the research performance (Hayashi et al., 2019; Spiers et al., 2018).

Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability is the consistency of results over time (Hayashi et al., 2019). Other researchers will arrive at the same results when they follow the same research steps indicated in the original study (Yin, 2017). Dependability is the stability of results over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability is the ability to duplicate the research and achieve the same results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In addition, some researchers might see dependability as an aspect of trustworthiness or validity (Hayashi et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Member checking is a technique to improve the accuracy of data interpretations where researchers most likely contain their subjective views (Brear, 2019; Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Because researchers make a series of interpretations and increase subjectivity in their findings (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Yin, 2017), they should transparently demonstrate the analytic steps and their data operations including logic and judgments (Brear, 2019; Caretta & Pérez, 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I applied member checking to reduce subjectivity for increased dependability. I was the only researcher conducting this study, so I reviewed my interpretations of the participants' responses and used their feedback to correct any discrepancies to support reliability. I also conducted member checking in the language the participants preferred to speak during the interview, so the participants were able to review the interpretations to potentially maximize the data quality. I developed supporting documents such as a list of codes, themes, and interpretations with definitions and explanations as well as a thematic map to demonstrate my logic formulation relevant to the research question. I addressed my subjective aspects of the research and increased the dependability of my research findings.

Validity

Qualitative validity is the confidence that researchers can conclude data analysis (Hayashi et al., 2019). Qualitative researchers view trustworthiness as the main idea of validity considering credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Hayashi et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Peterson, 2019). I supported the trustworthiness of this study by formulating credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the confidence of researchers' original work and valuable contribution to the scientific communities (Hayashi et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers gain credibility by presenting original data and their research work (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). They ensure data credibility through methodological triangulation by describing data sources, their roles in data collection, and the data collection method (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The credibility of findings can be ensured through member checking by explaining steps and idea generations in data analysis and finding development (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I improved the credibility of my study by applying methodological triangulation with a blended design and conducting member checking. I shared my data interpretation with the participant to authenticate the study data.

Transferability refers to the applicability of the research findings in an extended scenario (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers provide detailed descriptions with contexts about the participants and phenomenon to readers (Hayashi et al., 2019). Readers can make transferability decisions based on the descriptions if the study findings apply to their scenario (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers ensure the transferability of their research by developing thick descriptions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Adding contexts is critically important to aid readers' transferability decisions (Hayashi et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I increased the transferability of my study by developing research sections in a comprehensive and detailed manner. I described relevant details in participants, research method and design, and data analysis. I also provided contexts to present the findings and aid the readers' decisions in transferability.

Confirmability refers to qualitative objectivity (Hayashi et al., 2019). Other researchers verify that data, and research findings are developed through the research practices but not fictionally generated by the research author (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Researchers ensure the confirmability of their research through an audit trail to verify research steps (Hayashi et al., 2019; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I supported the confirmability of my study by applying an audit trail. I shared research steps and any other needed information in this study to demonstrate my decision-making steps for attaining qualitative rigor.

Additionally, qualitative researchers view data saturation as a critical item in validity because it can determine sample size (Alam, 2020; Fusch et al., 2018). Qualitative data saturation refers to the stage where new data generate no additional themes in their data analysis (Lowe et al., 2018). It also refers to the stage where new data generate no new information from the interview participants (Lowe et al., 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Researchers should describe a data saturation process and develop a supporting document such as a saturation table to trace themes and observations (Lowe et al., 2018). Member checking will facilitate the process of obtaining reviews from research participants to ensure the data saturation quality (Caretta & Pérez, 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I developed a saturation table to trace themes and observations for better data saturation practices and interviewed participants to reach data saturation.

Thus, I improved the qualitative validity of this study by assessing my data interpretation, reviewing participant transcripts, and conducting triangulation to

authenticate the study data. I also included comprehensive and detailed information to describe relevant details in participants, research method and design, and data analysis, including research steps and data saturation table to demonstrate my decision-making. Altogether, I demonstrated key validation practices for attaining qualitative rigor and earning better trustworthiness.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I detailed the research project. I elaborated on the study's purpose, the researcher's role, and participant selection. I justified the research method and design, including data generation, ethical practices, data collection, and data organization and elucidated reliability and validity to improve rigor and trustworthiness in analytic conclusions. In Section 3, I delivered the research outcome after I had conducted the interview and data analysis.

My goal is to deliver the findings and other information transparently to increase the rigor and trustworthiness of this study. I presented the study findings, application to professional practices, implications for social changes, as well as recommendations for specific actions. I included a thematic map to outline the research questions, themes, and analytic conclusions and confirm the alignments with the conceptual framework. I also presented the future research, reflections, and conclusions. I articulated not only the future research items to contribute to relevant research communities but also the reflections to highlight my individual biases which would possibly affect the participants, interview process, and analytic conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains. Six participants were selected using the purposeful sampling method, in addition to the snowball sampling strategy. I conducted videoconferencing (Zoom) semi structured interviews with open-ended questions with six business leaders from USGRC in California, U.S.A. During the data analysis, three themes emerged: customer-centric opportunity identification strategy, differentiation strategy, and firm-level, value creation strategy. The findings from the study indicated that USGRC leaders practice a series of strategies to generate cumulative insights before adapting those insights for decision-making in innovation activities.

