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Leadership Strategies of a Multinational Enterprise in the West Bank

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Abstract

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MS, Wagner College, 2002

BS, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Business leaders require the appropriate strategies and knowledge to successfully grow their companies through international expansion. Multinational enterprises (MNEs) in the West Bank in Palestine often encounter complex barriers as the executives of the firms explore business opportunities in foreign countries. The objective of this single case study was to explore, in depth, the perspectives of business leaders from a population of executives of an MNE in the West Bank. The conceptual framework used in the study was cultural intelligence. The selected multinational business leaders participated in semistructured, face-to-face interviews followed by member checking. The 2 executives of the MNE shared their experiences and knowledge concerning the internationalization processes of their company. The data analysis process followed Yin's 5-phase analysis cycle; it entailed an analysis of interview responses followed by member checking and a review of administrative documents of the MNE under study. Three themes emerged from the data analysis: international knowledge and adaption of local conditions, strategic partnerships, and diversification and specialization. The findings from the study could contribute to positive social change by encouraging executives to explore business opportunities in the West Bank, resulting in an increase in employment rate and better living standards for the residents.

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Dedication

The dedication of my doctoral study goes to my parents and family members that supported me throughout the entire experience. I especially thank my father for recommending that I pursue a doctorate in international business. He suggested that having a doctorate would add tremendous value to my career as a businessperson. You always pushed me beyond my limits to be the best that I could be. You gave me the confidence and strength to succeed. I thank my mother for always being there to cheer me on during all my accomplishments and to remind me to remain humble at all times. My parents are my inspiration and the reason why I am the person I am today. I also dedicate this study to the participants that were kind enough to share their business experiences as international executives.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Diverse international business strategies play a significant role in the success of multinational enterprises (Fung, 2014). Recent advances in technology and government practices allow more companies than before to expand internationally (Brush, Edelman, & Manolova, 2015). Although international opportunities continue to develop, the process of internationalization is difficult because some leaders lack strategies to grow their companies through global expansion (Shah, Javed, & Syed, 2013). The decision to expand internationally ultimately relies on the availability of resources and the capabilities of a firm (Brush et al., 2015).

Background of the Problem

As business leaders expand their existing operations to different countries, they inherit the challenge of adapting to local business conditions and practices (Tuleja, 2014). Business leaders that expand internationally recognize quickly that success in their local markets may not be as effective in foreign markets (Menon & Narayanan, 2015; Paletz, Miron-Spektor, & Lin, 2014). In the United States, business agreements abide by common legal regulations that may not translate, for example, in Middle Eastern countries (Mihoubi, 2011). The basis of business transactions in these countries focuses more on building a solid relationship first before contractual agreements (Bouyoucef & Chung, 2015). As MNEs continue to internationalize, they suffer from limited managerial skills and available resources (Ciszewska-Mlinaric & Mlinaric, 2010). International experience and knowledge play a pivotal role in expanding abroad (Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016).

International business strategies and company performance are important elements that shape relevant scholarly research on internationalization processes (Chan, Finnegan, & Sternquist, 2011). In the past, researchers focused on either the internal processes of a company or the external impacts that effected the performances of international firms (Nachum, 2000; Pan, Li, & Tse, 1999). In more recent times, researchers focused on the combination of internal and external characteristics that impact company performance in addition to available resources and capabilities (Chan et al., 2011). In this study, a more in-depth analysis of effective business strategies by successful international entrepreneurs developed more precise measures of the dos and don'ts during global expansion.

Problem Statement

Some firms consider international expansion as an opportunity for growth, but some executives lack the knowledge to overcome high costs and uncertainties (Hsu, Chen, & Cheng, 2013). In 2011, the worldwide employment rate from multinational firms increased by 1.5% and is continuing to grow (U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis [CBEA], 2013). The general business problem was that business leaders seeking to expand internationally do not have international business knowledge. The specific business problem was that some leaders lack strategies to grow their companies through international expansion.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies used by multinational executives to grow their companies through international expansion. The target population was business executives of a successful MNE that had a corporate headquarters in the West Bank in Palestine. The results of this study is expected to contribute to social change by helping MNEs in the West Bank grow, creating employment opportunities, which could improve the residents' living standards. MNE growth in the West Bank could lead to increased profits, which could be used to improve infrastructure and government services for all residents.

Nature of the Study

In qualitative research, the researcher sets up the context of the study through interpretation and knowledge from participants' viewpoints (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). The data collection process is in a natural setting where the focus lies on the consistency and quality of the information collected (Berazneva, 2014). Conversely, the quantitative research method involves an evaluation of logical and mathematical aspects of data for primary knowledge (Smith, 2014). The mixed method is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, which can help develop, valuable insights but cannot be understood solely with a qualitative or quantitative approach (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). The nature of the study aligned with the qualitative research method versus the quantitative and mixed methods because the context of the research was primarily exploratory (Yin, 2014). As the purpose of this study was to investigate in-depth data, the qualitative research method was the most appropriate approach for discovering effective international business strategies.

I considered four, primary qualitative research designs for this study: phenomenology, narrative, ethnography, and case study. The phenomenological approach was not suitable for this study because the goal was not to identify the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). The narrative approach was not suitable for my study because the goal was not to understand the individual lives of the participants (Richard & Morse, 2012), but to explore the international business strategies they used to expand their company. The ethnographic design involves observations with some degree of participation and an understanding of cultural guidelines (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). The ethnographic approach was not suitable for this study because the objective was not to participate in the respondents' work activities to obtain data. The preferred design for this research was the case study approach. Business researchers use the case study design (Zivkovic, 2012) where the focus is on understanding the social and technical aspects of the phenomenon being studied. In the case study design, the researcher can incorporate different perspectives from multiple participants to collect rich data (Yin, 2014). The case study design was the appropriate approach for this study because it allowed me to collect data from multiple sources to gain a deeper perspective in exploring and addressing the specific business problem.

Research Question

What strategies do business leaders use to grow their companies through international expansion?

Interview Questions

1. What motivated you to expand internationally?
2. What strategies worked best when you expanded internationally?

3. What barriers did you encounter when implementing those strategies?

4. How did you address the barriers when implementing the strategies?

5. How did you assess or measure the effectiveness of your international strategies?

6. What additional information could you provide that could be helpful in growing companies through international expansion?

Conceptual Framework

In this qualitative case study, I used the conceptual framework of cultural intelligence, a construct developed by Earley and Ang (2003), which classified cultural intelligence as the ability to cope with various cultures and to gain a better understanding of unfamiliar contexts. The three critical elements of cultural intelligence are cognition, motivation, and behavior (Tuleja, 2014). The principle behind the construct of cultural intelligence is the individual's ability to function effectively in multicultural settings (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). The purpose of understanding the cultural intelligence conceptual framework in this qualitative case study was to potentially help me to understand a context for developing business practices that support international expansion. The application of cultural intelligence in internationalization can facilitate cultural learning and enable business leaders to expand effectively internationally.

Operational Definitions

This section includes the definitions of technical terms used throughout this study.

Cultural intelligence (CQ): CQ is the ability to understand significant cultural norms of diverse cultures and to function skillfully under these different cultural contexts (Tuleja, 2014).

Cultural knowledge: Cultural knowledge is the recruitment of data from diverse perspectives resulting in an understanding of customs, practices, norms, languages, and behaviors for the development of creative ideas (Saad et al., 2013).

Internationalization: Internationalization is the process of integrating international or global constructs into the purpose, functions, or implementation of business practices (Knight, 2015).

Multinational companies: Multinational companies are entities that operate and generate profit in more than two countries through their movement of capital, goods, and services abroad (Tutar, Altinoz, & Cakiroglu, 2014).

Multicultural leadership: Multicultural leadership is a process of leading that cultivates a work setting that is worldly and culturally sensitive enough to successfully communicate and operate across borders (Ekan, Özturgut, & Craven, 2014).

Organizational culture: Organizational culture consists of the attitudes, values, behavior patterns, and habits within an organization that defines the quality of the social climate (Mohelska & Sokolova, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are thoughts or ideas that exist with the probability of being true (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Without an assumption, a research study may not progress (Simon, 2011). The first assumption entailed the consideration that international business processes are the same in every country. The second assumption was that there are multiple factors that contribute to selecting the appropriate strategy to grow a company for each country. The last assumption was that business strategies that were proven to be effective in developed countries could also be effective in developing countries, particularly the West Bank.

Limitations

Limitations are the potential weaknesses and circumstances out of the researcher's control (Yin, 2014). My first limitation was that the participants would provide truthful responses. A second limitation in this study included the potential for the participant to recall events inaccurately during the interviews. A third limitation involved the potential for accuracy of the company records shared by the participants for the document review. A fourth limitation was that my findings were not applicable to other populations.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the limits and boundaries of the scope of the study (Simon, 2011). A delimitation of this study was that the research included only MNE executives who participated in the internationalization of the company. The study consisted only of international business leaders in the West Bank in Palestine.

Significance of the Study

Exploring strategies that experienced multinational executives implemented for international expansion is significant because international business strategies impact a company's long-term performance and growth (Fung, 2014). By implementing effective multinational business strategies, business leaders can enhance their leadership abilities to grow their operations internationally.

Contribution to Business Practice

The findings from my study could contribute to business practice by identifying effective leadership strategies to expand operations internationally. A positive correlation exists between leadership practices that include effective decision making processes, long-term strategic options, and international growth (Fung, 2014). Previous researchers discovered the importance of a global mindset on both individual and organizational levels for international growth (Gaffney, Kedia, & Clampit, 2013). Fourné, Jansen, and Mom (2014) argued that for positive international growth, senior executives of MNEs must be strategic in recognizing and resolving cross-border issues that emerge. A thorough understanding of effective business strategies could lead to the development of crucial international leadership skills for catalyzing corporate growth and sustainability. The findings of the study could lead to valuable insights on effective strategies that could help business leaders enhance their international growth and increase profitability.

Implications for Social Change

The findings from this qualitative case study could encourage business leaders to explore business activities in other countries to increase corporate growth, which could result in new employment opportunities and thus better living standards. In the West Bank, there is an urgent need for economic investments to stimulate growth in the economy (Abu-Eideh, 2014). The results of this study could contribute to social change by enabling MNE growth in the West Bank, decreasing the unemployment rate, and enhancing the living situations for residents. The tax revenues generated from MNE growth could be allocated for the country's infrastructure and government services.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this literature review was to identify significant research on business strategies that multinational executives used to grow their companies through international expansion. The structure of the literature review was the foundation for exploring the research inquiry on the strategies that business leaders utilized to grow their companies through international expansion. A critical review of peer-reviewed literature was useful in researching effective strategies implemented by international business leaders.

To identify prospective, peer-reviewed articles and books, the following key words were used: *global management, internationalization, multinational enterprises (MNEs), globalization, cultural intelligence,* and *international leadership strategies*. The following databases were used: Google Scholar, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, Business Source Complete, Science Direct, and Emerald Management Journals. The majority of the peer-reviewed literature came from Google Scholar. Some seminal scholarly books were also used.

The strategic measure used for searching the literature involved identifying concepts that related to internationalization strategies. After establishing related concepts, I selected key words to enhance the search and collect the literature that helped define the nature of my study. A total of 268 sources were used for the study. Two hundred and thirty-eight of the sources were peer-reviewed references, which represented

88.8% of the total sources and 31 of the sources were not peer-reviewed references, equating to 11.6% of the total sources. Fifteen of the sources were books representing 5.6% of the total, one dissertation represented 0.4%, three government websites represented 1.1%, and five trade magazines represented 1.9%. Among the references, 233 had a publication date between 2013 and 2018, representing 86.9% of the total sources. The literature review consisted of 119 references. Of these, 109 were peer-reviewed sources, representing 92% of the total.

In this qualitative case study, I explored strategies used by multinational business executives to grow their companies through international expansion. Increased globalization contributed to the establishment of institutional and economic standards for growth strategies of various countries (Amal, Awuah, Raboch, & Andersson, 2013). Yemini (2014) argued that global business leaders should examine internationalization on the basis of benefits, outcomes, unforeseen developments, and negative implications. Some of these circumstances involve various measures including low trade barriers, elevated global integration, and targeting different markets resulting in new customers from around the globe (Amal et al., 2013).

This literature review is organized by (a) the facets of cultural intelligence (b) various international business strategies (c) specific factors to consider during internationalization (d) the challenges that business executives encountered as they expanded across borders, and (e) a synthesis of the literature as it pertains to cultural intelligence. I developed themes based on the topic to help gain an understanding of effective international business practices. The themes consist of the conceptual framework and elements that impact internationalization processes. The first theme is a thorough explanation of the major components of the conceptual framework of cultural intelligence in relation to international business strategies. The theorists, Earley and Ang (2003), identified three sources of cultural intelligence including the cognitive, motivational, and behavioral elements that can potentially clarify the strategic mechanisms behind successful internationalization.

The second theme involves effective strategies that enhance internationalization processes. I compared and contrasted previous, related research on various business strategies used by multinational enterprises. Some of the strategies involve the gaining and sharing of international knowledge, mergers and acquisitions, diversification strategies, and the adoption of effective leadership characteristics and skills. The third theme includes the factors to consider during international expansion. The considerations explored in this study include differences in cultural environments, cultural language, and different global systems. The final theme is an analysis of the challenges to expect during internationalization. Some of the challenges identified include cultural differences, lack of cross cultural skills and competencies in a foreign business setting, and political and environmental obstacles. The critical analysis and synthesis of the various themes will potentially enhance the understanding of the dynamics behind successful multinational business strategies as it relates to cultural intelligence.

Cultural Intelligence Conceptual Framework

CQ is a growing phenomenon in internationalization processes. As companies continue to progressively globalize, more firms are expanding to more diverse cross-cultural environments (Yitmen, 2013). Globalization significantly impacts modern leaders learning diverse cultures in regions where they intend to expand in (Ekan, Özturgut, & Craven, 2014). In reference to the sources of CQ, multinational business leaders should learn the culture and beliefs; display an understanding through actions; and should be willing to adapt to the characteristics, considerations, strategies, and local business challenges.

CQ contributes to the enhancement of leadership competencies and processes in multicultural environments. The term CQ refers to a combination of skills and traits that enable a person to effectively interact and communicate in a cultural environment (Menon & Narayanan, 2015; Yitmen, 2013). In business, CQ applies to the cognitive features of cultural awareness, cultural expertise, and the drive to adapt and function in diverse cultural conditions (Lisak & Erez, 2015). Earley and Ang (2003) introduced the construct of CQ and claimed that there are individual competencies that enable people to operate in multicultural environments. Leaders must adapt to change when operating in a cross-cultural setting and can use CQ to enhance their capabilities to conform to these changes (Erez et al., 2013). Elements of CQ appear to predict cultural assessments, decision-making processes, cultural compliance, and project performance (Ang et al., 2007). Yitmen (2013) inferred that CQ helped leaders cope with intercultural circumstances and communication conflicts. Huff et al. (2014) defined CQ as the ability to adapt effectively in diverse cultural environments. An international business leader that possesses CQ can ease the adaption process as they operate under unfamiliar conditions.

Early and Ang’s (2003) conceptual framework of CQ stemmed from Sternberg’s (1999) theoretical framework of successful intelligence. Sternberg developed the framework to introduce four components to conceptualize individual-level intelligence (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). Based on Sternberg’s work, CQ is a multifactor construct (Gonçalves, Reis, Sousa, Santos, & Orgambídez-Ramos, 2015), which consists of cognitive intelligence, metacognitive intelligence, motivational intelligence, and behavioral intelligence (Yitmen, 2013). The four elements of CQ emulate the contemporary aspects of intelligence (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). The general structure of CQ enables business leaders to build international knowledge and manage cultural differences while maintaining a competitive advantage in a global setting.

Cognitive Cultural Intelligence

The four facets of CQ refer to specific capabilities of responding to various beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes under changing environments. Cognitive CQ involves knowledge from individual norms and experiences leading to an understanding of cultural differences (Ang et al., 2007; Chen & Lin, 2013; Gonçalves et al., 2015; Lisak & Erez, 2015). A person with high cognitive CQ comprehends the similarities and dissimilarities of cultures (Charoensukmongkol, 2015). Cognitive CQ entails common knowledge and knowledge structures involving culture (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). An individual uses the cognitive aspect to conceptualize and process new data (Tuleja, 2014). The cognitive element of CQ is a significant component because the general knowledge of culture influences how people behave and think (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). The cognitive process enables a person to evaluate his or her knowledge, behave accordingly, and then reevaluate the events based on the nonverbal cues that occurred between the parties (Tuleja, 2014). An understanding of a culture enables individuals to appreciate the cultural structures that build patterns of social communication resulting in improved interaction with people from different cultural settings (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). If an individual understands the fundamental guidelines or expectations of a culture, he or she will more likely operate and communicate in a manner that is acceptable by others in that culture (Huff et al, 2014). Cognitive CQ facilitates cultural awareness and knowledge of foreign beliefs and practices through education or exposure to different cultural settings.