Presentation of the Findings

The main research question for this study was: What strategies do leaders of USGRC use to generate innovation for profit gains? During the data analysis, three themes emerged: customer-centric opportunity identification strategy, differentiation strategy, and firm-level value creation strategy. Each theme has included subthemes that may detail the rationale of the theme with data, literature review, and conceptual framework.

Theme 1: Customer-Centric Opportunity Identification Strategy

The first theme that emerged in the data analysis is customer-centric opportunity identification strategies. As shown in Table 1, participants focused on customer interests in business opportunity identifications. The theme includes three subthemes: strategies

built on understanding customer behavior, strategies built on assessing feasible

objectives, and integration of vertical and horizontal skills. Table 1 presents the

subthemes created based on the six data points used to generate strategies in customer-

centric opportunity identification.

Table 1

Customer-Centric Opportunity Identification Strategy

Subtheme	Frequency	Percent
Strategies built on understanding consumer behavior	55	54%
Strategies built on assessing feasible objectives	31	31%
Integration of vertical and horizontal skills	15	15%

Strategies built on understanding consumer behavior emerged as the initial

subtheme. Participants had built strategies to understand customers with their customer-

centric points of view. P6 confirmed that, "I have used a customer-driven strategy to

approach innovation," and "the strategy is to start with a problem, and mostly those

problems come from our customers." Additionally, P5 and P6 conducted intensive

market research and workshops to realize unspoken or unrealistic customer expectations.

P6 noted, "the customer does not understand our business or our technology," and

"customers sometimes want something that does not make sense."

The *strategies built on understanding consumer behavior* subtheme has been

intensely discussed in the literature, where customer-first culture is a key leadership

priority (Bogers et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2018; Grewal et al., 2021a, 2021b; Huang et al.,

2019; Leavy, 2019; McKinsey, 2021; Schoemaker et al., 2018; Teece, 2018). Leaders are

expected to craft strategies to meet more individualistic and global perspectives for

effective retail operations (Cao et al., 2018). For example, business leaders have the

choice to open an online-based store on an online platform, which is an approach to

increase customer engagement capacities for greater profitability (Grewal et al., 2017;

Hänninen et al., 2018, 2019; Huang et al., 2019). Based on reviews of company

documents, participants worked in companies that have multiple online channels

introducing their offerings via multiple direct contact methods. Four companies have an

online shopping page using global online retailing. Leaders need specific customer

understanding and intense strategic activities to innovate retail business models with new

technologies, personalization capacities, and multichannel communication (Grewal et al.,

2021a; McKinsey, 2021). The companies have their company account on LinkedIn with

five of them using at least one of the three main social media outlets (i.e., Twitter,

Facebook, and YouTube) to enable two-way communication with individual customers

and gather customer comments on their social media accounts.

Strategies built on assessing feasible objectives is the second subtheme. P1, P4,

and P6 explained optimization logic to identify feasible objects when considering

customer interests and business profitability. P1 shared that store managers optimize the

number of product varieties and customer satisfaction relative to store operation

capacities, as well as determining a level of customer satisfaction, number of suppliers,

and number of invoices that are manually processed by store operators; these numbers are

seen as an operational constraint. P4 facilitated the identification of customer preferences,

prioritized the preferences, and estimated break-even points between customer

satisfaction levels and costs. Also, P4 recommended product features that still recognize customer satisfaction and aid profitability. P4 noted, "we researched the 10 things a customer wants or needs but the most important are the most frequent three. As long as we provide these three things, customers should be satisfied." A review of homepages of companies' websites showed such words as "profit-optimization," "ROI," or cost efficiency that are designed to attract their customers.

P2 and P5 explained additional logic to identify feasible objects when considering customer interests and business profitability. P2 said, "First thing is sizing up that problem." P2 assessed the size of the opportunity by assessing, "how many customers are there? How big is the market? How many people have that problem? We tried to understand how painful this problem is to solve." P5 noted, "Instead of measuring profit and loss, I've measured how fast I get to the market. Another one is that I get critical clients or customers to accept my products." P5 stated, "Can your application and your organization be able to handle and scale larger? Scalability is very important."

The *Strategies built on assessing feasible objectives* subtheme has also been discussed in the literature. Leaders should assess both opportunities and risks associated with new opportunities (Kapoor & Klueter, 2020). Because of the increased operating costs of adapting complex and expensive retailing applications, experts outlined a declining profitability trend in the U.S. retailing industry (Jin & Shin, 2020; Sides & Skelly, 2021). The participants similarly noted the importance of scalability when they innovated their businesses by gaining or creating new digital capacities as part of a global retailing platform. Four participant organizations operate online shopping websites to

attract digital capacities. Leaders who apply digital platforms can achieve industrial scaling with relatively smaller resources by integrating scalable and adaptable platform models linking multiple resources (Montes & Olleros, 2019).

Integration of vertical and horizontal skills is also another subtheme. Participants have practiced cross-functional validation to determine customer problems and business feasibility to realize potential business opportunities. P2 stated that it is on, "how you actually bring different skill sets together as you try to drive business growth." More than one participant undertook joint opportunity identification. P6 explained that their sales team conducts gap analysis and business discovery to identify what the customer problems are, what are the problems customers need solved, and how engineers can help identify the feasible innovation specifications. P6 explained T style management as the vertical bars of the T represent the technical ability to connect with other internal and external expert organizations. Horizontal bars of the T represent the technical depth in the core competency of the group being managed. P6 noted, "T style management supports innovation in which the manager is the key technical communicator and has the breadth to see where new ideas might fit in the bigger picture if someone from the team has an idea."