Metacognitive Cultural Intelligence

Metacognitive CQ is a facet that reflects more on the mental procedures that people use to gain a better understanding of cultural differences. Metacognitive CQ is the mental measures that individuals utilize for cultural awareness (Ang et al., 2007; Gonçalves et al., 2015). Metacognitive CQ refers to the mental processes used by people to gain and comprehend cultural knowledge (Lisak & Erez, 2015; Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Individuals with high metacognitive CQ control their thought processes and frequently monitor their progress (Charoensukmongkol, 2015; Yitmen, 2013). A person with enhanced metacognitive CQ questions his or her personal cultural assumptions, reason his or her interactions, and conform his or her cultural knowledge to other cultures (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015; Chen & Lin, 2013). A person with metacognitive CQ is mindful of personal feelings, thoughts, and actions in multicultural settings (Tuleja, 2014). The metacognitive element of CQ stimulates thinking about individuals and situations in multicultural settings (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). An individual with this mental process tends to analyze assumptions and acclimate mental maps when experiences differ from expectations (Li et al., 2013). Metacognitive CQ allows people to reorganize their cultural strategies to accommodate cross-cultural encounters (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). The metacognitive element of CQ assists in managing individual thought processes through cultural knowledge.

Metacognitive CQ plays a significant role in controlling individual thinking when managing cultural differences. Metacognitive CQ is the most influential component of the four CQs that promotes knowledge sharing due to its direct and indirect impact on knowledge sharing (Gonçalves et al., 2015). Chen and Lin (2013) contended that business leaders should consider engaging in incentives related to metacognitive CQ to manage cultural differences within a team that adversely effects knowledge sharing. Team members with high levels of metacognitive CQ have skills in identifying and acclimatizing the distinct values of the members (Adair, Hideg, & Spence, 2013). Metacognitive CQ reflects a higher level of awareness of cultural influences on both the individual and others involved (Chen Lin, 2013). The metacognitive component of CQ is an enhanced facet of cultural intelligence, which involves advanced cognitive processes.

Motivational Cultural Intelligence

Self-motivation is a crucial factor in the enhancement of CQ. Motivational CQ refers to the ability to introduce, control, and convey learning and other useful behaviors in different cultural environments (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Motivational CQ refers to the self-motivation and duty to adapt and conform to cross-cultural settings (Lisak & Erez, 2015). A person with high motivational CQ maintains better coping strategies and has an inherent interest in attaining knowledge about different cultures (Eisenberg et al., 2013). A person's internal motivation drives him or her to engage in cross-cultural experiences (Gonçalves et al., 2015; Huff et al., 2014). Motivational CQ reflects on individual capabilities guided by energy and personal interest in functioning in a multicultural environment.

Higher levels of motivational CQ can enable a business leader to successfully function in a diverse setting. Motivational CQ is a driving force for learning about different cultural settings and how to function within them (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015; Huff et al., 2014). This element embodies a top-down proliferation of a company's mission and culture, where organization members adapt and embrace cultural diversity (Froese, Kim, & Eng, 2016). Individuals with motivational CQ successfully operate in different cultural environments (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). For instance, an executive who has a general understanding of a foreign language and enjoys interacting with others from diverse cultures will most likely converse with foreign colleagues. Conversely, an executive learning a language for the first time or opposes interactions with foreigners would be less likely interact with colleagues from other countries. Leaders with higher levels of motivational CQ have the ability to manage situations characterized by cultural dissimilarities, are able to overcome cross-cultural obstacles, and can likely cooperate with local organizational members (Froese et al., 2016). Individuals that have the motivation to adapt to cultural differences will most likely ease their chances of successfully operating in a transnational environment.

Motivational CQ can assist in overcoming multicultural challenges. This component of CQ is a fundamental attribute that people must possess to collaborate with diverse cultures (Presbitero, 2016). Individuals with elevated levels of motivational CQ tend to have high interest for cross-cultural experiences (Li et al., 2013). Presbitero (2016) referred to motivational CQ as a building block for overcoming obstacles caused by cultural differences. A person with motivational CQ has the drive to apply their knowledge and experience to multicultural interactions and activities despite the challenges they may encounter (Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016). Presbitero described motivational CQ in terms of self-efficacy, which influences an individual's control over motivation. Possessing the characteristic of motivational CQ is crucial, considering the time it takes to build trusting cross-cultural relationships (Charoensukmongkol, 2015). A person without confidence will be counterproductive when faced with cross-cultural encounters (Presbitero, 2016). Conversely, individuals with pronounced motivational CQ possess the self-confidence in cultural knowledge and skill to respond to demanding multicultural situations (Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016). Motivational CQ can guide a person's cultural capabilities and strategies into acceptable behaviors during cultural encounters (Presbitero, 2016). A person that possesses motivational CQ has the confidence to adapt to cultural differences and is likely to build cross-cultural relationships.

Behavioral Cultural Intelligence

The behavioral component of CQ focuses on the social interactions and behaviors within an intercultural setting. Behavioral CQ is the capability to adapt and apply the appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors in a multicultural context (Menon &

Narayanan, 2015). Some of these behaviors include attire, body language, time management patterns, physical space, and social etiquette (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Behavioral CQ is a significant element of CQ because verbal and nonverbal behaviors are the most pertinent aspects of social synergy (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). The ability to apply verbal and nonverbal actions enables a person to better communicate with others from diverse cultural environments (Huff et al., 2014). As individuals interact on a face-to-face basis, they lack access to individual thoughts, motivation, and feelings (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). A person with behavioral CQ has the capability to exhibit those behaviors (Lisak & Erez, 2015). These individuals do have access to an individual's vocal, facial, and other external expressions (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). Individuals with behavioral CQ apply their broad range of verbal and non-verbal capabilities to different cultural situations (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). People with higher levels of behavioral CQ are generally flexible and can adapt their behaviors to accommodate the distinct specifics of each cultural encounter (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015; Gonçalves et al., 2015). The behavioral facet of CQ allows the individual to effectively communicate in a verbal or nonverbal manner with people in an intercultural environment.

The facets of CQ can result in promising individual and organizational outcomes. All four components of CQ are different and promote cultural competence (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Adair et al. (2013) discovered that behavioral and metacognitive CQ had a positive effect on shared values of heterogeneous teams that were culturally diverse. Behavioral CQ represents an individual's ability to conform to verbal and nonverbal behaviors to replicate what other people from different cultural backgrounds do

(Charoensukmongkol, 2015). Metacognitive CQ is the dimension of cultural intelligence that exploits the decisive strength in management conflict styles (Goncalves et al., 2015). Motivational and metacognitive CQ negatively affects the shared values within culturally heterogeneous teams (Adair et al., 2013). Huff et al. (2014) posited that motivational CQ was the most significant for expatriates adapting in cross-cultural environments. Individuals with an advanced level of motivational CQ have elevated levels of energy and may put forth more efforts to adapt to another culture (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Presbitero, 2016).

Adaptability is a crucial component of CQ (Crowne, 2013). The best way to obtain CQ is through long-term international experience (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013). Individuals who enhance their CQ skills have a greater understanding of their cultural environment, which may result in more effective communication (Crowne, 2013). Cross-cultural communication is crucial in building cultural intelligence (Taras et al., 2013). Intercultural encounters influence a person's experience with the culture, which results in an enhancement of personal knowledge about that culture (Crowne, 2013). CQ contributes to effective leadership in an international setting (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013). By interacting in a culture, an executive could learn to adjust to the culture and understand how it differs from his or her own culture (Crowne, 2013). Individuals with CQ effectively communicate with others with different goals, beliefs, interests, and educational and social backgrounds (Gonçalves et al., 2015). CQ is a multidimensional construct made of components that enable individuals to consciously evaluate their own cultural assumptions and gain a deeper understanding of cultural norms for successful international expansion.

Cultural knowledge is a significant factor in internationalization strategies. Multinational firms are confronting global competition, which requires sufficient cross-cultural knowledge to survive (Sheng, Hartmann, Qimei, & Chen, 2015). As global work processes differ from domestic work processes, it has become increasingly important for global leaders to manage cultural differences to successfully execute global strategies (Li et al., 2013). The collaboration between social networks is a significant factor for firms operating in foreign countries where organizational processes differ from those of the company's home country (Charoensukmongkol, 2015). Cultural knowledge is a requirement for leaders seeking to grow internationally and maximize performance and profitability (Ekan, Özturgut, & Craven, 2014). Cultural competence is a crucial factor that assists in alleviating cultural differences within diverse social networks.

CQ is a vital attribute for business leaders to possess during internationalization processes. Based on the impacts of culture, a business leader's CQ is an essential component that heightens the quality of relationships between parties in culturally diverse settings (Charoensukmongkol, 2015). Firms entering a globally competitive market face greater complexities, which require enhanced integration and knowledge flow to overcome geographical, economic, and cultural differences (Yitmen, 2013). CQ is an enhancement of abilities to manage effectively people with diverse cultural backgrounds (Li et al., 2013). CQ is a significant attribute that positively influences the development of interpersonal conflict resolutions in multicultural settings (Gonçalves et al, 2015). In essence, CQ enables business leaders to operate more efficiently in foreign markets

(Charoensukmongkol, 2015). CQ is the objective means by which individuals can evaluate their own cultural knowledge to successfully operate in a cross-cultural environment.

Global leaders require intercultural competence to function in an environment with different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and norms. Tuleja (2014) postulated that culturally intelligent people utilize their knowledge to comprehend the different facets of various cultural backgrounds. Yitmen (2013) asserted that culturally intelligent companies could outperform companies that are less culturally intelligent. Ekan et al. (2014) suggested that leaders need to adapt to change when operating in a multicultural environment and that CQ strengthened the capabilities for adaption. CQ is a significant way to observe individual attributes that elevate efficiency in a foreign atmosphere (Morrell, Ravlin, Ramsey, & Ward, 2013). An individual with CQ can develop intercommunication strategies based on different situations in diverse environments. The ability of a leader to understand and adapt to cultural dissimilarities by being flexible is crucial in managing the complexities of cross-cultural encounters.

The incorporation of CQ in leadership styles can benefit social outcomes in culturally diverse settings. Ekan et al. (2014) correlated leadership styles with CQ. Individuals with higher CQ have the ability to manage their social behavior while utilizing integrative management styles and collaborative techniques compared to those with less CQ (Gonçalves et al., 2015). People with CQ can operate efficiently and manage social encounters in diverse cultural situations (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013). Individuals that are cognizant of individual differences during social encounters will accentuate their connection with others and implement strategies that strengthen the relationship (Gonçalves et al., 2015). It is imperative that international business leaders emphasize cultural intelligence as a key factor in developing imperative knowledge on cultural differences and similarities as they internationalize (Morell et al., 2013). The integration of CQ in leadership can enhance the social connection between parties in cross-cultural environments.

Another component related to cultural intelligence is contextual intelligence. Khanna (2014) discussed the importance of contextual intelligence when venturing into unfamiliar territory. Prinsloo, Archer, Barnes, Chetty, and Van Zyl (2015) referred to contextual intelligence as a thorough understanding of a company and how it functions with knowledge of its strategic objectives. Khanna defined contextual intelligence as the ability to recognize the limitations of our knowledge and to utilize that knowledge to adapt to different environments. Adaptive capacity is a core component of contextual intelligence, which enables the leader to assess his or her environment and organize data (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). During day-to-day activities, different contexts arise, causing different motivations for different circumstances (Ybarra et al., 2014). As conditions vary in different environments, it becomes more complex to adjust to local institutional characteristics, geographic locations, language, and cultural norms (Khanna, 2014). An individual with contextual intelligence embraces change and adjusts their behavior to adapt to that change (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). Similar to CQ, contextual intelligence enables business leaders to understand these complexities to effectively operate across borders (Khanna, 2014). Contextual intelligence can help business leaders understand the limitations of their knowledge, enabling them to use that knowledge to operate effectively across borders.

In the context of international growth, CQ is an objective construct by which individuals in business can acquire valuation based on their abilities to operate effectively in culturally diverse environments (Lima, West, & Winston, 2016; Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016). As a relatively new construct, CQ appeals to different disciplines including international management and intercultural psychology (Şahin, Gurbuz, & Köksal, 2014). Although CQ focuses more on individual level analysis, it is the foundation of the construct upon which to develop the organizational level analysis (Lima et al., 2016). The development and evaluation of cultural and societal competence is crucial for business leaders operating across borders (Tuleja, 2014). Lima et al. illustrated that intelligences are flexible and conformable and not standardized and fixed. Consistent with this view, Schlägel and Sarstedt (2016) believed that to properly measure CQ's effects on attitudes and behaviors of individuals with diverse backgrounds, practitioners need a clear understanding of how to evaluate CQ. International leaders must embrace change and be willing to overcome the complexities of intercultural differences (Tuleja, 2014). A precise assessment of CQ could enable firms to recognize issues within the organization at an early stage (Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016). CQ can assist in defining individual differences used to manage new multicultural environments (Huff et al., 2014). An accurate measurement of CQ will allow an organization to develop strategies for incorporating CQ in operations (Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016). These strategies contribute to the endurance needed to successfully complete MNE assignments (Wood & Peters, 2014). Developing a thorough comprehension of CQ is imperative when evaluating international management abilities and competencies (Schlägel & Sarstedt, 2016).

An executive of an MNE can learn cultural intelligence and use it to enhance international competency. Wood and Peters (2014) examined CQ through short-term cross-cultural study tours and found that CQ was adaptable, changeable, and capable of being enhanced. Although all four dimensions of CQ are different, each component has a significant effect on cross-cultural competencies (Eisenberg et al., 2013). A short-term cross-cultural study tour promotes experience in culture, which then leads to more developed CQ (Wood & Peters, 2014). As a multidimensional construct, CQ is made of components that represent different abilities that combine to make up one construct (Eisenberg et al., 2013). Specifically, these business visits enhance the metacognitive, cognitive, and motivational dimensions of CQ (Wood & Peters, 2014). Leaders with CQ generally focus on understanding, reasoning, and behaving effectively under culturally diverse settings (Ang et al., 2007). Wood and Peters suggested that firms should consider short-term cross-cultural study tours early on in the international leadership development stage to support CQ and enhance cross-cultural interactions. International experience leads to better knowledge and strengthens social competencies, which impacts an individual's CQ (Şahin et al., 2014). Individuals that decide to step away from their comfort zone and relocate to foreign cultures often experience stress due to unfamiliar beliefs and practices (Ang et al., 2007). Exposure to diverse cultural environments enables individuals to be conscious of their own cultural beliefs and allows them to think and reason before and during their encounters (Sahin et al., 2014). Hansen, Tanuja, Weilbaker, and Guesalaga (2011) referred to CQ as the antecedent of multicultural adjustment. Individuals with international experience are more appreciative of cultural similarities and are understanding of cultural differences (Sahin et al., 2014).

An international leader with higher levels of extraversion is more likely to develop effective internationalization strategies. Open personality traits positively impact the capability of a leader to perform (Tufekci & Dinc, 2014). Şahin et al. (2014) found that higher levels of extraversion resulted in enhanced metacognitive CQ and behavioral CQ in comparison to less extraverted people. The personality traits of openness to communication and conscientiousness affect the components of CQ (Tufekci & Dinc, 2014). Extraversion is a person's desire to be a part of a social setting and having social competence (Sahin et al., 2014). Ko (2015) concluded that extroversion and open-mindedness are primary characteristics that could enhance international leadership strategies. Individuals that are more open to cultural experiences enhanced their motivational CQ, where people that are less open reduced their levels of motivational CQ (Sahin et al., 2014). In an international context, extraverted leaders with CQ are open to adapt to a transnational environment and are likely to develop strategies to effectively merge into a foreign market.

Cultural intelligence is a significant asset for international growth. Rothwell (2012) confirmed the importance of CQ for businesses growing globally and identified valuable tips on training individuals in multicultural environments. International executives should determine how best to adjust to cross-border management practices by obtaining adequate knowledge of the local norms and cultural practices (Nguyen &

Aoyama, 2013). Rothwell emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity, researching the country before entry, and locating qualified partners or informants. International experience is also essential for global executives because it is a vital component of intercultural learning, which enhances CQ (Li et al., 2013). Companies should focus on the appropriate marketing principles, consider local languages, be aware of cultural issues, and understand the differences in how individuals partake in business activities and what motivates them (Rothwell, 2012). Paletz, Miron-Spektor, and Lin (2014) emphasized the value of cultural meanings where individuals can control and leverage conflict for positive outcomes if an individual enhances their knowledge on the differences of those meanings. Other recommendations included the comprehension of different negotiation methods, sensitivity towards various communication styles, capitalizing on personal relationships, and maintaining a level of tenacity to make an impact (Rothwell, 2012). Internationalization practices guided by CQ can serve as a platform for international business leaders seeking to operate across borders.

Alternative Theories

In addition to CQ, there are other theories that help predict international expansion. Uppsala internationalization theory and effectuation theory are two theories that assist in exploring the business inquiry. Both theories are recognized alternatives in the study of internationalization.

Uppsala internationalization theory. The Uppsala internationalization model is a one of the most widely used theories for explaining international market selection trends due to its simplified and applicable platform (Childs & Jin, 2014). The Uppsala theory is an economic model that focuses on the gradual integration, increased involvement, and use of knowledge in foreign markets (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). This theory helps identify obstacles faced by international firms leading to a more accurate business network view (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Researchers discovered that as companies gain international market knowledge and minimize their international risks, the companies increase their commitment level (Childs & Jin, 2014). The internationalization theory pertains to the company's need to overcome the extra cost of foreignness, including vague political regulations, geographic distance, and cultural and language barriers to succeed abroad (Almodóvar & Rugman, 2015).

There are two significant components of the Uppsala model: market knowledge and market commitment (Childs & Jin, 2014). Johanson and Vahlne (1977) suggested that as a firm continues to enhance their international knowledge, they would increase their level of market commitment, which determines the speed, market selection, and entry mode. If a company has less foreign market knowledge, their internationalization speed will be lower and they will select markets with minimal risks (Childs & Jin, 2014). As a firm's market knowledge increases, the speed of internationalization increases (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Companies with low market knowledge are likely to select markets in countries that are geographically and culturally similar to their home country and pursue an entry mode with limited risks, which may include licensing or franchising (Child & Jin, 2014). Firms that gain market knowledge will increase their commitment and select a higher control entry mode that may consist of joint ventures or fully owned businesses (Child & Jin, 2014).

Johanson and Vahlne (2009) recognized the changes in the patterns that influenced internationalization resulting in a more evolved version of the Uppsala model. Johanson and Vahlne (2013) focused on a more in-depth approach and discovered a correlation between developing knowledge and strengthening international relationships. Almodóvar and Rugman (2015) referred to the enhanced internationalization theory as Uppsala 2 where they considered the risks of network outsiders being a significant barrier during an international expansion. Cho and Jin (2015) had a more optimistic perspective on the Uppsala model and suggested that foreign market knowledge played a significant role in mediating the relationship between foreign networking and global market involvement. The Uppsala model evolved into a more in-depth concept on internationalization where the emphasis relies on experimental knowledge.

Effectuation theory. Effectuation theory is another alternative model in the study of internationalization that is the foundation for understanding the early development of MNEs (Andersson, 2011). Effectuation assists in describing decision-making heuristics based on predicted events, allowing firms to increase their level of foreign market commitment (Kalinic, Sarasvathy, & Forza, 2014). A decision that involves effectuation consists of a set of unchangeable characteristics and situations, possible effects, constraints on those effects, and the basis for selecting between the effects (Sarasvathy, 2001). Similar to CQ, the effectuation process begins with leadership traits and skills, international knowledge, and foreign relationships when entering global markets (Chetty, Johanson, & Martín, 2014). Global entrepreneurial firms with exiting relationships in international markets use effectuation to enter foreign markets (Chetty, Ojala, & Leppäaho, 2015).

The basis of effectuation involves relationships at an individual executive level (Chetty et al., 2015). In the context of international business, the executive of an MNE uses effectuation to expand their business to foreign markets with limited access to resources (Sarasvathy, 2001). For instance, an executive of a company that primarily operates in the United States with only relationship ties to the West Bank may lack other resources to expand operations to the region. Through effectuation, the executive may pursue expanding abroad by examining an available set of means or causes (Sarasvathy, 2001). The executive may have limited monetary resources to invest the time for a thorough analysis of the market, enabling him or her to think creatively without available resources. Through effectuation, the executive may build a foundation of strategic partnerships to identify target segments (Chetty et al., 2014). The effectuation theory relates to the development of a decision making capacity by the executive of a firm, enabling him or her to seek new opportunities with strategic partners under uncertain circumstances (Agogué, Lundqvist, & Middleton, 2015). The concept of effectuation is a viable decision making logic where the emphasis lies on the executive's own actions (Sarasvathy, 2001).

Both the Uppsala internationalization model and effectuation logic are alternative theories that apply to internationalization. The Uppsala model focuses more on the organizational level, where the firm develops international knowledge, while minimizing liabilities and increasing their commitment to those markets (Childs & Jin, 2014). The effectuation theory relies on the individual executive's cautious and innovative actions with regard to accessible means, potential effects, and partnership commitments (Reuber et al., 2016). CQ contributes more towards the individual multinational executive's competencies and strategies on a tactical level of analysis. A close examination of CQ reveals that business executives can learn the skill sets and traits needed to strategically interact and communicate effectively during an international expansion (Yitmen, 2013).

International Business Strategies

International growth has been a topic of interest for companies since the evolution of globalization (Shah et al., 2013). The emergence of globalization resulted in businesses facing the challenge of adapting effective internationalization strategies as they grow their companies internationally. With a global platform, MNEs using internationalization strategies develop standards that are suitable for home national cultures (Bondy & Starkey, 2014). A common strategy for growth through international expansion included the development of a production and global marketing scale that reduces costs and generates supply chain savings (Contractor, 2013). Some MNE strategies focused more on adjusting their human resource management practices to different societal and organizational contexts (Edwards et al., 2013). Other strategies involved striving for international recognition, understanding the complexities of organizational and customer needs, leveraging foreign knowledge, replicating emerging markets, and investing in natural resources (Contractor, 2013). Some multinational firms pursued strategies that capitalized on first-mover advantages, entry motives and modes, increased localization and adaption to local conditions, market acquaintances, and political acquaintances (Bouyoucef & Chung, 2015). Fourné et al. (2014) identified three dynamic capabilities that formulated the basis for strategic agility, including sensing local opportunities, achieving international complementarities, and appropriating local value. Large international firms use these capabilities to function effectively across foreign markets. Firms with strategic agility pursue extended strategic resource commitments, maintain a level of flexibility, and create innovative products. For the purposes of this study, I elected to explore strategies on gaining and sharing international knowledge, mergers and acquisitions, diversification, and adopting the appropriate leadership characteristics and skills needed to grow companies through international expansion.

Gaining and sharing international knowledge. As companies grow internationally, they must understand how to manage their operations effectively in foreign environments to remain competitive and successful (Fletcher, Harris, & Richey, 2013). Fernhaber and Li (2013) found that gaining knowledge through international exposure to alliance partners was one strategy that positively impacts new transnational ventures. Knowledge is a crucial element of sustainable growth and organizational performance (Witherspoon, Bergner, Cockrell, & Stone, 2013). Fletcher et al. (2013) suggested that internationalization knowledge plays a significant role in a competitive global market and that firms should combine external sources with accumulated internal experience to develop enough sufficient international knowledge to sustain a foreign market. Consistent with this view, Pellegrino and McNaughton (2015) argued that new international ventures required such knowledge to develop new potential products in foreign markets. Internationalization knowledge is the foundation for experiential competence in a foreign market (Fletcher et al., 2013).

An extension of the benefits of international knowledge is the concept of knowledge sharing. Chen and Lin (2013) asserted that CQ was a significant driver of knowledge sharing among intercultural organizations. Paulin and Suneson (2015) noted that in knowledge sharing the focal point is on human capital and the interaction between people. Yitmen (2013) noted that an MNE's emphasis on knowledge sharing helps strengthen the interorganizational interface between firms. The intent to share knowledge relies on a person's expectation of exchanging data, expertise, and skills to enhance shared operations (Witherspoon et al., 2013). Paulin and Suneson asserted that there were four significant elements that impact knowledge sharing, including the attribute of knowledge, the desire to share, the opportunities to share, and the work setting. MNEs function more efficiently and collaborate by sharing knowledge with outsourced companies that comply with consumer needs (Gupta & Polonsky, 2014). The facilitation of knowledge sharing within the subsidiaries of MNEs requires trust, task efficacy, and a more natural environment (Sheng et al., 2015). MNEs could cultivate employee knowledge sharing through labor training, high-end intermediate inputs, and management techniques (Poole, 2013).

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A). M&A is another effective strategic method used in international expansions (Gomes, Angwin, Weber, & Yedidia Tarba, 2013). M&A is the primary method for entering global markets (Alimov, 2015). Sarala, Junni, Cooper, and Tarba (2016) suggested that M&As were significant mechanisms for international growth. Since 2000, there has been a rapid increase in M&A due to market globalization and more competition (Di Guardo, Marrocu, & Paci, 2015). MNEs use cross-border mergers and acquisitions to assist in the development of outward foreign direct investments from emerging countries (Deng & Yang, 2015). M&A serves as an enhancement of the knowledge infrastructure of the acquiring company through the development of innovative knowledge combinations from merged firms (Sarala et al., 2016). Ferreira, Santos, de Almeida, and Reis (2014) referred to M&A as the preferred strategy for CEOs expanding their business and geographic scope. Di Guardo et al. (2015) confirmed that firms using M&As as strategic tools are likely to gain market shares, develop transnational bridges with budgeted start-up costs, gain access to international markets, and assist in dealing with government regulations. Blonigen, Fontagné, Sly, and Toubal (2014) believed that the motivation of firms to pursue transnational M&As stems from their need to gain a comparative advantage in international markets through acquisitions from experienced targets. Gaffney, Cooper, Kedia, and Clampit (2014) argued that in addition to exporting, licensing, alliances, and joint ventures, M&A is a strategic option for MNEs seeking to internationalize. Deng and Yang (2015) referred to M&As as an effective business strategy for accelerating international growth.

Diversification strategies. Multinational firms also used diversification strategies to avoid the risk of reducing growth in an existing firm, enhance the possibilities for growth in an industry with similar technologies, and when firms have name recognition chose to expand into other businesses (Merdzanovska, 2015). Product diversification has recently received substantial attention amongst international firms and involves managing multiple products in different market segments (Tianjiao, 2014). The increased diversity of products enables MNEs to benefit from gains in productivity and economic growth (Parteka & Tamberi, 2013). Product diversification can also be beneficial when larger companies are insecure about future markets (Tianjiao, 2014). The value of diversification is dependent upon the level of capital market development, integration, and the country's regulatory systems (Berry‐Stölzle, Hoyt, & Wende, 2013). Qui (2014) suggested that product diversification had a positive impact on international strategic business initiatives for global firms. This strategy is significant because it helps international firms cope with unfamiliar business settings and reduces expensive investment risks (Tianjiao, 2014).

Leadership Characteristics and Skills. In a highly complex global economy, researchers are constantly searching for strategies that enhance cross-cultural encounters and develop cultural competencies and skill sets to ease the internationalization process (Froese et al., 2016; Menon & Narayanan, 2015). In a global market, the skills and characteristics of a business leader are crucial factors that determine company performance (Charoensukmongkol, 2015). Companies must utilize the appropriate leadership skills and characteristics needed to successfully implement leadership strategies across borders. Huff, Song, and Gresch (2014) noted that characteristics were attributes in individuals that construe extensive and balanced predispositions. Sammut-Bonnici (2014) reported that effective leadership could serve as the significant source of motivation, empowerment, innovation and creativity. Blonigen et al. (2014) posited that omitting the skills of workers and managers of foreign companies could generate extreme bias when estimating M&A activity across borders. The strategy of adopting international leadership skills and characteristics that cater to foreign environments is necessary to convey corporate goals to various sectors across the globe.

Leaders must evaluate the internal and external surroundings, set strategic goals, supply performance updates, and develop experienced-based programs to enable leaders to gain a global perspective and utilize internal and external data efficiently (Antonakis & House, 2014). An organization that makes the decision to operate abroad must have the knowledge to assemble a team that interacts to overcome challenges and to execute a successful plan (Owen et al., 2013). In team contexts, leaders engage themselves in behaviors impacting their organization and focus on individual needs (Zhang, Li, Ullrich, & van Dick, 2015). The ability to implement the plan and to deal with the challenges and high stress levels in foreign markets is an important factor that could result in positive or negative international growth outcomes (Hon, Chan, & Lu, 2013).

The adoption of transformational or transactional leadership styles can serve as a strategic method in managing international business transactions. Antonakis and House (2014) suggested that transformational and transactional leadership are an enhancement of general leadership constructs. Du, Swaen, Lindgreen, and Sen (2013) recommended that managers utilized both transformational and transactional leadership styles depending on certain circumstances. Transactional leaders focus on meeting objectives while transformational leaders rely on motivational practices to complete those objectives (Breevart et al, 2014). Transactional leadership works well with day-to-day events and the transformational style is effective in developing social responsibility practices (Du et al., 2013). Elkory (2013) professed that transformational leadership and effective organizational culture improved employee satisfaction and commitment. As a company internationalizes, the executive of the company may consider the most appropriate leadership strategy when operating in a foreign country.

Conforming to a transformational leadership style is a strategy that could lead to innovation and enhanced performance when operating across borders. Al-Husseini, Elbeltagi, and Dosa (2013) concluded that transformational leadership was a crucial component that impacts innovation because it supports follower values, promotes individual and corporate change, and cultivates trust and knowledge sharing in different organizational environments. Breevaart et al. (2014) characterized transformational leadership by the four I's consisting of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Idealized influence is when the followers share common attitudes and beliefs with the leader resulting in mutual respect and trust (Moriano, Molero, Topa, & Mangin, 2014). Organizations require leaders that can positively influence their subordinates to enhance performance (Nasomboon, 2014). Inspirational motivation is the development and communication of a leader's future vision (Breevaart et al., 2014). A leader uses inspirational motivation to strengthen team spirit (Tyssen, Wald, & Spieth, 2014). In individual consideration, the leaders acknowledge that their subordinates have individual needs and capabilities (Breevaart et al., 2014). Intellectual stimulation involves challenging followers to think beyond conventional ideas and to utilize alternative approaches to problem solving (Moriano et al., 2014). Transformational leadership is a valid global concept where the requirements for particular leadership factors vary from country to country (Muenjohn & Armstrong, 2015).

The adoption of transactional leadership is another strategy that's proven to be effective in foreign environments where individuals are driven more by monetary compensation. Transactional leadership involves contingent rewards where the motivation of followers relies on material incentives (Breevaart et al., 2014). Transactional leaders focus on the task-related exchange of actions and rewards with the followers (Tyssen et al., 2014). The leader and the follower bargain and exchange tasks and incentives as the primary form of motivation to reach an objective (Antonakis & House, 2014). Although most leadership approaches fall under the classification of transformational or transactional (Tyssen et al., 2014), an international leader can strategically utilize either style to successfully function in a multinational environment.

Another point of view involves the positive correlation between CQ and transformational leadership (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013). Muenjohn and Armstrong (2015) posited that transformational leadership was universal but some behaviors related to leadership varied from country to country. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2013) revealed that leaders with enhanced CQ portrayed management styles that aligned with transformational leadership. Transformational leaders inspire their subordinates and make them aware of the importance of corporate vision and values (Mittal, 2015). Individuals with elevated CQ have the leadership capabilities to successfully function in a multicultural setting (Keung & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2013). Consistent with this view, Menon and Narayanan (2015) found that international leaders with CQ have the ability to manage the challenges that occur in culturally diverse environments. Keung and Rockinson-Szapkiw extended this view and concluded that behavioral CQ and cognitive CQ were the culminating forecasters for transformational leadership. Mittal (2015) furthered the concept of correlating cultural dimensions with leadership styles and found that certain types of leadership cater to different societies. Breevaart et al. (2014) suggested that certain elements of transactional leadership were productive but found transformational leadership to be the most effective. Mittal suggested that in flexible and individualistic societies, charismatic leadership was more acceptable. Charismatic leadership guided by a transactional leadership foundation could be useful in aligning resources with a corporate mission while motivating the subordinates (Antonakis & House, 2014). Conversely, transformational leadership was the most adequate leadership style for collectivized and tighter niched societies (Mittal, 2015).