Participants integrated a workflow across vertical and horizontal functions to consider multiple points of view to craft better strategies. P4 stated, "all selected people from different departments involved in gaining more customer base have to be involved in decision making in terms of what strategies are going to be pursued." P6 noted, "production and Sales have to communicate tightly to ensure value is recognized by

customers." The feasibility validation activities included external knowledge and industry experiences. Additionally, P3 noted, "We have some other advisors, beyond the board of directors, who will actually evaluate our ideas for us. They're under non-disclosure agreements, and they will tell us if this advice would be relevant to our target customers."

A review of company documents confirmed the cross-functional approach adopted by these organizations. The top page of P2's company is designed to set a button for trial and product purchase, which are linked to sales functions, a future event menu box that is designed to navigate details of future marketing events, a product ROI information piece associated with the product value testimonials to link marketing research activities, and customer support information including future updates. The top page of P3's company is designed to show a video animation to visualize the value creation process customers would experience in the end as enabled by P3's technologies. The animation contains details of two types of value creation steps on two different locations on the top page followed by brand use case stories.

As with the other examples, the *integration of vertical and horizontal skills* subtheme has also been discussed in the literature. A success factor for inventors can be uniting business philosophy and invention (Teece, 2018). Innovation can also be a new idea being adapted into existing practices (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Si et al., 2020). Participants of this study applied multiple skills from products, engineering, and sales to assess consumer behaviors and feasibility objects. OECD researchers suggested four types of innovation: product, process, organizational, and marketing (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Gault, 2018). Participants used multiple skills to trace multiple innovation

potentials in the new opportunity identification, as well as to approach value recognitions relative to the existing business practices. Christensen et al. (2016) highlighted innovation practices and existing business operations as co-existing business activities to impact financial outcomes. The participants all acknowledged that senior leaders, the boards of directors were involved in decision-making, and multi-functional executives needed to participate in new business development. A CEO would gain a better advantage if a CMO and a CIO were jointly accountable for the retail digitalization to enhance customers' experiences (Whitler et al., 2022).

According to Porter (1991), managerial choices or initial conditions are preliminary determinants to initiate strategic practices. Leaders might make a managerial choice independent of existing practices or assess initial conditions to develop strategies consistent with existing practices (Porter, 1991). Participants of this study demonstrated their initial opportunity assessment to aid executive decision-making. The *strategies built on understanding consumer behavior* subtheme indicated participants' intense practices in addressing customers' specific interests to realize potential opportunities. *The strategies built on assessing feasible objectives subtheme* emerged to show participants' value and cost validation practices to further confirm new business feasibility. The *integration of vertical and horizontal skills* subtheme appeared to confirm a chain of causality, which indicates a circular flow linking all activities and determinants (Porter, 1991), through cross-functional collaboration, as well as internal and external executive involvements. Participants have integrated workflow across vertical and horizontal functions and considered multiple points of view, including part of chain of causality to

craft better strategies in the initial opportunity assessment stage. Some parts of the workflow are understanding customers, optimization logic to identify feasible objects, cross-functional validation to determine customer problems, and business feasibility to realize potential business opportunities. Retail business leaders who do not have a workflow may fail to understand customer needs, assess feasibility, and integrate vertical and horizontal skills because of inaccurate business focus, as well as lack of functional and resource alignments.

Theme 2: Differentiation Strategy

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis was differentiation strategy. Participants sought differentiation strategies to advance their competitive advantage to further gain and sustain profitability. The theme included two subthemes: strategies built on distinctive value identification and strategies built on capturing first-mover advantage. Table 2 represents the subthemes created based on the six data points used to generate differentiation strategy.

Table 2

Differentiation Strategy

Subtheme	Frequency	Percent
Strategies built on distinctive value identification	43	61%
Strategies built on capturing first-mover-advantage	27	39%

Participants detailed value identification approaches used to formulate their functional practices adapting market and organizational conditions. A book on P6's organization indicated that executives have led people to look for different and new ideas.

P6 noted that designers in their organization discuss best implementation design either as generating value in performance improvements or cost improvements to be distinctive. P5 detailed a distinctive approach to identify customer requirements of new products and features, saying, "When you are looking into a new business, you need to comprehend what we call 'understanding the gaps'". P5 further noted

It is more holistic to use experiences to get outcomes…the experience creates outcomes. If you have a different experience, you will have different outcomes. When you have five, for example, you could compare these five different outcomes versus just one function at a time.

P2 explored new marketing practices to produce differentiated values in digital marketing practices. P2 noted

I have a saying that if you do what everyone else is doing, you'll get the same results that everyone else is getting…I always look at what are people not doing or how are others using the technology differently and what results are they getting.

P1 developed a unique method of store-based procurement, noting that each store manager is responsible for product selections and sells both in large varieties and small quantities. The store managers operated a special back office system to handle labor-intensive invoicing and inventory. P1 highlighted that department stores including Target and Walmart have product lineups that are in small varieties and large quantities.

Participants advanced their value identification practices with new information technology and management. P2 highlighted digital marketing practices with the newest technologies in value creation approaches.

> You need a database of your audience. You need an email marketing or an engagement marketing platform to be able to communicate via email. You help customers along that journey and get feedback, like get real-time feedback loops to help keep you evolving your message, your story, your marketing, and your sales approach.

P3 prioritized actionable insight creation. P3 noted, "There are a lot of things that are interesting but not all interesting things are useful for your business. We want to give information that's actionable for business."

The *strategies built on distinctive value identification* subtheme has been thoroughly discussed in the literature. Participants have demonstrated distinctive approaches to identify unique customer requirements and apply new digital technologies to potentially generate differentiated values in the market. Leaders in the retailing industry must innovate their existing practices to adjust market conditions and sustain profitability (Bogers et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2018; Henriksen et al., 2018; Schoemaker et al., 2018; Teece, 2018). Participants noted additional differentiation activities, on top of the existing practices. Leaders need new types of marketing strategies and support multiple differentiation activities to succeed over others and remain competitive over time (McDonald & Eisenhardt, 2020). More leaders adapt new technologies to aid their personalization capacities and multichannel communications with their customers to meet

customer demands (Grewal et al., 2021a; McKinsey, 2021). A review of homepages of companies' websites indicated that some participants are from companies that operate a subscription business model often called a platform business. They can serve a large number of customers including global enterprise customers on a single service platform. Some other participants have operated an online shopping site to sell products to both B2B and B2C customers globally. In terms of distinctive value creation practices, more leaders work together in new types of partnership alliances (Ávila-Robinson et al., 2022; Budden & Murray, 2022; Hänninen et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2019). P1 applied a partnership strategy, added some distinctive values by cocreating special variant covers that are a front and back cover page of publishing products, and exclusively sold the products at selected physical and online stores. According to P1, they coordinated special promotion events for the last edition of sales of popular comics. They developed a variant cover, attached an extra gift which was a signature board printing an animation character from the comic, and added a wrapping cover with Japanese special papers. P1 noted that the product sold very quickly. P1 also noted that many partners are Japanese brands and these Japanese brands gain overseas sales channels through a partnership alliance with P1.

Strategies built on capturing first-mover advantage was the second subtheme. P3, P5, and P6 sought first-mover advantage in their new business development for greater profitability. P3 noted, "Because we're trying to bring something new, we try to do it as a startup. We are not replicating what other people are doing at lower costs." P6 stated, "When somebody sees a need outside the customer flow and anticipates what the industry

needs, the need is usually extremely high when it has happened before the majority of customers see it." Participants mentioned keywords such as "first" and "new" when they spoke about product design and features and several tactics including patenting were mentioned. P5 spoke about key assessment questions such as "Is your new business going to have something that nobody else has? How fast can you create the business? Are you setting it as an industry standard? Are there critical components that can be patented to protect your intellectual property?" P6 added that a patent strategy is important. P6 noted, "The strategy with patents is also a business activity. You're trying to create a fence between you and your competitors with a patent and maintain those high-profit margins longer."

The *strategies built on capturing first-move advantage* subtheme has been broadly discussed in the literature. The participants sought to generate higher profit margins by being first to the market and aiming to create an industry standard. P6 shared a book in which the authors mentioned that the company developed a product that grew from $0 to over $2 billion annual profit in 14 years. The participants carefully determined new types of innovation opportunities and explored better strategic options including patent applications to generate higher profits. Leaders need to make better strategic choices over types of innovation in the cases of new entrant or incumbent, entry timing, and innovation adaptation processes because each combination changes the levels of risks, resources, and expected gains (Pantano et al., 2022). Leaders who seek to profit from innovation should update strategic choices in R&D, licensing, patent, and complementarity to digitally influence the economy because strategies which were

suitable during the industrial economy might not be relevant in the digitally influenced economy (Teece, 2018).

Porter (1991) modeled a dynamic system containing determinants of factors, conditions, industrial environments, and firm strategies. All these determinants are located in a chain of causality within the organization. The chain of causality is an information flow with complex and interdependent relationships across the determinants (Porter, 1991). Participants described information flows, including information aggregation processes across different functions to generate new business insights. For example, participants mentioned cross-functional activities to outline customer requirements, chose the best options to address these requirements, and identified distinct values to produce differentiating outcomes. Participants looked for gaps between existing and desirable products by applying the new business insights to develop differentiated values such as experience. Some participants measured existing and new factors, such as speed to bring products or solutions first to the market. These participants determined if they could bring those products first enough to the market and generate higher profit margins. Some participants applied digital capacities, aggregated new data sources, and generated new insights in the flow. For example, participants developed new data around customer activities, gathered the new data in the database, and used the data to identify actionable insights for taking customer engagement actions. Participants did not explain a single practice that disconnected from the series of cross-functional aspects of the workflow. Instead, they highlighted their cross-functional aspects of the workflow, which enabled a more systematic approach to process cross-functional collaboration to explore,

identify, and develop new businesses. Retail business leaders, who exclude relevant functions in process information flow, may fail to create distinctive values or cannot access first-mover advantages because of missing functional insights or lack of market insights in differentiation practices.

Theme 3: Firm-level Value Creation Strategy

The third theme that emerged in the data analysis was firm-level value creation strategy. As shown in Table 3, participants traced more executive involvement in activities to enable structural value creation. The theme included three subthemes: strategies built on new business execution, strategies built on change management, and strategies built on culture transformation. Table 3 represents the subthemes created based on the six data points used to outline firm-level value creation strategy.