Aggarwal and Goodell (2014) emphasized the importance of proper personal skills for implementing successful international business processes. Business leaders must have the necessary skill set to deal with people with diverse cultural backgrounds and values to sustain international growth (Posner, 2013). A leader should be mindful of the subordinates and managers with different cultural backgrounds in addition to developing sufficient knowledge about the country (Aggarwal & Goodell, 2014).

Multinational executives that possess the knowledge to educate members of their organization and outside affiliates can help a firm grow through international expansion. Contractor (2013) asserted that MNEs that properly trained their local employees, partners, and suppliers improved labor skills and the management capabilities required to enhance collaborations with global peers. Amal et al. (2013) concluded that experience and the ability to learn and network were crucial factors that influenced firms to internationalize. Executives need the skill sets, competencies, and relationships to collaborate with business associates to effectively function in a competitive global environment (Menon & Narayanan, 2015).

Other strategic methods involving effective skill sets for cross border expansion include long-term orientation and post merger acquisition expertise. Contractor (2013) focused on emerging market multinationals (EMM) where important skill sets included long-term orientation and post merger acquisition skills. Long-term orientation refers to a level of humility that recognizes the need for long-term strategies and internationalized knowledge of cultural trends and the ability to learn from foreign allies (Nguyen & Aoyama, 2013). Long-term orientation encourages internationalization because of the increased levels of commitment to secure a future position in an international market (Mitter, Duller, Feldbauer-durstmüller, & Kraus, 2014). Post-merger acquisition skills involve customary negotiation practices along with the ability to overcome acquisition related challenges, resulting in higher acquisition performance (Dikova & Sahib, 2013). Knowledge and the use of strategic measures and tactics are essential elements in international negotiation practices, which can lead to a competitive advantage in a global market (Chirodea & Soproni, 2013). A multinational executive with post-merger acquisition skills can help promote a successful integration between the members during an international merger (Smeets, Ierulli, & Gibbs, 2016).

Although many multicultural members share similar characteristics, multiple differences exist that can impact a company's operation abroad (Lisak & Erez, 2013). Organizational members from diverse backgrounds bring different perceptions, work habits, experiences, behaviors, and working cultures to the organization (Hosseini, Zuo, Chileshe, & Baroudi, 2013). Global leaders should be mindful of their ability to manage employees that are culturally diverse and from different geographical locations (Tuleja, 2014). Lisak and Erez (2014) identified three characteristics that leaders should possess that fit the global context including cultural intelligence (CQ), global identity, and openness to cultural diversity. The adoption of these characteristics is a tactical strategy that multinational leaders could pursue to strengthen their position in an international market.

Global leaders with higher levels of CQ are aware of different business procedures, have the motivation to implement resolutions for conflicts, have the capabilities to display verbal and non-verbal behaviors, and reflect upon these behaviors in a cultural context (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). Leaders with well-developed global identities serve as role models for their followers (Lisak & Erez, 2014). Individuals that are open to cultural diversity embrace the differences in culture and have the most potential to develop CQ (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013). These characteristics guided by CQ enable global leaders to better function and grow their operation effectively in a global expansion (Menon & Narayanan, 2015).

Factors to Consider During International Expansion

In addition to characteristics, there are important factors to consider before establishing an international presence. Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington (2013) considered cultural environment as a factor that influences the method in which an executive implements an international project. The cultural environment is one of the most significant elements for both local and international businesses (Tutar et al., 2014). Although some project leaders from diverse cultures may operate identical projects, their management practices may completely differ (Rees-Caldwell & Pinnington, 2013). As most multinational firms have workforces with diverse geographic, religious, and language backgrounds, business leaders should consider the cultural environment in their management processes (Tutar et al., 2014).

A thorough understanding of the multiple aspects of culture can assist a multinational executive seeking to expand to global markets. Paletz, Miron-Spektor, and Lin (2014) characterized culture as diversified subgroups. Tutar et al. (2014) defined culture as a combination of emerged customs, traditions, concepts, and institutions resulting in rules, traditions, and ideas that guide interpersonal relations. Guo and Hu (2013) postulated that culture determines nonverbal behavior that embodies distinct thought, feeling, or the status of the person communicating. Tutar et al. (2014) asserted that international business leaders should consider the different facets of culture in management strategies to gain a competitive advantage in a transnational market.

Cultural language is another element to consider for a global expansion. Suchan (2014) asserted that considering the cultural language was a key approach to understanding how individuals think, coordinate, and interact. Tuleja (2014) referred to language as one of the fundamental principles directed towards understanding people's beliefs and behaviors. This is typical in the Middle East where language, religion, social and political institutions, and individual identity have a close connection (Suchen, 2014). Afsharghasemi, Zain, Sambasivan, and Siew Imm (2013) proposed a similar argument and found that cross-cultural communication, market orientation, government regulation, and competitive advantage played an influential role in internationalization processes. The consideration of cultural differences and work processes in a foreign environment may prepare executives to better function in an international work setting.

Other factors to consider during a global expansion include the two different types of global time systems that are the most significant in international business (Guo & Hu, 2013). During cross-cultural encounters, misunderstandings may arise as individuals communicate with others who perceive the concept of time differently (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Guo and Hu (2013) referred to these systems as monochronic and polychronic times. Individuals that function in monochronic time only focus on one item at a time and give priority to schedules, segmentation, deadlines, and efficiency (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Monochronic systems exist in more affluent countries with sufficient resources (Sammut-Bonnici, 2014). Northern American and northern European countries generally follow the monochronic time system (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). In a polychronic time system, individuals attend to many things at once and concern themselves more with personal relationships (Sammut-Bonnici, 2014). People in polychronic systems avoid stringent scheduling and instead focus more on executing human transactions (Guo & Hu, 2013). They incorporate task-oriented activities with socio-emotional activities (Menon & Narayanan, 2015).

Challenges During International Expansion

In addition to strategies, challenges also contribute to the processes of internationalization. Economic growth and opportunities could result in major challenges for MNEs (Bouyoucef & Chung, 2015). As emerging multinational firms pursue foreign markets, they encounter the challenging task of balancing their commitment to acquire tangible and intangible resources with the need to engage in cross-cultural relationships to alleviate resource dependencies (Gaffney et al., 2013). Multinational firms face multiple challenges due to the complexities of foreign markets and cultural differences (Aguilera-Caracuel, Guerrero-Villegas, Vidal-Salazar, & Delgado-Marquez, 2013; Froese et al., 2016). The leaders of these multinational organizations also encounter the particular obstacle of demonstrating ethical leadership towards their diversified subordinates through managing cross-cultural work forces, negotiating with multinational associates, and cooperating with stockholders across borders (Eisenbeiß & Brodbeck, 2014).

Due to globalization, several challenges exist for managers and employees in today's work environment (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Li et al. (2013) suggested that MNEs should create developmental opportunities for their executives to help them deal with intercultural challenges. A global economy requires ongoing interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds and demands constant alternatives aimed at enhancing cross-cultural encounters and competencies (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Once a company establishes an effective cross-cultural communication platform, the racial diversity can serve as an enabling factor for a company's enhanced competitiveness (Andrevski, Richard, Shaw, & Ferrier, 2014).

Al-Husseini et al. (2013) posited that because of globalization, developing countries are facing extreme obstacles that require competent and skillful leaders. Aggarwell and Goodwell (2014) discussed the inherited challenges that result from the driving forces of globalization, which include demographics, sustainability, and technology. The challenge for global managers is to initiate ways to develop skills and competencies that help adapt to different cultural settings (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Demographic pressures result in international instabilities in employee populations and government capital (Aggarwell & Goodwell, 2014). Some global projects face the challenges of clients neglecting to pay for costs of goods sold, the inability to find qualified local personnel, and the failure to abide by contractual agreements (Barnwell, Nedrick, Rudolph, Sesay, & Wellen, 2014).

The global economy encounters challenges in sustainability and climate change (Aggarwell & Goodwell, 2014). In some areas in the Middle East, these environmental challenges include lack of security of food and water, energy, desertification and land degradation, urbanization, industrialization, and political instability (Rozsa, 2014). In the Middle East, governments face the challenge of rebellion from Islamic extremists causing turmoil within the regions (Fry & Walt, 2015). There are continuous uprisings in the Middle East making the region a more volatile and insecure place to conduct business (Afiouni, Ruël, & Schuler, 2014). In the West Bank, business owners are building institutions leading to continued economic growth despite the country's development challenges (Sabella, Farraj, Burbar, & Quaimary, 2014). Most of these developing countries in the Middle East are fast-growing markets that are attractive to companies like Sony and Coca-Cola (Fry &Walt, 2015).

Bouyoucef and Chung (2015) discussed uncertainties that existed in economic policies, political systems, foreign company regulations, infrastructures, contractual agreements, and property protection. These uncertainties exist in the Middle East where the political situation is very complex between the Arab and Israel governments (Rozsa, 2014). Due to these extreme consequences, many MNEs chose not to invest in foreign countries (Bouyoucef & Chung, 2015). Other challenges involve talent management issues where there is difficulty in attracting the appropriate talent in multiple labor markets and producing global leaders (Creelman, 2014). MNEs require a pool of local talent to enable the company to respond to the challenges of both existing and emerging multi-regional markets (Fourné et al., 2014). Talent management obstacles include not being open-minded enough to discover talent anywhere, neglecting the supporting forces that assist in global organizational collaboration, and poor execution of global talent management processes (Creelman, 2014).

Menon and Narayanan (2015) revealed that customers and service providers also faced challenges due to cultural differences. Some cultural differences provide benefits where others provide conflicts (Nguyen & Aoyama, 2013). Leaders that cannot readily adapt to change and confront the complexities of cross border relationships will not succeed in a multicultural environment comprised of different values, behaviors, and attitudes (Tuleja, 2014). As people with diverse cultural backgrounds continue to engage in the service industry, more individuals are facing different emotional demands that require cultural skills and competencies to successfully compete in service-oriented economies (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). As business executives frequently face these challenges, the conceptual framework of CQ can serve as the platform for understanding the phenomenon that supports international leadership (Capatina & Schin, 2013).

I explored various elements that challenge and encourage leaders seeking to grow their companies through global expansion. Companies are encountering the challenge of coping with global competitors that dominate the international market (Shah et al., 2013). Some of these internationalization challenges include licensing, abiding by local regulations, forming partnerships, mergers and acquisitions, and the development of fully owned subsidiaries (Gaffney et al., 2014). It is imperative that companies focus on the positive and negative aspects of international growth when entering the global arena (Shah et al., 2013). Economic growth is the foundation for accomplishing social, economic, and political developments (Abu-Eideh, 2014). The situation in the West Bank has the potential for growth in the national and international sectors. Palestine demonstrated enhanced developments in institutions generating economic growth (Sabella et al., 2014). For instance, Palestine showed an 8% growth in GDP and a 44.3% increase in the construction industry during the first quarter of 2016 compared to the first quarter of 2015 (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Abu-Eideh (2014) demonstrated a different perspective and revealed that even though Palestine witnessed a growth in GDP, this growth was not enough to reach the demanded level of economic development.

In addition to the West Bank, many regions have different cultures that have diverse mindsets on how individuals and societies interact and function efficiently (Fung, 2014). The fundamental organizational transitions that exist during internationalization impact global mindsets at both the individual and organizational level (Gaffney et al., 2014). Major concerns during these transitions include that of international business strategies and activities aligning with local and domestic laws and practices (Fung, 2014). There is also the challenge of deciding which managerial practices need adjustments to cooperate with cultural differences (Nguyen & Aoyama, 2013). International leaders must establish objectives and endure potential channels for success while abiding by local norms (Fung, 2014). Globalization brings in growth to a diverse world with mixed cultural contexts that influence the way business leaders think when they expand their business abroad (Saad et al., 2013).

Summary and Transition

In Section 1, the introduction includes a brief explanation of the foundation of the doctoral study. The purpose of this qualitative single case study is to explore business strategies used to grow companies through international expansion. Section 2 includes an explanation of my role as the researcher and addresses the eligibility of the participants. This section also includes an extension of the nature of the study through an elaboration of the research method and design. Section 2 will consist of data collection specifications and required reliability and validity factors. Section 3 will entail a summation of the findings, application to professional practice, recommendations, and implications for social change.

Section 2: The Project

The second section of this study provides valuable information about my role as the researcher, the purpose of the study, and the criteria for selecting prospective participants. Section 2 contains a discussion of the research project and an explanation of various research methods and design approaches, including a highlight of the key methodological and design considerations. I address the reasons for choosing a qualitative method and a case study design to explore effective strategies that business leaders use to grow their companies through international expansion. In this section, there is a discussion of the population and sampling, the process of ensuring ethical research, and the tools used during the data organization, collection, and analysis process. Section 2 also encompasses a discussion on my plan to ensure the reliability and validity of the study findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies business leaders used to grow their companies through international expansion. The target population was business executives of a successful MNE that had a corporate headquarters in the West Bank in Palestine. The results of this study could contribute to social change by helping MNEs in the West Bank to grow, creating employment opportunities, which would improve the living standard of its residents. MNE growth in the West Bank could also lead to increased profits, which could be used to improve infrastructure and government services for all residents.

Role of the Researcher

I am the primary research instrument in this qualitative case study. As the primary research instrument, the researcher must collect and organize the data and analyze the findings (Collins & Cooper, 2014). The researcher generates information from willing participants (Whiteley, 2012). I used multiple ways of collecting data, including conducting personal interviews and gathering additional company documents. One of my roles as the researcher for this study was to select potential participants for face-to-face interviews. My responsibilities entailed collecting data from the interviewees and presenting a thorough explanation of the key elements of the data, while providing recently published literature to support my evaluation.

In recent years, I gained extensive experience in international business and developed long-lasting contacts with multinational executives. My 10 years of experience as an international real estate developer enabled me to develop close relationships with various multinational business owners. These relationships enhanced my exposure to strategies used to grow companies through international expansion.

A U.S. government commission established the Belmont Report in 1979 to establish ethical principles and guidelines for the involvement of vulnerable research participants including minority groups (United States Department of Health & Human Services, 1979). The Belmont Report is a synopsis of ethical guidelines that promote high ethical standards in respect for persons, justice, and beneficence (Brakewood & Poldrack, 2013). My role in ensuring ethical research was to assure that the subjects were entering the research voluntarily and with equal treatment. The subjects encountered minimal risks and were a part of a study aimed at improving international business strategies. I selected the criteria for participants to comply with the Belmont Report's guidelines by eliminating vulnerable human beings. The participants received notification that their identity remained confidential and that only the researcher reviewed the interview notes, transcripts, and interpretive reports.

The mitigation of bias is a major obstacle for qualitative researchers utilizing interviews to retain data from the participants (Chenail, 2011). A researcher can mitigate bias by recognizing that multiple realities exist, outlining personal experiences and viewpoints that could potentially be bias, and presenting a clear and accurate analysis of the participants' perspectives (Noble & Smith, 2015). I am a businessperson who operates in multiple countries and acknowledge that certain biases exist as an international business practitioner. In recognition of these biases, a high level of openness to contrary evidence subsisted. To mitigate bias and avoid viewing the findings from a personal perspective, I mentally prepared myself to conduct appropriate interviews that did not limit my discoveries to what I thought I knew. My openness to the inquiries enabled me to embrace the true information obtained from the participants' views and meanings.

The use of a proper interview protocol and confirmation of interpretations reduces bias and enhances validity (De Ceunynck et al., 2013). One rationale for the interview protocol is to develop a dependable and consistent rapport with the interviewees (Derrett & Colhoun, 2011). A well-crafted interview protocol can lead to a higher level of dependability and consistency due to its purpose of reducing potential issues that may arise during the interviews (De Ceunynck, Kusumastuti, Hannes, Janssens, & Wets, 2013). The interview protocol (see Appendix A) for this study included instructions about the interview, open-ended interview questions, and recordings and note-taking procedures to help mitigate concerns during the data collection process.

Participants

An essential requirement in the research design phase is to select the appropriate participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Sargeant, 2012). The objective is to select eligible participants with enough experience to explain the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). The criteria for participant eligibility in this case study included multinational business leaders who have successful strategies to grow their company through international expansion. In qualitative case studies, the respondent should have a significant amount of experience on the topic of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015; Sargeant, 2012; Yin, 2014). Each participant had at least 5 years of experience in implementing international business strategies to grow their company through international expansion.

An essential requirement for a qualitative case study is for the researcher to develop a working relationship with the subjects (Johnson, 2014; Meng, 2012). The strategy for gaining access to eligible participants was through personal and professional relationships with multinational business firms in the West Bank. These relationships enabled me to gain access to potential subjects. Yin (2014) emphasized the importance of identifying key informants for a successful case study. The importance of utilizing my relationships with international business firms was to identify key participants that had enough experience in internationalization strategies. The informants provided valuable insight on my topic and directed me to potential participants that met the eligibility criteria.

Significant strategies for establishing a rapport with potential participants include a casual introduction followed by encouragement to engage in the study (Derrett & Colhoun, 2011; Yin, 2014). The initial contact with each potential participant began with a casual email discussing the purpose of the study. The use of e-mail in a globalized world is a significant form of interaction (Al-Alwani, 2015; Lenters, Cole, & Godoy-Ruiz, 2014). After the initial contact through e-mail, each participant received a phone call requesting a casual meeting in a comfortable setting to discuss the purpose of the research and to highlight the major points in the informed consent form. A thorough understanding of information will result in minimal misinterpretations and elevated levels of trust (Johnson, 2014; Pinsky, 2013). I requested that each executive under study complete the informed consent form to ensure that they fully understood the background, procedures, confidentiality, compensation, benefits, risks, and inquiries related to the research.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

In qualitative research, the researcher approaches the participants in an open and exploratory manner, allowing for the development of explicit research and inquiries emerging from the participant's point of view (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). The qualitative approach provides the means of obtaining perspectives from personal experiences within a cultural context (Lyons et al., 2013). Gringeri, Burusch, and

Cambron (2013) referred to qualitative research as a craft skill, where the researcher establishes context-dependent decisions based on the advancements of the project. The objective of using the qualitative method was to generate in-depth knowledge of this business inquiry from the actual experiences of individuals in the business environment. I selected the qualitative method to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies that leaders utilize to expand their organizations internationally.

The other scholarly research methodologies are quantitative and mixed-methods. In quantitative research, the researcher focuses on numeric measures to examine statistical comparisons between variables (Thamhain, 2014). Researchers that utilize the quantitative method comprehend the statistical correlations through numerical evidence and rely on the ability to draw conclusions from the data (Cokley & Awad, 2013). The quantitative approach can assist in administering samples of communities, analyzing cause-and-effect relationships between variables, approving and disapproving theoretical hypotheses, and clarifying numerical data (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). I rejected the quantitative method because it narrowed the spectrum of factors associated with my study proposal to identifying statistical relationships and testing hypotheses (Yilmaz, 2013). Thamhain (2014) contended that quantitative research no longer provides a complete analysis of the inherent value of a proposal, especially factors that impact the study in a non-linear fashion. Although the quantitative approach can contribute to the assessment and selection of a field study, the qualitative method focuses more on the contextualized study of subjects through interviews (Lyons et al., 2013), which better fits this specific exploratory research on internationalization strategies.

The mixed-methods approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study used to obtain a more elaborate understanding of a subject of interest (Venkatesh, et al., 2013). In mixed-methods research, the researcher conjoins qualitative and quantitative data within a single study (Griensven, Moore, & Hall, 2014). Mixed-methods research is a useful method for addressing the *who*, *what*, and *where* questions of quantitative research and the *why* and *how* questions of qualitative research (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Qualitative research does not entail generating statistical data between variables nor include a combination of methodologies to retain the distinctiveness of each methodology (Kahlke, 2014). I did not choose the mixed-methods approach given the exploratory nature of this study.

Research Design

Four qualitative research design options were taken under consideration for this study: phenomenological, narrative, ethnographic, and case study. In phenomenological research, the individual's particular experience is the primary source of interpretation (Bevan, 2014). The researcher utilizes the phenomenological design to gain access to a phenomenon by focusing on the nature and the content of the participant's lived experiences (Chan & Walker, 2015). Gill (2014) asserted that phenomenological designs are a combination of interrelated avenues consisting of a common ground in phenomenological ideology, a distinct interest in the context of individual experiences, pursuit to understanding the participant's perspective, uniformed sampling, and a thematic evaluation that requires originality and vision. The phenomenological design was not applicable in this study because I did not focus on open-ended inquiries on the lived experiences of individuals or their subjective meanings.

The narrative design was not an appropriate research design for this study. This particular design involves telling a story based on a person's life experiences (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2014). The narrative design was not suitable for this study because it focuses more on the life story of the individual or small group (Hunt, 2014).

In ethnographic research, the investigator focuses on a specific phenomenon within the culture and subculture of the participants (Crede & Borrego, 2013; Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). Through the ethnographic process, the researchers deeply involve themselves in the participant's social setting to gain a better understanding of distinct concerns (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Ethnography involves a deeper comprehension of counter-subjectification, where the researcher positions him, or herself as subjects in the participant's world (Hampshire, Iqbal, Blell, & Simpson, 2014). The ethnographic design requires intimate involvement in the participant's environment and extensive time for data collection (Jerolmack & Khan, 2014). I did not select the ethnographic process because the nature of the design does align with the topic under study.

The case study design enables the investigator to systematically and thoroughly research specific inquiries in natural settings (Cronin, 2014; Johnson, 2014). Using the case study design enabled me to explore dimensions of global growth strategies from different perspectives. Case study research is useful in exploring a complicated phenomenon that requires a deeper investigation in a real-life setting (Dasgupta, 2015). The case study researcher can analyze data from interpretations and experiences of the participant (Suchan, 2014). Case studies consist of inquiries that are contingent on the individual, resulting in different interpretations and experiences (Harland, 2014). Bouyoucef and Chung (2015) used a case study platform to investigate the internationalization strategy of an MNE and were able to discover successful entry strategies to emerging countries despite the region's economic and environmental hardships. This study was a case study design because it applied to real scenarios that stimulated innovative thinking and ideas for business practice. In essence, I learned from the experiences of international business leaders as they inquired into their work strategies.

In qualitative research, data saturation is a significant element of rigor (Morse, 2015). To achieve data saturation, there must be a significant amount of data to replicate the study and the collection of data should result in no further themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Suri, 2011). Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) posited that in data saturation, the researcher continues to interview new participants until the information from the responses become redundant and no new data develops. In this single case study, I reached data saturation after interviewing the second participant. The responses from the second participant were repetitive and no new data emerged. The second participant did not add any new data but instead elaborated more on the same content from the first participant's interview. Being that both participants grew the same company through international expansion, they both utilized the same strategies and conveyed the same experiences. The second participant encountered the same obstacles and opportunities as the first participant during the company's expansion, which resulted in responses that were redundant.

Population and Sampling

Researchers carefully select the most suitable population for exploratory research (Poulis, Poulis, & Plakoyiannaki, 2013). The target population for this study was executives from multinational firms in the West Bank in Palestine. The first multinational company I approached in the West Bank agreed to participate in the study. This multinational firm, referred to as Company X, had a team of executives with extensive knowledge on business strategies used to grow their company through international expansion. Through purposeful sampling, I selected participants with international business experience. Purposeful sampling enables the researcher to access the suitable subjects in the field to establish data-rich knowledge on the topic of interest (Suri, 2011). Suen, Huang, and Lee (2014) asserted that researchers who utilize purposive sampling use their judgment to select participants to provide rich data based on the purpose of the study. The basis of my purposeful selection process entailed targeting participants that demonstrated the ability to operate their organizations in multiple countries efficiently. Purposeful sampling enabled me to select eligible subjects with the wealth of knowledge on strategies business leaders used to grow their company through international expansion. Purposeful sampling is a necessary process in obtaining authentic interpretations of findings to reach data saturation (Suri, 2011).

Researchers carefully select the most suitable population for exploratory research (Poulis et al., 2013). The number of participants should reflect the amount of subjects needed to obtain a sufficient amount of data (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2013). The population consisted of four executives of a multinational firm in the West Bank. A minimal size population is grounds for a more intimate case study analysis (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This case study required a smaller selection of subjects to gain an intimate perspective on what strategies business leaders used to operate abroad. For the purpose of this qualitative case study, the smaller number of participants was suitable to address the research question and reach data saturation. Two participants were interviewed in this study and I reached data saturation after the completion of the second interview. After interviewing the second participant, I recognized that this participant did not offer any new data but instead elaborated on the data that emerged from the first participant's interview. The data from the interviews became repetitious after the second interview resulting in no new data. Both participants followed the same international business policies as they grew the company in different foreign markets. The participants revealed that they implemented the same international business strategies and shared the same experiences as they grew the company through international expansion. The interviews reached the point where the information within the data became repetitive.

Defining the sample size relied heavily on the point at which I reached data saturation. Marshall et al. (2013) posited that gauging the appropriate sample size has a direct connection to saturation. The objective of data saturation is to continuously gather subjects to reach the period of which themes become repetitious and no new information surfaces (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A more homogenous sample can increase the likelihood of common themes and data saturation (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Manson (2010) suggested that if saturation is the basis of qualitative research, there is no limit to its achievement. Following the concept of saturation, my intentions were to interview at least two participants until saturation occurred. Marshall et al. (2013) suggested interviewing as few as three participants in a qualitative case study to achieve data saturation. The number of participants in a qualitative study is a minimum of two and is determined when the researcher collects enough information to reach data saturation (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012). I recognized that I reached data saturation when the information that emerged within the data became repetitive. The second interview was an elaboration of the content from first participant's interview. The themes from the interviews were repetitious and no new information emerged. Both participants followed the same corporate guidelines to expand internationally and encountered the same experiences as executives of the same company. These factors contributed to my recognition of data saturation and my decision to stop interviewing.

The criteria for selecting participants included business executives of a successful multinational firm in the West Bank in Palestine. The participants were either owners or leaders of a firm that operated in more than one country for at least 5 years. The selection process must be appropriate and consist of participants who best represent or are knowledgeable of the phenomenon under study (Elo et al., 2014; Poulis et al., 2013). There must be a clear rationale behind the selection process aimed to satisfy a distinct purpose related to the business inquiry (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). In this case study, I selected executives of a multinational firm with over 5 years of experience in growing their company through international expansion.

The interviews took place at a neutral site free from interruptions. The location of the interview is a crucial element in the data collection process (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The researcher should conduct the interview at a time and place that is most convenient for the interviewee (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). The semistructured interview entailed face-to-face contact, which is an essential component in creating a rapport and developing rich qualitative information (Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). Nelson, Onwuegbuzie, Wines, and Frels (2013) suggested that the interview should be a therapeutic process resulting in a trusting collaboration between the researcher and the informant.

Ethical Research

A measure to ethically protect the participant was to receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Anderson and Cummings (2016) classified the IRB as an institutional overseer of ethical conduct. The IRB ensures that the researcher has the qualifications to conduct the study, abides by all governmental guidelines, and produces the pertinent informed consent forms (Anderson & Cummings, 2016; Cseko & Tremaine, 2013). Walden University's IRB approval number for this study was 10-03-17-0505361.

Informed consent refers to the rights of participants to acquire sufficient data on their autonomous decisions while participating in research (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013; Halkoaho, Pietilä, Ebbesen, Karki, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The researcher must provide the subject with adequate information explaining the potential risks and benefits of partaking in a study and must receive informed consent (Rao, 2016). The general principles behind the informed consent process, is to maximize the probable benefits and minimize the risks when participating in research (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013).

I provided each participant with a consent form and requested that they thoroughly read and acknowledged the content. Each participant received a verbal review of the consent form, agreed to the terms, and signed the form to proceed with the interview. During the consent process, it was important to confirm that each potential interviewee understood that their participation was completely voluntary and confidential. Bromley, Mikesell, Jones, and Khodyakov (2015) specified that to maintain voluntarism, the interviewer and interviewee should jointly expect the research to induce truthful knowledge that is advantageous and not easily obtainable otherwise.

The participants had the option to withdraw from the research at any time. Most researchers emphasize to the interviewees the option to withdraw from the study to comply with ethical principles (Faisal, Matinnia, Hejar, & Khodakarami, 2014; Haahr, Norlyk, & Hall, 2014). Furunes et al. (2015) promised the informants in their study anonymity and the option to withdraw from the interviews to be ethically responsible. To withdraw from the study, the participant had the option to inform me of their withdrawal via email or phone. Once the subject submitted a withdrawal request, the data collected from the participant was shredded and destroyed.

Researchers who offer incentives to participants are likely to influence them (Amarasinghe et al., 2013). Johnson (2014) preferred non-monetary incentives for participants due to lack of financial backing. For some individuals, the potential benefits of the research alone can serve as an incentive (Robinson, 2014). The participants in this study did not receive monetary incentives for participation to avoid any conflict of interest. The downside to monetary incentives is that it may motivate participants to fabricate the data during the interview (Robinson, 2014).

Confidentiality is the basis for protecting the privacy of the subjects and the data provided by them (Check, Wolf, Dame, & Beskow, 2014; Johnson, 2014). To ensure confidentiality, this study did not include the identities of the participants or the organization. Referring to each interviewee by identifier code and maintaining a secure encrypted file for each of them enhanced confidentiality. Each participant was assigned a random identifier code, P1, P2, etc., and the organization was referred to as Company X. The purpose of incorporating privacy preservation techniques is to remove unconcealed identifiers from data results before publication (Erlich & Narayanan, 2014). Storing the data from the participants in a safety deposit box for 5 years will protect the confidentiality of the subjects. After the expiration of the 5 years, I will destroy all the collected data related to the research by use of a shredding machine.

Data Collection Instruments

In qualitative research, the investigator focuses on the richness and quality of the data collected (Anyan, 2013). In this case study, the data collection process entailed gathering data from individuals that have international business knowledge. As the primary data collection instrument, I collected data through semistructured interviews and the examination of progress reports and international business policies from the company. In qualitative research, the investigator seeks to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under study (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). My primary point of interest in this qualitative research inquiry was to obtain a deeper comprehension of internationalization strategies from the perspective of knowledgeable participants.

The interview is the most crucial element in developing case study evidence (Yin, 2014). A semistructured interview is a common technique in qualitative research that entails the use of prepared interview questions with the flexibility to explore clarification (Doody & Noonan, 2013). When conducting a semistructured interview, the researcher must structure the questions in a way that focuses on the topic using indirect questions (Chan et al., 2013). I used semistructured interviews for the data collection process to encourage the participants to speak freely about internationalization strategies. The interviews included questions located in Appendix A. The interviewer uses open-ended questions to collect data and group the responses into specific themes or codes for analysis (Lewis, 2015; Williams, 2014). Most participants offer valuable data from their own experiences, but require restrictions on the amount of information they share (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The semistructured interviews for this qualitative inquiry included open-ended questions to encourage depth and richness in the participant's responses.

In addition to conducting semistructured interviews, there was a thorough investigation of company documents including internal records on international business policies and progress reports. The analysis of organizational documents is common in qualitative inquiries (Bowen, 2009). Analyzing archival records can serve as supporting evidence and assist in developing convergent avenues of inquiry (Yin, 2014). Similar to other analytical approaches, the evaluation of documents requires the investigator to analyze and interpret information to develop an understanding of particular knowledge

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I collected available documentation to gain a more thorough understanding of the case study. Some of the documents included financial reports to measure the company's progress before and after they began operating in a foreign country. Other documents included the internal records explaining the strategies used to successfully operate in a foreign environment. The purpose of collecting these administrative and public reports was to accurately measure the perceptions of the informants in conjunction with the strategies they used to address international expansion.

Qualitative researchers use interviewing as a preferred technique to produce and collect information for their research (Chenail, 2011). Semistructured interviews allow the participants to convey their concepts openly without diverting from the topic of interest (Von Wagner et al., 2014). The semistructured interviews began with six open-ended questions catered towards the exploration of internationalization strategies of multinational firms. The open-ended interview questions enabled the participants to speak freely about their experiences with effective international business strategies. Qualitative secondary data is the preexisting information that researchers use to enhance methodological understandings (Irwin, 2013). The use of secondary data, including internal organizational reports and policies, enhanced the understanding of my discoveries and broadened the range of findings related to internationalization strategies. I used semistructured interviews to gather valid and reliable data and used preexisting document based information to gain additional knowledge and interpretations on the business inquiry.