Table 3

Firm-Level Value Creation Strategy

Subtheme	Frequency	Percent
Strategies built on new business execution	61	50%
Strategies built on change management	41	33%
Strategies built on culture transformation	21	17%

Strategies built on new business execution was the first subtheme. Participants created new businesses and implemented strategic practices adjusted to types of activities such as invention, innovation, or integration. Participants articulated invention as more oriented to creativity for generating new ideas and innovation as more oriented to sales activities for profit generation. P6 highlighted, "A new product creation costs money to

develop, but most of the time that development gets paid off by profit margins." P6

noted, "Innovation is a sales process to increase profits. People have to believe in it.

Innovation is a job. We ask somebody to change what and how they do in business".

Participants used return on investment (ROI) metrics for new businesses and

revenue-profit metrics for established businesses. P3, P5, and P6 noted using a very

simple ROI metric considering engineering time and costs during the development stage

whereas leaders generated no profits. Participants developed execution plans adapting

relevant metrics and key milestones for new businesses. In engineering, cost optimization

is performed to increase value advantage according to P3 and P6. P6 stated, "everything

was optimized according to engineering design time." P6 used return on design time to

develop a standardized average based on the ratio calculation of engineering headcount,

sales headcount, test engineering headcount, or manufacturing headcount. P5 noted,

"Instead of profits and losses, I've measured how fast I get to the market. Another one is

that I get critical clients or customers to accept my products." P3, P5, and P6 also applied

their quality management practices based on the new product quality and speed of market

delivery to determine a quality threshold of outcomes. P3 incorporated a backup plan that

included extra time to manage unexpected or difficult engineering needs, so the team

could still meet deadline expectations. P5 and P6 undertook a beta launch with selected

customers before launching new products into a larger market.

P1 noted that they prioritize store manager needs to serve customers over

transactional sales practices such as following to meet sales targets. P1 noted that they

use sales targets as performance reference points. P1 also noted that they value and support store managers' needs to serve regional customers at stores.

P3, P5, and P6 noted the need for an execution plan, including a long-term executive sponsorship, because the new business development requires long-term financial and engineering commitments to reach a profitable level. For an established business, revenue and profit are used to measure business performance. P5 stated, "traditional businesses are measured by revenue and profit to assess if they are making money." P5 highlighted that people in traditional businesses tend to use their revenue-profit metrics and misjudge new business performances which generate no market share and zero profits. P3, P5, and P6 noted that a solution is to have an executive sponsor to demonstrate the new business accountability during the development and growth stages.

Executive sponsors must have decision points to stop investing in new businesses or potential exit strategies. P5 stated, "Two things can happen in the new businesses. Either they become successful and you integrate them into the main business, or you get to stop the business." P5 noted a structural complication as

> It happens a lot in big companies. We stay too long. Decision points cannot be straightforward due to some financial and political reasons…major companies are very reluctant to dismiss underperforming new businesses because politically it does not look good. That means we started a business, we spent millions, and then we failed…you have got to have a management system in a new business. If a godfather says no more, everybody will respect that. That's why having the right leader is very important."

P6 noted, "you have to decide to either do that or not because the company has not been growing. If you are not growing, it is obvious you are failing." P6's company indicated in an annual report that the company was acquired by a larger organization for continuing to grow in a different organizational structure.

The *strategies built on new business execution* subtheme has been discussed in the literature. The participants in this study coordinated a creative process, to generate new ideas in innovation practices, and to aid in generating innovation outcomes that further increase profit margins, and source future innovation activities. People tend to assume a typical innovation culture as a creative process unrelated to profit generation (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Leavy, 2019). Innovation and business models are interconnected to impact profit generation practices (Christensen et al., 2016). Leaders should ensure resources allocated for aiding innovation practices in profit generation; the additional revenue can be spent on future innovation practices as well (Leavy, 2019).

Strategies built on change management is another subtheme identified during the data analysis. Participants acknowledged challenges in human resource, digital adaptation, and problem solving enabled by creating and acquiring new businesses. In human resource practices, P5 hired talents who had had more relevant experience earned in less established organizations in order to lead new businesses. P5 noted the managers who only worked in established businesses had a greater interest to lead new businesses. However, P5 also noted those managers often needed established infrastructure to succeed in their roles. P5 also underlined that some traditional managers would not understand the role and responsibility changes in the new or existing workforces.

In digital adaptation, P2 noted a need to shift workforce culture to be supportive to adapt new digital technologies and reduce the resistance to accepting new processes and cross-functional collaborations. P2 added, "you just buy some technology, but then getting everybody to play together is the challenge. In problem solving, the CEO at P6's company hosted a special event inviting senior leaders to a collaboration seminar to engage opportunity and challenge discussions to identify issues and solutions. The book on P6's organization indicated a CEO transition implementation of a structural reorganization to shift from a product-centric to a customer-centric organization. P6 added some significant efforts taken by leaders to reduce excessive engineering power and increase customer focus power. P6 acknowledged that the executives in the company worked with external consultants and executed a series of programs based on the consultants' recommendations to deploy customer-oriented business models. The book on P6's organization indicated leaders of that organization analyze the company's market competitiveness in human resources, marketing, and manufacturing to gain organizational strength.

The *strategies built on change management* subtheme has been discussed in the literature. The participants noted some changes in operational needs such as management priorities to align business needs, different talents for new or existing business managers, and adaptation of new processes and technologies. A common theme of innovation can be a change from existing to new business practices (Gault, 2018; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021). Another is a change from new to existing business practices. Once leaders grow new businesses and establish industry standards, the leaders will be in the established

industry. These leaders face new entrants and have to strategically compete with them (McDonald & Eisenhardt, 2020). Competitive advantage can be recognized based on internal and industry conditions (Porter, 1991).Either change is associated with industry conditions, and leaders must change their strategies to remain competitive, as participants have demonstrated.

Strategies built on culture transformation have been also traced during the data analysis. Participants created and enhanced a working culture supportive of innovation practices. Some participants performed specific cultural shifts to create values at a firm-level. P6 mentioned, "In a merger and acquisition, an issue has been solving conflicts between acquiring and acquired companies." Concerning the structural reorganization, P6 noted

> The change process to support innovation was quite disruptive and caused a loss of talents, information in the process, and skills in methodology…An issue has been solving some internal conflicts. A senior leadership team has been making the right alignments between engineering and sales to focus on customer needs and profitability.

P5 noted, "Several top challenges include aligning culture, harmonizing divergent behaviors, and aligning metrics."

Participants mentioned mindsets and beliefs to shift people in existing businesses. P6 noted, "Innovation is where you are trying to get somebody to change their behavior into something new." The book on P6' organization indicated dedication and investment in talent development, careers, and life. Additionally, there is a publication about the

founder of P6's company that describes the impacts and legacy of the person. P5 acknowledged, "You eventually may have to create a more homogenous-based culture while maintaining diversity and inclusion. Encouraging individual thinking is also a crucial value that is a key behavior of the new workforce." P4 noted, "A really good innovation leader may tell a good story, but not everybody is equipped to do it. It's important to have communication specialists helping you communicate what's needed in innovation practices. P3 acknowledged, "We can create an environment where people can feel comfortable in trying new things or suggesting new things." P2 added, "adding new capacities has been a lot of getting consensus as well as driving and getting people to a common or shared vision.

The *strategies built on culture transformation* subtheme has been discussed in the literature. Participants in this study, directly and indirectly, managed cultural shifts. Experts suggested the need to shift to a culture supportive of innovation and support change management implementation at various levels of organizational operations (Edwards-Schachter, 2018; Gault, 2018; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2021; Leavy, 2019). The participants highlighted conflicts between people across different businesses. A firm is structured as a set of interrelated economic activities including human resources, technology development, and procurement in business operations to form the firm's value chain (Porter, 1991). In the value system, the firm's value chain intersects with other value chains such as a supplier, sales channel, and end-user (Porter, 1991). The participants also advised leaders to communicate clearly and help everyone to be on the same page. Some researchers suggested that leaders must communicate the meaning of

the change in innovation practices (Christensen et al., 2018; Hunsaker & Knowles, 2020, 2021, 2022; Leavy, 2019).

The conceptual framework for this study has assisted in exploring the strategies built on new business execution, change management, and cultural transformation to create firm-level value creation strategies. The participants detailed new business creation activities or integration into the new and existing businesses for value creation. Porter (1991) asserted that a competitive advantage model can be seen as a dynamic system influenced by key determinants. In this system, each determinant is no longer separately expressed, so the effects of other determinants should be considered to predict overall results (Porter, 1991). Identifying opportunities and ensuring that these opportunities align with the overall organization's system of skill, resources, products, and services is the first step to achieving overall organizational success and creating a competitive advantage. Assessing these opportunities and deciding whether to pursue these opportunities is essential to reduce waste and to optimize the use of scarce resources. Organizations in retail businesses that do not assess opportunities may fail to develop competitive products and services because of lack of resources or because of a mismatch with the organization's skills, products, and services.

Applications to Professional Practice

The study findings may contribute to opportunity identification practices. USGRC leaders might create customer-driven strategies to identify new opportunities by formulating customer needs, market gaps, and opportunity feasibility assessments in a cross-functional manner. Participants applied cross-functional design workshops to assess

customer needs. Cross-functional team members evaluate the workshop outcomes to assess relevant information such as customer satisfaction, latest market conditions, and the size of the opportunities to estimate business feasibility. New business planning can be designed to articulate investment timing, expected milestones, and performance levels associated with termination points. Senior leaders in the retailing businesses should enable new capacities to aid creation of personalized products and services in their offering. These leaders should integrate newer and useful technologies to enable multichannel communication within their retailing operations for fulfilling diverse customer needs.

The study findings may also contribute to distinctive value identification practices. Participants highlighted using customer experience to identify unique customer requirements because retailers could generate differentiated values in new product or service development. When retail business leaders focus on customer experience, these leaders might create products to satisfy unmet customer needs. They will develop differentiated products or services as well as gain a path to establish an industry standard. These leaders might combine multiple practices including patent or regulation to increase first-mover advantages and profitability. In a value creation system, retail business leaders may take advantage of partnership alliances and generate distinctive value creation opportunities. Participants acknowledged a partnership alliance approach to develop new products and sell the products exclusively in physical and online store operations.

The study findings may contribute to firm-level value creation practices. Retail business leaders may increase profitability by creating better metrics, adapting the metrics in planning, and achieving creative alignments. The retail leaders may set up metrics relevant to new or existing business models. They may use ROI-oriented metrics including design time, unit economics, milestones, and termination points for new businesses to monitor development progress and adaptation performances. Retail business leaders may also use profit-focused metrics for established businesses to monitor revenue performances. Those leaders may adjust their new business strategies to types of activities such as invention, innovation, or integration.

Retail business leaders may increase profitability through change management and culture transformation practices. The leaders may face some unavoidable challenges in creating and acquiring new businesses, and they might undertake strategic management practices to reduce potential friction. Some of the practices can be adapting top-down resource management, conducting gap analysis to identify requirements between new and existing businesses, and implementing approaches to reduce change impacts in human resources, culture, and problem-solving.