In order to ensure reliability and validity, the research must accurately reflect the data and be consistent (Noble & Smith, 2015; Saunder, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). Reliability and validity are essential criteria used to evaluate quality research (Noble & Smith, 2015). Member checking is a validation technique that researchers use to ensure accurate interpretation of the participant's responses (Birt et al., 2016). Through member checking, I shared my interpretive reports of the interviews with the participants to assess the credibility of the qualitative results. Caretta (2016) increased validity by using member checking as part of a combination of qualitative methods in the form of pamphlets to counter check preliminary data. The member checking process allows the participants to confirm or challenge the interviewer's interpretations of the interviews (Reilly, 2013). I conducted member checking interviews, allowing the participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretive reports and make the comments or corrections needed for validation.

Data Collection Technique

The appropriate data collection technique for this qualitative case study included semistructured face-to-face interviews and a review of company documents. Semistructured interviews allow the researcher the flexibility to communicate freely with the participant about the phenomenon of interest (Anyan, 2013). Face-to-face interviews are a common element for data collecting in research design and encourage the respondent to speak candidly (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015; Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). During a face-to-face interview, the researcher interviews the participant in person to collect data on the business inquiry (Spence & Liu, 2013). The interviewer should record each interview with the responder's permission and carefully take notes to later compare with the recordings (Williams, 2014). Audio-recordings enhance the authenticity of data by limiting the risk of particular data filtering by the examiner through audio playback (Chew-Graham et al., 2013; Kowitlawakul, Wang, & Chan, 2013). The note taking process should be just enough information to create rich passages that emulate the participant's perceptions on the topic (Yin, 2011). The interview protocol in Appendix A includes the introduction, time, date, and location of the interview. The interview consisted of six open-ended questions followed by probing inquiries and member checking. I audio-recorded each interview, took notes, and created reports of my interpretations of their responses for analysis and participant review.

The analysis of organizational documents serves as supporting evidence to gain a better understanding of a particular inquiry (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Yin, 2014). Researchers use secondary data sources to provide sufficient accuracy to explore a phenomenon of interest (Fleischhacker, Evenson, Sharkey, Pitts, & Rodriguez, 2013). In alignment with this view, Putnam, Molton, Truitt, Smith, and Jensen (2016) believed that it was possible to gain advances in knowledge through secondary data sources. In this qualitative study, I conducted semistructured face-to-face interviews followed by a collection of administrative documents related to the business inquiry.

The advantages of face-to-face interviews involve the interviewer and interviewee being able to physically see one another. This advantage allows the researcher to observe the participant's specific tones and body language to reduce misinterpretations (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). Barnwell et al. (2014) stated that face-to-face interaction is an irreplaceable form of communication. Face-to-face interviews enable the researcher to obtain an immediate response, build a rapport, and be certain of the participant's identity (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). This type of interview is flexible, adaptable, and relies on one-on-one interactions regulated within the interview setting (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013).

The use of open-ended questions in semistructured interviews is an advantage that enhances the flexibility of the researcher to search for clarification of an inquiry (Tran, Porcher, Falissard, & Ravaud, 2016). Most responders will willingly contribute data, but require direction on how much information they should disclose (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Investigators seeking to explore a phenomenon are likely to use open-ended interviews for their investigation (Chenail, 2011). The open nature of the interview questions promotes depth and validity and assists in the development of new themes (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

A disadvantage in administering face-to-face semistructured interviews may entail the participant's feeling of self-consciousness when asked to answer sensitive questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013). This situation may result in less conventional and socially undesirable responses (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Other disadvantages include the impact of the appearance of the interviewer on the interviewee and the time and cost of this type of interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013). A face-to-face interviewer can influence the interviewee's responses based on appearance and bias, which can hinder the credibility of the results (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Bias can play a significant role in research studies and is a major challenge for qualitative researchers (Chenail, 2011;

Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). The participant may contribute a non-personal, dishonest view to please the interviewer (Doody & Noonan, 2013). The disadvantages of data collection technique could compromise the quality of the study.

The advantages of using secondary data are to save time and money and maintain a higher quality of information (Smith, 2006; Vartanian, 2011). Generally it is easier and less time consuming to collect administrative documents than to actually collect, analyze, and interpret the data (Saunder et al., 2016). In some cases, secondary data is more accessible and may have a higher level of accuracy and validity (Bryde, Broquetas, & Volm, 2013). The disadvantages of secondary data may include collecting information that does not align with the research question or obtaining inaccurate data (Denscombe, 2007).

A pilot study was not applicable in this qualitative case study. Although a pilot study is useful in evaluating an interview protocol and discovering researcher biases (Chenail, 2011), it is not necessary in this research study. Williams (2014) recommended pilot studies to measure the reliability, validity, and acceptability of collected data. Conversely, Pritchard and Whiting (2012) asserted that pilot studies were unnecessary when the investigators have the option to learn on site from the participants under study.

Member checking is a research process that plays a significant role in validating information. Researchers use member checking to gauge the accuracy of the participant's responses (Andrasik et al., 2014, Birt et al., 2016; Koelsch, 2013). Member checking is the process of bringing back an interpretive report of the interview to the interviewee for review and confirmation (Harvey, 2015). Each multinational executive had the opportunity to review the interview reports and confirm the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. I used member checking to enhance the reliability and validity of the research as part of the process of confirming data saturation.

Data Organization Technique

Reflective journals are recorded detailed descriptions of various concepts, events, and thoughts (Davies, Reitmair, Smith, & Mangan-Danckwart, 2013). Reflective journals are an effective tool in documenting fieldwork experiences and the reasoning behind those experiences (Applebaum, 2014). This tool enables the researcher to engage in critical thinking and reflect on his or her experiences (Everett, 2013). Reflective journaling is an effective method used to explore the experiences of the participants (Davies et al., 2013). As the researcher, I used reflective journaling to record observations of the participants. The journals included detailed notes from the interviews to supplement the participants' responses to the interview questions.

The use of a research journal is helpful in recording events, interview dates and times, location of interview, and documents collected during the study (Richie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013). The organization of data enables the researcher to categorize information by participant, date, application, and themes (Campbell, Heriot, Jauregui, & Mitchell, 2012; Flannery & Gormley, 2014). Through journaling, I scanned the interview notes and administrative documents, recorded the dates and times of the interviews, and categorized the themes that emerged from the participant responses. Storing the data on a flash drive occurred after the completion of the study. The flash drive will remain in a safety deposit box for a period of 5 years and then destroyed to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewees.

Data Analysis

Most qualitative case studies entail a combination of multiple methods to strengthen the validity of the case study analysis (Yin, 2013). Triangulation occurs when the researcher utilizes more than one methodological approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Wilson, 2014). The process of triangulation relies on the use of different sources to generate comprehensive conclusions (Cope, 2014). Four different types of triangulation exist, including data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Gorissen, van Bruggen, & Jochems, 2013). Methodological triangulation was the most suitable data analysis process for this qualitative case study. Methodological triangulation is a common form of triangulation that involves the use of more than one method to research a phenomenon (Heale & Forbes, 2013). Instead of applying the "across method" of methodological triangulation, which involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative data-collection techniques, I implemented the "within method," where the focus primarily remained on qualitative (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). The use of methodological triangulation helps in conforming information from different data collection methods to ensure in-depth data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The most logical and sequential data analysis process for this study was the thematic approach guided by Yin's five-phased analysis cycle. The analytic process includes (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding (Cope, 2014; Yin, 2011). Following the five-phased cycle, the analysis started with a compilation of data from the interview notes, recordings, and organizational documents. This analytic process enabled me to compile information, break down the data to create themes, and develop a conclusion based on the data.

As prominent research tools, qualitative data analysis software is used to support analyses of data collected through interviews, organizational documents, and open-ended interview questions (Woods et al., 2015). The use of applications software can help identify prominent themes (Black, Palombaro, & Dole, 2013). Many researchers use Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to identify themes in qualitative studies (Fenn, Sangrasi, Puett, Trenouth, & Pietzsch, 2015; Wun, Payne, Huron, & Carpendale, 2016). The researcher enters data into the spreadsheet to visualize and organize data (Wun et al., 2016). I implemented coding procedures to maintain the confidentiality of the participants' words and experiences and input them into the spreadsheet to identify key concepts. The individual coding grouped with the data from the administrative documents and interview notes in Excel enabled me to develop themes centered on the central research inquiry.

Data analysis will involve a search for recurring themes, insights, and concepts (Yin, 2014) that will assist in a greater comprehension of internationalization strategies. The development of explanations came from thematic patterns from the interviews, notes, and transcriptions of the audio recordings. I used an inductive approach to understand the perceptions of the respondents and the meanings behind the collected data. Features of the inductive approach include an exploration of evidence to recognize developing themes, beginning the study with a defined research inquiry, sampling from a specific demographic, and interpreting rich data (Liu, 2016). Greenfield et al. (2015) used the inductive approach to facilitate the exploration of themes in narratives while maintaining a sample criterion. Khaikleng, Wongwanich, and Sujiva (2014) discovered the benefits of the inductive method in theory development using data from stakeholder interviews and site observations. Generating and refining themes will continue until no new themes emerge. Charach, Yeug, Volpe, Goodale, and dosReis (2014) continued to collect data until no new themes surfaced in their qualitative study. The focus remained on the key emerging themes in conjunction with recently published literature on internationalization strategies and the conceptual framework of cultural intelligence.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability in a study is the valuation of consistency and reproducibility in the research results (Williams, 2014). With reliability, results may be transferable to a broader society and affirm change in processes (Birt et al., 2016). The basis for confirming reliability in qualitative studies relies on the investigation of dependability (Wang & Lien, 2013).

Dependability refers to the constancy of information over time and through various scenarios (Elo et al., 2014). To ensure the dependability of data over time, I elected to apply member checking. Member checking the participants occurs after the initial collection of data from the interviews allowing time in between (Birt et al., 2016). Through member checking each interviewee receives an interpretive report of the interviews allowing them to confirm the validity and trustworthiness of the research (Andrasik et al., 2014; Harvey, 2015). Member checking allowed the interviewees to review my interpretation of the interview to assure dependability.

Validity

Validity pertains to the accuracy of the findings in relation to the data (Noble & Smith, 2015). The use of specific validity criteria enhanced the credibility of the research. Dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability are key elements in evaluating the rigor of qualitative studies (Cope, 2014; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013).

Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the information from the participant and the researcher through engagement, different forms of observation, and audit trails (Noble & Smith, 2015). The credibility of a qualitative study relies on assuring that a match exists between the participants' representations and lived experiences (Cope, 2014). I elected to ensure credibility through member checking and methodological triangulation. Black et al. (2013) identified triangulation and member checking as crucial approaches in establishing credibility in research. Triangulation allows the researcher to use different methods to ensure credibility (Gorissen et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). The use of multiple independent sources of data and methods of collection in the study increased the level of credibility. Member checking is a technique used to explore the credibility of outcomes (Houghton et al., 2013). Through member checking, each participant had the opportunity to review the interpretive reports of the initial interviews to ensure accuracy and credibility.

Transferability refers to the extent of which findings are transferable to different environments or contexts (Cope, 2014; Elo et al., 2014). To meet the standard in qualitative research, the findings must be meaningful to individuals beyond the research and a connection should exist with their own experiences (Burghardt, Mayhew, Lavis, & Dobrow, 2013). In this qualitative study, the readers and future researchers will establish the extent of which the findings are transferable. I affirm that the reader has enough data on the research and the participants to assess the adequacy and transferability of the results. Researchers addressed transferability by offering a thorough explanation of the context of their research (Black et al., 2013). Future researchers may determine whether or not the results of the research are transferable under different conditions (Houghton et al., 2013). Enabling others to determine the transferability of the findings occurred by reaching data saturation.

Confirmability refers to the researcher's method in assuring that the participant represents accurate, consistent viewpoints in their responses (Cope, 2014). Confirmability involves an analysis of data and an auditing process that ensures that the findings reflect the data collected (Venkatesh et al., 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). I enhanced confirmability by asking probing questions during the semistructured interviews and conducting follow up member checking interviews. Probing questions is an effective technique in preparing the interview allowing the interviewee to mention issues that were unclear or not thought of before (Chan et al., 2013; Nguyen & Aoyama, 2013). The use of probing questions enabled me to confirm a level of authenticity of the respondent's answers to the interview questions. These questions can also assist the researcher in achieving data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Follow up member checking interviews allow the researcher to forward their interpretations of the participants' responses to the interview questions (Birt et al., 2016; Saunder et al., 2016). Member checking is a technique for confirming the accuracy of the data from the interviews through participant validation (Cope, 2014; Reilly, 2013). Conducting follow up member checking interviews enabled me to communicate my interpretations of the responses permitting the interviewees to confirm or challenge the interpretive reports.

Data saturation can have a significant impact on the validity of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researcher achieves data saturation when no new data or themes emerge (Tran et al., 2016). Data saturation occurs when the analysis occurs in conjunction with data collection in a repetitious cycle (Sargeant, 2012). To achieve data saturation, I continued interviewing until there was enough data to replicate my research and no new data or themes emerged.

Summary and Transition

Section 2 included a description of my role as the researcher and the participant selection process. In this qualitative single case study the sample population included executives of multinational firms in the West Bank. Section 2 also includes the ethical standards involving informed consent processes followed by a description of data collection instruments, data collection, and organization techniques. I selected methodological triangulation for data analysis and elected to use various methods including member checking, semistructured interviews, and document review to enhance the reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 entails a presentation of the findings, application to professional practice, an elaboration of the implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies multinational executives used to grow their companies through international expansion. I conducted face-to-face semistructured interviews with two business leaders of a multinational firm who had at least 5 years of international business experience. Further data collection entailed a review of company progress reports and international business policies. Following the initial interviews, I used member checking with each participant to ensure that my interpretations of the initial interviews were accurate. Prior to the interviews, each participant reviewed and signed the informed consent form and agreed to participate in the study.

The interviews took place in the conference room of the company, in a setting that was free of disruptions from employees. I asked six questions to gain an in-depth understanding of what strategies business leaders used to grow a company through international expansion. In this section, I provide (a) an overview of the study, (b) a presentation of the findings, (c) applications to professional practice, (d) implications for social change, (e) recommendations for action, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) my reflections, and (h) conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

This study was designed to answer the following research question: What strategies do business leaders use to grow their companies through international expansion? The company under study was a banking institution that offered corporate, retail, and investment banking services throughout the Middle East with a headquarters in the West Bank in Palestine. Three themes emerged from the data analysis of responses to the interview questions of the two international business leaders and my review of company progress reports. The progress reports revealed increased revenues over the years since the company began to expand into foreign markets. Further support of the findings in this study was evident in Company X's international business policy, which served as a guide to the process of growing the company through international expansion.

The initial interview lasted approximately 25 minutes each and consisted of six interview questions. After the initial interviews, follow-up member checking took place with each participant to confirm the accuracy of the findings. Member checking for each participant lasted approximately 10 minutes and took place in the same company conference room, approximately 1 week after the initial interviews. During the process, I asked each participant, P1 and P2, to review my interpretive reports of the interviews to either challenge or validate my interpretations of their responses. Both participants confirmed the accuracy of the interpretive reports.

The review of administrative documents enhanced my understanding of the company's internationalization strategies. For triangulation purposes, I used the data from company documents to confirm the data from the interviews. The company's progress reports entailed a thorough analysis of Company X's growth from 2011 to the third quarter of 2017. The reports showed evidence of financial growth from 2011 to 2017, when the company began expanding its operations into multiple locations in the West Bank, Israel, and Jordan. As part of Company X's internationalization strategies, the company developed international business policies to guide them during their expansions. Company X's international business policies included compliance requirements in accordance with international and regional standards, a *know your customer* policy, protocol for conducting regional feasibility studies, and integration of international ethical, social, and environmental initiatives. From the analysis of the data collected from the interviews and the review of administrative documents, three main themes emerged: (a) international knowledge and adaption to local conditions, (b) strategic partnerships, and (c) diversification and specialization.

Theme 1: International Knowledge and Adaption to Local Conditions

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis was international knowledge and adaption to local conditions. Pellegrino and McNaughton (2015) defined international knowledge as the knowledge gained through experience while conducting business in foreign countries. Both participants (P1 and P2) shared the importance of adapting to local conditions as they explored different countries for potential opportunities for growth. P1 and P2 asserted that gaining international knowledge and adapting to local conditions was a crucial strategy needed to operate successfully in other countries. Both participants emphasized the need for international knowledge and adaption processes to grow the company through international expansion.