In human resources, retail business leaders may determine relevant skill requirements in new and existing businesses and align talents accordingly. In digital adaptation activities, they might be mindful to realize the needs of cultural shifts that can be more supportive of adopting new digital technologies, accepting new processes, and being open for cross-functional collaborations. Retail business leaders may also create homogenous-based culture including individual thinking and different ideas whilst

maintaining diversity and inclusion. In problem-solving, the leaders may host a special workshop inviting all senior leaders in the companies to discuss current opportunities and challenges to approach collaborative problem-solving practices. CEOs may assess workshop outcomes and reorganize the company based on these outcomes. Retail business leaders may increase their focus on creating and enhancing a working culture supportive of innovation practices through their leadership initiatives.

<div align="center">**Implications for Social Change**</div>

The findings in this study might benefit positive social change. When leaders in USGRC improve strategic practices to generate more profitable innovation, they can further enhance their contribution to economic, social, and environmental improvements. Customer-centric opportunity identification strategy may help in creating new products to serve customers with special interests such as products for more sustainable living or production by consuming fewer resources, reducing more waste, and enhancing people's health and safety.

Differentiation strategy may enable organizations to differentiate themselves in the market and become successful. Successful organizations have more resources to further innovate themselves when they expand. Successful organizations deliver new products and some of these products may be used by many stakeholders including governments to improve the quality of life of the citizens in the community.

Firm-level value creation strategy may activate organizations to set new industry standards and become successful at multinational levels. Multinational organizations increase new job opportunities globally when they scale. Multinational organizations

operate based on international working culture on a global scale. Some of the cultural elements may be adapted by the regional players including the government to influence more equal employment opportunities and embrace regional uniqueness to aid sustainable economic development.

Recommendations for Action

Recommended actions from the study findings are improving strategic practices in customer-centric opportunity identification, differentiation, and firm-level value creation. The recommended actions are listed to indicate potential retail business leaders who may influence and impact the recommended actions to increase profitability. The study may be submitted for publication in business journals.

In customer-centric opportunity identification practices, retail business leaders are recommended to improve strategies built on understanding customer behaviors, assessing feasible objects, and integrating vertical and horizontal skills. Participants have strategized profitable new business creations by building and formulating needed strategies. These strategies are expected to produce outcomes that can be more desirable to customers, profitable, and optimize internal cross-functional interests. Retail business leaders may validate whether strategies are built and formulated based on the needed functional perspectives including product, sales, legal, and finance. Based on the findings, retail business leaders may also make the final decision on whether new businesses will be developed or not. The leaders will further decide on the positioning of the new businesses either complementary to the existing practices or disruptive to them.

In differentiation practice, retail business leaders are recommended to enable strategies that are not commonly used in the industry to produce profitable distinctive values. Retail leaders may develop new businesses by considering the best possible strategic options, formulating the cases of new entrants or incumbents, entry timing, and innovation adaptation processes because each combination changes the levels of risks, resources, and expected gains. Retail business leaders driving R&D, licensing, patent, and complementarity trends may constantly review the effectiveness of the existing strategic practices to ensure differentiated value creation in the market. The retail leaders creating industry standards with their business assets might gain first-mover advantages.

In firm-level value creation practice, retail business leaders are recommended to build on new business execution, change management, and cultural transformation because of new business practices. The business leaders across the organization may prepare and acknowledge two sets of metrics. Retail business leaders overseeing new businesses may use ROI-oriented metrics including design time, unit economics, milestones, and termination points to monitor development progress and adaptation performances to ensure profitability. The retail leaders overseeing existing businesses may use profit-focused metrics to monitor revenue performance.

Retail business leaders are recommended to strategize top-down resource management, conduct gap analysis, and implement approaches to reduce change impacts in human resources, culture, and problem-solving. In new business integrations, the retail leaders in human resources may work closely with new and existing business leaders to determine relevant skill requirements and avoid misplacing talents to lead new

businesses. The human resource leaders may lead cultural shifts in organizations and enable trends in adopting new digital technologies, accepting new processes, and being open to cross-functional collaborations. The retail leaders in human resources are suggested to enable "more homogenous-based culture including individual thinking and different ideas as well as maintaining diversity and inclusion are rewarding in innovation practices", according to P6. Senior retail leaders, such as CEOs, are encouraged to take the initiative to collaboratively address problems and solutions. These leaders are recommended to take needed actions such as structural reorganization to update organizational strategies. I aim to publish this study in a peer-reviewed journal. I will also provide a summary of the study to the six USGRC leaders who participated in this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this study, I focused on strategic practices which resulted in profitable innovation without specifying the size of the companies, such as small startups or large established organizations, and types of new business environments, such as B2B or B2B2C. Future researchers could increase the population and articulate strategic differences by company size, new business types, and industry types. Future researchers could also increase the population to include USGRC leaders from other states or specify a landmark location such as Silicon Valley in the San Francisco bay area to identify trends in strategic practices for profitable innovation. For further research, I also recommend that researchers explore new types of values generated from an emerging ecosystem to realize additional competitive advantages and to increase firm-level competences in a global business environment. Another limitation was that the

participants might be unable to fully share their knowledge in a detailed manner that could not be reviewed and corrected. In addition, participants might be unable to remember certain information or accurately remember the events. Future researchers could provide all interview questions to participants before an interview, so participants could have a choice whether they would brainstorm their interview responses before the interview. In this way, researchers would help participants recall their memories by searching some event logs to confirm their memories. These participants could further detail their interview responses during the interview.

Reflections

My journey to pursue a doctorate degree has been a transformative adventure. I registered for the DBA program imagining myself conducting research in environmentally friendly practices and building knowledge in sustainability-focused case studies. I had to adjust my imagination when I selected the DBA dissertation topic because it was suggested to me to view sustainable businesses from an innovation angle. The change enabled new research interests in entrepreneurship, innovation, strategy, and value creation practices.

During the DBA journey, I have been through many benefits and pitfalls. One unforgettable event was recruiting interview participants to complete data collection. My anxiety and stress levels hit the highest peak due to the uncertainty because my research performance depended on whether people would participate in my study. I was unsure when I would complete the recruitment process or if I would ever complete it. I relied on my professional network to identify potential participants online. After a few sleepless

nights, fortunately, I recruited participants. When I started interviewing them, all my learning from literature, program activities, and course materials suddenly made great sense. I learned participants' frontline experience in innovation practices. They shared not only their successes and challenges in technical, managerial, and leadership activities, but also their passion to serve the community by bringing value products.

After all, overcoming obstacles led to a treasurable learning opportunity. I felt as if my knowledge transcended because I started seeing innovation as a collective organizational process yet creative and adaptive to aid invention and potentially cause social change for people and communities. In a nutshell, the DBA training and research experience revealed an unimagined path and enabled the greatest possible path ahead. I truly aspire to catch a "pie in the sky" together with all like-minded people.

Conclusion

Research indicated only 50% of innovation practices at global companies are perceived as profitable (Dobni & Klassen, 2020). Successful USGRC leaders practice strategies to innovate businesses that fulfill new types of customer demands, generate distinctive values, and create profit from first-mover advantages. This study focused on three themes: customer-centric opportunity identification strategy, differentiation strategy, and firm-level value creation strategy to generate innovation for profit gains. Successful strategies facilitate the development of new products and services, increase profit gains, and sustain businesses as well as aid in sustainable economic development and social value creation on a global scale.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participant's Pseudonym: _____ Participant ID: _____
Interview Date: _____ Total Time: _____
Interview system: Online videoconferencing (Skype, Zoom, or Google Meet)

What I do	What I say—script
	Thank you for your participation. My name is Julia Kazue Goto and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am pursuing a degree of Doctor of Business Administration in entrepreneurship. I am attending the university as my personal project.
	To begin with, please let me explain the interview details and confirm a few important points.
	This is a 50-minute online videoconferencing meeting, and I will ask seven interview questions. I am interested in learning about strategies you use to generate innovation for profit gains. If you have any company documents that you want to share with me that you consider relevant to this topic, please send those documents over email to me within 1 weeks of this interview.
Introduce the interview and set the stage in an online videoconferencing.	I would like to obtain your permission to tape record this interview. The purpose of tape recording is to accurately document the information. If you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know at any time during the interview. Please note the confidentiality of the interview. Your responses will remain confidential and will be only used to generate text data for this study. The purpose of this study is to explore strategies that leaders of U.S.-based global retailing companies (USGRC) use to generate innovation for profit gains.
	Please let me confirm your written consent to participate in this study. The consent document to attend this meeting was signed on xx/xx/2022 . It means we agree to continue the interview session. Each of us has one copy and I will keep mine in a safe place.
	Finally, please let me confirm your participation in this interview. It is completely voluntary and I am happy to stop at any time if you need to take a break. Please feel free to let me

know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without any consequences.

We are about to start the interview. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission, we will begin the interview.

1.What strategies have you used to generate innovation for profit gains?

The first question is what strategies you have use to generate innovation for profit gains. When many leaders enable strategies around innovations, they produce various outcomes. Would you like to share some of the innovation strategies which have resulted well in for profit gains?

2. What have the drivers of your innovation practices been like?

There are some aspects in the innovation practices for the profit gains. Many leaders express those aspects as profit drivers. Each leader tend to focus on different types of drivers in innovation strategies. What have the drivers of your innovation practices been like?

Asking interview questions with contexts.

3. How have you determined key drivers for enhancing your competitive advantages in the industry and competitors?

The key drivers are aimed at the further increase of competitive advantages and better industry performance over direct competitors. How have you determined key drivers for enhancing your competitive advantages in the industry and among competitors?

4. What tools have you used to monitor and control the implementation of your strategies?

Some of the leaders develop or adapt special tools to monitor and control the strategy implementation practices. What tools have you used to monitor and control the implementation of your strategies?

5. What have the key challenges been to integrate the innovation processes into overall corporate overall strategies?

Leaders often link between their innovation strategies to other corporate strategies in order to benefit in terms of profit generations. What have the key challenges been to integrate the innovation processes into overall corporate overall strategies?

6. How have your organization addressed key challenges to integrate the innovation processes into overall corporate strategy?

Leaders often face implementation challenges of innovation strategies and must overcome the challenges to meet expected goals. How has your organization addressed key challenges to integrate the innovation processes into overall corporate strategy?

7. What other information would you like to share regarding strategies you use to generate innovation for profit gains?

Thanking the participants

As to complete the interview, I would like to thank you for your time and sharing your insights. I do appreciate it. I am very happy to receive any follow up communication regarding this interview session.

Thank you again for your time.