International knowledge. P1 and P2 explained that conducting market feasibility studies contributed to the enhancement of their international knowledge of foreign markets. The participants asserted that conducting market feasibility studies helped determine the depth and conditions of a particular territory and its ability to support the company's banking services. P1 and P2 suggested that conducting market studies enhanced their knowledge and capabilities to expand their business into different countries. P1 explained that by conducting market studies, the company was able to gain a thorough understanding of foreign conditions, obstacles, opportunities, and competition. P2 expressed the importance of conducting market studies for international growth and how conducting market studies played a major role in finding potential locations that had limited competition, resulting in opportunities for the company to tap into underserved markets.

To enhance international knowledge on the needs and wants of the consumers abroad and to gain a thorough understanding of economic and environmental conditions within the region, P2 relied heavily on conducting market studies. P2 commented, "You need to understand the new market very well before you even think about it." Both participants underscored the importance of conducting market feasibility studies to build their international knowledge and also emphasized the importance of adapting to local conditions.

Company X's feasibility report revealed that the company focused on specific factors including project costs, demographics, environmental conditions, local regulations, and banking trends to determine the viability of building a new branch in an location of interest. The goal of the company's feasibility study was to thoroughly understand the potential obstacles and opportunities that may occur when developing new projects in an environment that was different than their home country. The company's feasibility report enabled the company to make decisions about where to conduct business, what market they would target, potential challenges, competition, total costs of the project, and revenue projections. The findings from the document review support the participants' explanations in the interviews. Both participants explained that gaining information through market studies strengthened their international knowledge when entering a foreign market and helped them develop specific banking services that targeted underserved demographics. The participants revealed that they maintained an advantage over their competitors by conducting market studies. P1 shared that through market studies the company was able to increase their understanding of target markets, the environment, and the competition in different regions. P2 commented that conducting market studies allowed them to objectively collect and analyze data about competition, local norms, and specific underserved markets.

The participants' concept of international knowledge aligns with various peer-reviewed studies. The participants' emphasis on obtaining knowledge on the depth and conditions of a particular location is similar to Pellegrino and McNaughton's (2015) discussion of the importance of international knowledge when introducing a new product into a foreign market. This theme aligns with the work of Fletcher et al. (2013), which emphasizes the need for international knowledge to operate effectively in foreign markets and to maintain a competitive advantage. International knowledge is an essential component for sustainable growth and performance (Witherspoon et al., 2013). Andersson, Dasí, Mudambi, and Pedersen (2016) extended this view on the importance of international knowledge and confirmed that international knowledge was a key concept in worldwide economic growth in addition to technology and innovation. The participants' emphasis on international knowledge aligns with Liu and Giroud's (2016) study where the authors focused on acquiring external knowledge beyond organizational boundaries. The participants relied on feasibility reports to enhance their knowledge and capabilities before expanding to different countries. Lui and Giroud asserted that by gaining international knowledge and understanding foreign conditions, MNEs could establish unique internationalization strategies before entering a new foreign market. By enhancing their international knowledge, the participants were able to understand the challenges and opportunities before entering a new foreign market.

Adaption to local conditions: As P1 and P2 explored different countries for potential opportunities for growth, the participants quickly recognized that every region had its own local conditions, including cultural differences, different sets of rules and regulations, and accessibility. The participants asserted that a thorough comprehension of local conditions helped them overcome obstacles and improved their chances of success within the region. P1 and P2 made it a priority to understand the regions cultural similarities and differences, government rules and regulations, and the countries' accessibility as they grew the company through international expansion.

As Company X began expanding operations to different countries, the company experienced differences and similarities in local cultures and norms. Some of the differences the participants experienced included behavior patterns and traits in various regions that followed the same religious practices as their home country. Despite the similarities in religion, some of the people in different regions displayed outward behaviors that appeared to be more Westernized and modern as opposed to more traditional and conservative. P1 suggested that even though some countries they targeted shared the same religious beliefs and spoke the same language, there was no guarantee that the locals would embrace the products that Company X had to offer. P2 experienced major culture shocks in some regions the company internationalized in that seemed similar on the surface, but was actually more different than anticipated.

In an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, MNEs focus on leveraging similarities and differences in cultural conditions to identify potential target markets (Gelfand, Aycan, Erez, & Leung, 2017). P1 expressed that in order to gain a thorough understanding of cultural conditions, one must consider continuous visitations to the country of interest and learn the culture by communicating with the locals personally. P1 and P2 preferred frequent visitations to potential countries because it allowed them to understand the mindsets of the locals before expanding their operations to the region. Many countries have different cultures with different mindsets on how individuals interact (Fung, 2014). The transitions that occur during an international expansion influence the mindsets of the individual and the organization (Gaffney et al., 2014). P1 said: "You need to study the culture, the market, the competition, and also consumer behavior." Taking these steps enabled Company X to better adjust to the cultural mindset of their target market.

In addition to adjusting to local cultures and norms, both participants suggested that a thorough comprehension of government rules and regulations was a crucial element that determined the success or failure of a firm seeking to grow their company through international expansion. P1 and P2 discussed the importance of understanding local government ordinances. P1 referred to government regulations as the “main barrier.” P2 referenced governmental regulations as a “barrier to entry” that requires knowledge from an experienced local partner. P1 recalled a scenario where Company X invested in a country that appeared to have low barriers to entry. Over time, Company X realized that although the company encountered minimal challenges entering the market, the company suffered greatly in exiting the market due to stringent governmental regulations. P1 referred do the dealings with these inflexible regulations as a learning experience that impacted future decision-making when exploring business ventures in foreign countries. Hafner-Burton, LeVeck, and Victor (2017) supported the importance of understanding the intricacies of government in a targeted area before entry. Hafner-Burton et al. posited that a poor understanding of governmental regulations could lead to negative outcomes. The participants suggested that thoroughly comprehending local ordinances helped Company X better select countries of interest for their expansion.

Government regulations play an influential role in internationalization processes (Afsharghasemi et al., 2013). Although both participants considered governmental regulations to be an obstacle, they believed that understanding the local rules and regulations could help ease the process of expediting government requirements as they grew the company through international expansion. This concept is evidenced in the company’s compliance and regulations section of their international business policy, “To maintain the highest levels of transparency and compliance in accordance with international and regional standards as well as the governance procedures and regulations as stipulated by the Palestinian Authority.” Part of Company X’s international business policy was to "foster strong relationships with several international and foreign government agencies. The company's reputation of compliance has facilitated its growing network of correspondents and partnerships." By adhering to company policy, Company X promoted an open mindset through international knowledge to adjust to both different cultural norms and foreign government regulations, which is a strategy they believed, led to the company's fast international growth.

P1 and P2 expressed the importance of having access to a country to grow the company through international expansion. P1 explained how he learned about the countries' accessibility through frequent visitations and relationships with local partners. P1 stated, " You need to access the country easily so you can control your business." P2 inferred that reaching the company locations in other countries was extremely important to succeed in the region. P1 commented that training the employees would be difficult if they are not reachable. P1 shared an example of negotiating a deal in an area that he believed was a promising location to expand Company X's operation. P1 recognized that the location was too far to get to and complicated to reach. Both participants frequently encountered travel restrictions due to the location of their headquarters. The corporate headquarters of Company X is located in the West Bank, which is a territory near the Mediterranean coast of western Asia, known for its political and environmental challenges. P1 and P2 sometimes faced major obstacles in exploring potential locations due to frequent bridge closures or obtaining visas to travel. P1 discussed one occasion where the company invested funds in a location that was not easily accessible. Over time, the distance resulted in a loss of interest leading to poor management and financial losses.

The concept of having access to a country to expand a business is in line with Buckley's (2016) research on considering location in internationalization. Buckley asserted that MNEs should consider the distance and accessibility between locations to avoid problems of governance, which can negatively affect the company as a whole. The participants shared that having easier access to other countries enables them to control their operations more efficiently. Johanson and Vahlne (2013) suggested that companies should develop relationships or utilize their existing relationships with credible contacts to ease the process of accessing different regions. By capitalizing on foreign relationships, companies can identify and exploit opportunities in different markets without the challenge of gaining access to a country (Johanson & Vahlne, 2013). The participants' experiences in accessibility enabled them to enhance their knowledge on seeking opportunities in countries that are more accessible in order to control their operations successfully.

Correlation to conceptual framework. Theme 1 correlates to Early and Ang's (2003) CQ theory. Early and Ang proposed that individuals with CQ have the capability to successfully function in different cultural settings. Each participant displayed evidence of CQ theory in their exploration of how businesses function in different cultural environments. Both participants invested extensive time and energy in understanding the cultural environments first before expanding to different regions. Once the participants established their business in a new country, they focused on adapting to the local culture.

By adapting to the local culture, Company X was able to function successfully in a foreign environment. The participants exhibited characteristics of CQ in their international leadership practices where they displayed intercultural competence when dealing with the complexities of developing relationships in an environment that has cultural differences. The participants relied on obtaining international knowledge and adapting to local conditions to enhance their individual competencies to function in different cultural settings.

Early and Ang's (2003) four facets of CQ are made up of the cognitive, metacognitive, behavioral, and motivational. The participants displayed evidence of cognitive CQ by expressing their understanding of different cultural structures and their knowledge of foreign practices and beliefs through proactive learning and exposure to different cultural environments. An individual with cognitive CQ understands the similarities and dissimilarities of culture and have general knowledge structures pertaining to culture (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015; Charoensukmongkul, 2015). By evaluating and understanding their own knowledge and behaving accordingly in cross-cultural environments, the participants were able to successfully operate their businesses in different countries. The participants paid close attention to the formalities of their international colleagues by noticing the everyday protocols they respected and minor courtesies they engaged in. For instance, when P1 visited Egypt to evaluate the market, he discussed how his collogues enjoyed evening festivities every night. P1 recognized that in order to develop relationships with the appropriate partners, he needed to adapt to this liberal way of life that he was not accustomed to in his home country. P2 shared his experience when he had to negotiate with Israeli politicians and had to accommodate the their stringent formalities when establishing a bank in Jerusalem. The participants revealed that they possessed cultural awareness and knowledge of local norms and practices through their due diligence and exposure to different cultural settings.

Theme 2: Strategic Partnerships

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis was strategic partnerships. The participants asserted that finding the "right strategic partner" was an important strategy used to expand Company X internationally. P1 and P2 concluded that building relationships with the appropriate partners not only increased their confidence and motivation to expand internationally, but also helped mediate barriers during the process. Both participants preferred partners that were local to the country of interest, trustworthy, and knowledgeable. Cihelková, Nguyen, Wožniaková, and Straková (2017) referred to strategic partners as individuals or institutions that help safeguard and promote sustainable growth and stability. The participants identified strategic partners as legal councilors, local shareholders, and multinational institutions that had strong ties with the local community.

P1 and P2 were advocates for developing strategic partnerships with legal councilors when expanding their operations to different countries. P1 referred to local legal councilors as "credible partners that you can potentially trust and depend on." P2 elaborated on the importance of strategic partnerships by explaining how their understanding of legal and economic conditions and regulations came from a knowledgeable legal partner. P2 further explained that the legal partner simplified business processes within the region by offering advice on how to deal with potential legal issues and the cost of resolving them. Maintaining legal partnerships enabled the participants to understand the formalization of local rules, the roles of intermediaries, the methods in which to negotiate, the costs of business transactions, and the challenges institutions faced when conducting business in a foreign country. The participants suggested that different societies had different rules and ways of ensuring compliance. P2 shared that their strategic legal partner "made everything flexible before deciding to go." P1 suggested that companies exploring opportunities abroad should seek the assistance of knowledgeable legal partners to help mitigate rules and regulations that emerge when functioning in a foreign environment.

The participants further discussed the importance of forming strategic partnerships with local shareholders to help navigate business transactions in areas the company wanted to expand in. P1 and P2 searched for local business people who had the experience and the connections to function in environments that were different than their home country. Once the participants located the "right" business partners, they offered the potential partners a stake in the new business within the region. P1 discussed that one should not only select the "right local partner" but should select a partner that "shares the same vision and purpose." P1 recalled an event where Company X opened locations in two different countries at the same time. Both countries had similar economical, governmental, and environmental conditions. Both locations also had local shareholders responsible for handling each operation. P1 explained that one location was successful because Company X had the "right partner" and the other "failed big time" because

Company X did not have a knowledgeable shareholder that shared the same vision. P1 and P2 expressed that forming strategic partnerships with knowledgeable local share holders can help mitigate risks and identify markets. The participant's emphasis on assembling strategic partnerships with knowledgeable shareholders is similar to Fernhaber and Li's (2013) study, which illustrated that forming partnerships with foreign alliances was an effective business strategy that positively impacts new multinational ventures. By creating joint ventures with knowledgeable shareholders in different countries, Company X was able to capitalize on opportunities and strengthen the company's capacity to manage local deals.

The participants suggested forming strategic partnerships with multinational business institutions to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges business leaders encountered before expanding into other countries. As Company X explored different countries for expansion, the executives of the company formed alliances with leaders from institutions in other countries to deal with the complexities of operating in a foreign environment. The initiative to develop these partnerships is evidenced in Company X's international business policy, which encourages "strong relationships" with several international government agencies, finance corporations, and private investment firms. The bank's international business policy focuses on building international relations with some of the world's top financial institutions. According the bank's policy, strategic relationships with international and foreign governmental agencies help guarantee that the bank "maintains the highest levels of regulatory compliance." The banks robust compliance system is in accordance with the highest international standards and acknowledged by partner institutions. P1 described experiences where Company X held local meetings with multinational business leaders from well-known business institutions from other countries. During the meetings, the executives from Company X and the business leaders from the other multinational institutions openly shared experiences and visions with one another. Ultimately, the sharing of international business knowledge resulted in gaining useful information about governmental regulations, business policies, and underserved sectors in foreign markets.

During the course of forming strategic partnerships with multinational institutions, P1 developed a rapport with the leaders in these multinational firms. Building a rapport with high profile executives enabled P1 to gain knowledge from multinational leaders with first hand experience in international business. P2 counted on the relationships with legal partners, local shareholders, and influential leaders to gain knowledge on addressing local ordinances within the region and to assist in conducting business processes. The concept of knowledge sharing of government regulations, business policies, and underserved sectors in foreign markets is evident in Paulin and Suneson's (2015) study that concluded that knowledge sharing was a significant element in building human capital and creating relationships between parties. Knowledge sharing occurs between different individuals and groups for the purpose of communicating knowledge (Paulin & Suneson, 2015). By developing a rapport and communicating knowledge with leaders in multinational institutions, Company X learned how to facilitate decision-making capabilities, establish organizational routines, adapt to change, and improve overall company performance under different cultural settings.

Correlation to the conceptual framework: Theme 2 correlates to Early and Ang's (2003) metacognitive facet of CQ. The participants displayed evidence of metacognitive CQ by reflecting more on their mental procedures to gain a deeper understanding of cultural differences. By controlling thought processes and monitoring progress when conducting international business activities, the participants' actions align with the metacognitive facet of CQ. The participants analyzed assumptions and acclimated mental maps when collaborating and sharing knowledge with foreign business associates.

The participants displayed evidence of metacognitive CQ through knowledge sharing. The participants displayed knowledge sharing by developing relationships with qualified strategic partners. The participants emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge while maintaining higher levels of cultural awareness. The participants initiated contacts with knowledgeable and strategic partners that would benefit the company during an expansion. Their initiative to pursue a greater understanding of local conditions and potential obstacles and opportunities through the lens of strategic partners shows evidence of metacognitive CQ in its highest form. In essence, the participants were mindful of the feelings, thoughts, and actions of their strategic partners and conformed to their cultural knowledge and local business experiences as they expanded into foreign territories.

Theme 3: Diversification and Specialization

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was diversification and specialization. Both participants asserted that diversification and specification enabled

Company X to be one of the fastest growing banks in the Middle East. P1 and P2 focused on the strategy of diversifying their services and specializing in niche markets to grow their company through international expansion. Company X's diversification and specialization strategy was evident in the company's profile section of the international business policy and progress report, which is an overview of the Bank's accomplishments and commitment to excellence. According to Company X's profile, the company received multiple awards on becoming the Middle East's fastest growing bank in terms of treasury management for its unique treasury solutions and services.

Diversification. The participants shared that as Company X is an established company in the West Bank, the company offered a higher level of service and expertise in comparison to most of the local competition. Due to poor economic conditions, Company X faced a dilemma of having the capabilities to expand locally but suffered limitations for growth due to political clashes. At the time, declining revenues threatened the survival of the company's once thriving business. This dilemma was a motivating factor in Company X's decision to expand internationally. P1 and P2 recognized that in order to expand as a company, Company X needed to implement a diversification strategy.

The participants recognized that there were potential market opportunities in different countries that needed either different versions of their existing products or entirely new products. Company X diversified their product line by modifying their existing products and adding new products to their line. As Company X expanded to foreign territories, the company developed different products and services that catered towards different segments in markets that were underserved. P2 discussed how the company introduced a more modern product to cater to the Israeli market as opposed to the traditional products the company was accustomed to in their home country. The modern product consisted of longer-termed car financing, which was not common in the region. P1 mentioned how the company modified their existing product line to adjust to Islamic markets that opposed banking products that were interest bearing. P1 shared that some Muslim regions did not believe in paying interest due to religious beliefs. P1 expressed that product diversification enabled the company to expand to different countries and target markets that other companies neglected.

The participants developed a thorough understanding of these markets by conducting feasibility studies that indicated market segments that needed specific products. P1 highlighted the importance of a market study to gain a better understanding of the local culture and specific product demand. P2 explained, “We did the market study. We understood the needs and wants of the customer. We familiarized ourselves with the new market.” This theme reinforces Merdzanovska’s (2015) findings that MNE’s use of diversification strategies helps reduce risk and enhance the possibilities for growth. Company X focused on gaining a thorough understanding of different market segments and assessing both the opportunity and the risk of introducing new or modified products to different markets.

Specialization. In addition to diversification, P1 and P2 focused on using their expertise to cater to a specific niche. P2 referred to an opening of a retail bank in Israel, which led to the company’s substantial financial growth because the local banks did not offer the same or similar banking services. P2 shared, “we presented a product that does not exist in that whole country.” The product that Company X specialized in locally served as a luxury in foreign markets. This is evident in Company X’s international business policy, which encouraged the introduction of specific banking services that catered to specific consumers in different countries. P1 and P2 posited that Company X not only implemented a diversification strategy to develop new products for different segments of the market but also introduced their existing products and expertise to foreign markets. Company X introduced a core banking system that was innovative and technologically advanced. Their advanced banking platform enabled the company to enhance their competitive position and provide greater long-termed value for their customers.

By implementing specialization strategy, Company X provided a product that targeted multiple customer types. The participant’s strategy of offering their effective banking services to different countries gave the company a competitive advantage in growing the firm internationally. This theme reinforces the work of Kaivo-oja, Vähäsantanen, Karppinen, and Haukioja’s (2017), which emphasizes that specialization strategy enables companies to focus on their own particular skills and expertise to maintain a competitive advantage. Company X capitalized on the fact that their existing product line was unique in different countries. The company used their existing expertise to assist a wider range of clients. Through specialization strategy, Company X provided a product and service that many of the people in the targeted region were not familiar with. This strategy enabled the company to gain tremendous growth while establishing their credibility in the market.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. CQ was evident in Theme 3, diversification and specialization. The participants utilized their CQ to diversify their product line and to cater to a specific niche. Both participants focused on building international knowledge on countries of interest and developing strategic partnerships to enhance their CQ. CQ is a combination of skills and attributes that enable a person to effectively function in different cultural environments (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). By obtaining a thorough understanding of local norms, beliefs, and regulations, Company X was able to develop new services and focus their existing services on areas that were underserved. The participants' general foundation of CQ enabled them to utilize their competencies and processes in cross-cultural environments while maintaining a competitive advantage in different settings.

Applications to Professional Practice

The results from this study may be applicable to business practice in various ways. Global leaders face the challenge of initiating ways to enhance their competence to function in foreign settings (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Many business leaders lack the knowledge to expand their operations to different countries resulting in negative outcomes. The purpose of this study was to identify strategies that business leaders use to grow their companies through international expansion. The findings from this study indicated that international knowledge and adaption to local conditions, strategic partnerships, and diversification and specialization play a major role in successfully growing a firm across borders.

The findings from this research are relevant to improved business practice because the findings show specific strategies used to expand a firm to different countries while mitigating risks. International knowledge is the basis for operating effectively in a foreign country (Fletcher et al., 2013). As executives explore international opportunities, they can learn about the country by gaining international knowledge and adapting to local conditions to improve their business practices. Business leaders can improve their international knowledge by conducting market feasibility studies to learn about foreign conditions, barriers, market opportunities, and competition. Business executives can also gain a thorough understanding of the country they wish to expand in by adapting to local conditions. Business leaders seeking to explore international opportunities can focus on learning the region's cultural similarities and differences, government rules and regulations, and the country's accessibility.

Further results of the research, including strategic partnerships and diversification and specialization, are applicable to improved business practice. Forming relationships with knowledgeable partners can have a positive impact on international ventures (Fernhaber & Li, 2013). Strategic partnerships are applicable to improved business practice because it enables business leaders to develop relationships with partners who have the local knowledge to build and operate local businesses. Business executives can select partners that understand the local norms, rules, and regulations. Some of these strategic partnerships can include legal counselors, local shareholders, and multinational institutions with ties to the local community.

Diversification and specialization strategies play a significant role in enhancing the possibilities for international growth and maintaining a competitive advantage (Kaivo-oja et al., 2017). Diversification and specialization are applicable to business practice because it enables business leaders to diversify their products and specialize in specific niches when entering a new international market. Executives can utilize their feasibility studies to identify different segments in the market. Once the business leaders identify attractive market segments, they can diversify their product selection or specialize in a specific product to satisfy target market needs and wants.

Implications for Social Change

The strategies identified in this research have been successful for leaders of an MNE in the West Bank in Palestine. Although the Palestinian economy functions below its potential due to continuous political conflict, the West Bank has shown signs of economic growth (Sabella et al., 2014). Birt et al. (2016) posited that if the purpose of a study is to contribute knowledge to enact social change, there is an ethical responsibility to explore different interpretations so that others can decide on the transferability of the results. Understanding business strategies used by experienced multinational executives can enhance the probability of successfully expanding a company across borders. These strategies can assist future leaders seeking business opportunities in countries that are in dire need of employment opportunities and better living standards. The use of these strategies may also effect social change by promoting MNE growth within the West

Bank, which can lead to a higher employment rate and enhanced living situations for local residents. The tax revenues generated from these companies can be used for improvements in the country's infrastructure and the enhancement of government services.

Recommendations for Action

In alignment with the conceptual framework of cultural intelligence, the findings of this study can serve as a platform for business leaders seeking to grow their companies through international expansion. The strategies mentioned in the research findings came from experienced multinational executives. The results of this study could enable MNEs to benefit from the knowledge and the experiences of the participants and help mitigate the risks associated with a global expansion. Business leaders that lack international business experience could benefit from the knowledge that developed from this study before entering a foreign market.

An enhanced global platform can enable MNEs to develop internationalization strategies that are suitable for different foreign markets (Bondy & Starkey, 2014). The first recommendation is for business leaders to focus on gaining international knowledge and adapting to local conditions. By gaining international knowledge and adapting to local conditions, executives will have a thorough understanding of potential obstacles and opportunities before expanding into a foreign market. This strategy can enable leaders to understand cultural similarities and differences, local government regulations, competition, and accessibility. Executives that have the appropriate international knowledge could gain a competitive advantage and maintain sustainable growth (Fletcher et al., 2013). Leaders seeking to expand operations internationally should adjust to local conditions, including different cultural norms and government regulations. Adjusting to local conditions could enable business leaders to better understand foreign markets and their government regulations.

A second recommendation is to develop strategic partnerships when venturing into new foreign markets. Business executives can focus on building relationships with individuals that are trustworthy and familiar with local business processes. Some strategic partnerships may include legal councilors, local shareholders, and influential multinational institutions within the region. Executives can partner with individuals that have the legal experience to manage government regulations, share the same corporate vision, and can assist in recognizing local opportunities and risks. Finding the appropriate strategic partners can assist leaders in mediating barriers and developing ties within the local communities during an international expansion.

A third recommendation is for executives to diversify their product selection and to specialize in an underserved niche market to promote growth. Implementing a diversification strategy can enable leaders to develop different products for different market opportunities in foreign regions. Through specialization strategy, an executive can focus on their existing product, services, and expertise and use it to target specific markets. Utilizing these strategies can encourage MNEs to offer valuable products outside their home country potentially leading to significant international growth.

The final recommendation is for business leaders to enhance their cultural intelligence. Executives with CQ function better in multicultural environments than those who lack CQ (Menon & Narayanan, 2015). Evidence of CQ was found in the results of this study. The executives under study portrayed signs of cognitive and metacognitive CQ as they explored opportunities in foreign countries. As business leaders grow their companies through international expansion, they can learn the similarities and dissimilarities of cultural differences in multicultural settings. Executives can immerse themselves in the local norms of the community to gain a thorough understanding of the cultural structures. A business leader with CQ has the competency to cope with potential cross-cultural challenges that emerge during international expansions. Business leaders with CQ are able to recognize and overcome the complexities of intercultural differences in a foreign work environment. A business leader with CQ can control and leverage multicultural encounters for positive outcomes and can function effectively across borders. MNEs and business leaders seeking to expand their operations across borders can benefit from the aforementioned results and recommendations.

MNEs or corporations seeking to expand abroad for the first time could incorporate the results from this study into international business seminars or training programs. The seminars may include content pertaining to the general cultural norms, business practices, and government regulations in the country of interest. Companies could also offer training programs that encourage cross-border interactions enabling employees to build CQ and develop potential strategic partnerships. Both options guided by the results from this study can help create multicultural awareness and enhance the international knowledge of business leaders. These initiatives could potentially result in an organization that is better equipped to grow the company through international expansion.

Recommendations for Further Research

Executives should have the business strategies and competency to successfully expand their companies through international expansion. The results of this study involved the in-depth perspectives of a few business leaders from one multinational firm in a particular developing country. Given the concept that the findings from a limited demographic can assist executives in growing their firms internationally, it makes sense to further the research through the perspectives of other international business leaders from different countries. MNEs use internationalization strategies to deal with the uncertainties and complexities of functioning in foreign business environments (Bouyoucef & Chung, 2015). Future researchers should explore internationalization strategies through the lens of business leaders from other developing or developed countries with different populations. Multiple factors from different countries can influence a firm's effectiveness in operating abroad (Amal et al., 2013). Further research should address international business strategies used in different industries and firm sizes. Another recommendation for further research is to conduct a quantitative study to analyze numerical comparisons of business strategies used to grow a company through international expansion. Future research can lead to the improved practice of international business by exploring different demographics, industries, firm sizes, and using mathematical measurements and calculations through quantitative analysis.

The limitations identified in this study can be addressed in further research. A method in which to assure that future participants are providing truthful responses is by developing a good rapport with the participants. By developing a good rapport, the researcher can establish a comfortable environment to interview future participants, encouraging rich and truthful responses. In addressing the second limitation, future researchers can ask additional probing questions that can assist future participants in recalling their experiences accurately during the interviews. The third limitation can be addressed in further research by acquiring accurate company records from the executives of well-established multinational firms. The final limitation can be addressed in future research by exploring international business strategies through the perspectives of business leaders from other populations. Interviewing different participants from other demographics will allow future researchers to determine whether or not the findings from this study are applicable to other populations.

Reflections

My experience during the DBA doctoral study process was challenging yet rewarding. Through qualitative research, I was able to communicate and gain valuable knowledge from top executives of a multinational firm. The lessons learned from this study enabled me to validate and question my own international business practices. Although I am an entrepreneur with international business experience, I had the opportunity to play the role of a researcher, exploring the perspectives of multinational business leaders from another organization. Due to my own experiences in international business, I was well aware that certain biases existed. To mitigate bias I maintained a high level of openness to differences in perspectives and opinions. I viewed the findings from the perspectives of the participants and maintained a neutral position during the research process.

During the interviews, I discovered that the participants possessed a high level of confidence and ambition while discussing their experiences in international business. The participants welcomed the interviews and seemed eager to share their knowledge and experiences. After the interviews, the participants expressed their gratitude for allowing them to be a part of this study. The participants appeared to have had a pleasant experience during the interviews and displayed a sense of satisfaction in being able to contribute their knowledge to the subject.

All of the themes that emerged from the study were consistent with my own views with the exception of the theme on strategic partnerships. As an international business practitioner, I have experienced negative outcomes that derived from selecting partners that did not have the appropriate knowledge or experience. The findings from the study enabled me to change my thinking. The participants highly recommended partnering with individuals that have international business knowledge and expertise in order grow a company through international expansion. After interviewing the participants, I am more inclined to consider selecting strategic partners so long as the potential partners have appropriate knowledge, experience, and shared vision.

Conclusion

As global business opportunities continue to develop, leaders require strategies to grow their companies through international expansion. Internationalization strategies are complex and determined by different variables that can either encourage or discourage multinational involvement (Heiss, 2017). Leaders must have the appropriate resources and capabilities to successfully guide their firms through the internationalization process (Brush et al., 2015). Two participants offered their extensive experience in international business practices. The secondary data included progress reports and international business policies, which helped explain how the company grew through international expansion. Three themes emerged from the study: (a) international knowledge and adaption to local conditions, (b) strategic partnerships, and (c) diversification and specialization.

The results from the findings helped me confirm that international business strategies guided by the conceptual framework of CQ can assist leaders seeking to expand their companies across borders. Executives should consider enhancing their international knowledge while adapting to local conditions, develop strategic partnerships with knowledgeable and experienced individuals, and consider diversification and specialization as they introduce their products, and focus on adjusting to multinational markets. The strategies used by the participants from Company X can serve as a guideline for motivated leaders seeking to explore opportunities in countries other than their home country.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

What you will do	**What you will say----script**
Greet participant upon arrival.	Hello and welcome!
Introduction	I would first like to thank you for participating in this study. My name is Arafat Abuaziz and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. The purpose of this study is to explore strategies that business leaders, like yourself, use to grow your companies through international expansion. The interview should not take longer than 30 minutes of your time. During this time, I will ask you a series of questions allowing me to gain a deeper understanding of internationalization strategies used for global expansion.
Watch for non-verbal queues. Paraphrase as needed. Ask follow-up probing questions.	1. What motivated you to expand internationally? 2. What strategies worked best when you expanded internationally? 3. What barriers did you encounter when implementing those strategies?

	4. How did you address the barriers when implementing the strategies? 5. How did you assess or measure the effectiveness of your international strategies? 6. What additional information could you provide that could be helpful in growing companies through international expansion?
Wrap up interview thanking participant.	I greatly appreciate your participation in this research study. I assure you that your identity is completely confidential and will not be disclosed in this or any other future research.
Schedule follow-up member checking interview. 1. Review and interpret the interview transcripts. 2. Write each question followed by a succinct synthesis. 3. Provide a printed copy of the synthesis to the participant. 4. Ask if the synthesis	I would like to schedule a follow-up member checking interview. During this interview, I will ask you to read a report of my interpretation of the interview so as to confirm the accuracy of your responses. Once you read the report, you will have the opportunity to confirm or challenge my interpretation. Now that you read the report, I would like to briefly review each question with you along with other questions related to the findings to assure that my synthesis addresses your responses. Please feel free

represents the answer or if there is any additional information. 5. Continue member checking until there is no new data to collect. 6. Ask probing questions related to the findings.	to add any input that comes to mind during the review.

Appendix B: Email Invitation to Participants

Dear {Participant},

My name is Arafat Abuaziz. I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in my research study. The purpose of my study is to explore strategies that business leaders use to grow their company through international expansion. I hope to receive at least 4 volunteers to participate in this single case study.

If you are interested in participating, please review the attached informed consent form and feel free to ask questions. You may reply to Arafat.abuaziz@Waldenu.edu, call my local number, or notify me in person. The first 4 volunteers will be accepted as potential subjects. If you accept and are selected for this study, I would like to invite you to an informal meeting in a mutual location to discuss the purpose of the study and review the informed consent form so that you have a thorough understanding of your participation in this study. If I receive more volunteers than the required amount or collected a sufficient amount of data, I will notify you by email of your status as a participant.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Arafat Abuaziz

Doctoral Candidate

Doctorate of Business Administration: International Business

Appendix C: Data Collection Instrument for Interviews

Interview Questions

Q1: What motivated you to expand internationally?

Q2: What strategies worked best when you expanded internationally?

Q3: What barriers did you encounter when implementing those strategies?

Q4: How did you address the barriers when implementing the strategies?

Q5: How did you assess or measure the effectiveness of your international strategies?

Q6: What additional information could you provide that could be helpful in growing companies through international expansion?