2020

Business Leader Strategies that Fulfill Corporate Social Responsibility

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
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Abstract

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MS, University of North Texas, 2015

BS, Prairie View A&M University, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Ineffective corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies harm the organizational brand, reputation, and financial growth. Business leaders who lack strategies to achieve CSR initiatives risk the profitability of their organizations. Grounded in stakeholder theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore CSR strategies leaders of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) use to sustain profitability. Four SME leaders who implemented successful CSR strategies and improved profitability in Maryland and Virginia participated in semistructured interviews. Other data collected were company profit and loss statements. A thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The 3 primary themes that emerged were responsible employee engagement strategy, responsible governance strategy, and increased transparency strategy. The implications for positive social change include the potential for business leaders to increase corporate philanthropic donations to communities. Philanthropic activities could potentially improve the living conditions of citizens through community growth and development, increased benefits for the least advantaged, and increased collaboration between society and industry.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge all who supported and encouraged me through this journey. Thank you, Dr. Lisa Cave, Dr. Mary Weber, Dr. Janie Mayo, Dr. Gwendolyn Dooley, Dr. Susan Davis, and all Walden faculty. Thanks to my wife and daughter, Andia and Ashley Abraham, and to my parents, Dr. Justice and Dr. Agnes Abraham for all the support in helping me reach this point in my academic career.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Business leaders leverage strategies over decades to improve performance. Griffin and Molloy (2015) noted that the largest corporations in the United States can grow at a faster pace than the general economy. The growth coupled with general competition among firms may benefit the economic sector but may not always benefit society as a whole. A historic example of the adverse effects of business growth was the global great recession of 2008. The economic meltdown mainly blamed on corporate greed and ethical problems affected not only corporations, but communities and the environment, and started a debate on the need for corporate ethics and responsibility (Griffin & Molloy, 2015).

The corporate social responsibility (CSR) versus profitability debate leads to a general question: What strategies do business leaders use to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability? To answer the question, I explored the strategies that several business leaders employed to achieve CSR activities profitably. The elements of Section 1 include the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, nature of the study, and research and interview questions. I review the conceptual framework, operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. I then present a review of the professional and academic literature and the foundation of the study. I conclude with a summary and transition to Chapter 2.

Background of the Problem

Business leaders historically used CSR models to become socially accountable to stakeholders and the community in the absence of regulatory oversight or intervention from external bodies. CSR was once a voluntary moral business obligation that became an integral part of strategic planning resulting from increased demands from consumers and governmental regulators (Miller, 2016). According to Boulouta and Pitelas (2014), successful CSR strategies increase a company's competitiveness. Agan, Kuzey, Acar, and Açıkgöz (2016) and Rhou, Singal, and Koh (2016) also concluded that CSR has a positive influence on the profitability and competitive advantage of responsible firms. Karim, SangHyun, Carter, and Mo (2015) characterized CSR practices as having a net positive impact on business. Šontaitė-Petkevičienė (2015) further suggested that business leaders who failed to engage in CSR compromise organizational profitability. However, many of the largest companies worldwide that reported CSR activities in 2015 lacked strategies to achieve CSR promises, resulting in lower corporate profits (Thorne, Mahoney, Gregory, & Convery, 2015). There is a need for CSR strategies that business leaders can implement to increase profitability because the lack of strategies creates a void.

According to Euchner (2016), business leaders constantly explore tools and seek ways to align corporate initiatives with profitability goals. Leaders may find strategic business decisions especially challenging when CSR and financial measures point in opposing directions (Bento, Mertins, & White, 2017). Given the findings of value in engaging in CSR, leaders need strategies to justify and implement CSR in business. CSR research and resources are primarily focused on large organizations. The concentration of available research resources to large organizations versus to small organizations is a justification for further discussion of small business leader strategies to engage in CSR (Byron & Thatcher, 2015; Mostafa & Ahsan, 2017). I critically analyzed recent concepts and strategies that small organization leaders employed to navigate CSR and profitability challenges. The background of the business problem has been summarized here and the focus now shifts to the business problem.

Problem Statement

Business leaders who fail to engage in CSR compromise organizational profitability (Šontaitė-Petkevičienė, 2015). Over 76% of American consumers reported they would not purchase a product or service from a company without a CSR culture, yet small businesses in the United States lack strategies to achieve CSR promises, risking profitability (Thorne et al., 2015). The general business problem was that some leaders fail to achieve CSR promises risk business profitability. The specific business problem was that some small business leaders lack strategies to achieve CSR activities that can result in increased profitability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study was to explore the strategies small business leaders use to achieve CSR activities that can result in increased profitability. The targeted population consisted of four small business leaders located in Maryland and Virginia who successfully implemented strategies to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability. The findings of the study may contribute to positive social change by increasing corporate philanthropic donations to communities. These philanthropic activities could improve the living conditions for citizens through local community growth and development, increased benefits for the least advantaged, and increased collaboration between society and industry.

Nature of the Study

I chose the qualitative method for the study. Researchers use the qualitative method to gain an understanding of underlying motivations and insights into a problem (Clark, 2017). The qualitative method was appropriate to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, experiences, and inspirations of participants. The quantitative method involves testing a hypothesis using statistical methods (Clark, 2017). The quantitative method was not appropriate for this study as hypothesis testing and analysis of variables' relationships or differences was not necessary to address the purpose of the study. Researchers use mixed methods, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, to explore and examine data of human experiences (Kong, Yaacob, & Ariffin, 2016). The mixed methods approach was not appropriate as I did not test a hypothesis or analyze variables' relationships or differences.

I selected a qualitative multiple case study design for the study. Researchers use the case study design to explore real-life, contemporary, bounded systems over time through detailed multiple source data collection (Yin, 2018). I selected a multiple case study design over a single case study to explore strategies that business leaders of different organizations use to implement successful CSR activities. Researchers use the phenomenology design to explore a phenomenon in human nature through the meanings of the lived experiences of a small number of participants (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenology design was not appropriate for this study because the intent was not to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Researchers use the ethnography design to study people and their behavior within a group's cultural setting (Edberg et al., 2015). The ethnography design was not appropriate because I did not explore a group's culture.

Research Question

RQ: What strategies do small business leaders use to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies did you use to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability?
2. What strategy did you find worked best to achieve CSR activities that contributed to increased profitability?
3. How did employees contribute to different strategies to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability?
4. What strategies were least effective in achieving CSR activities resulting in increased profitability?
5. What modifications did you apply to any strategy to improve CSR achievement and increased profitability?
6. What else would you like to discuss that you did not address about achieving CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability?

Conceptual Framework

I chose the stakeholder theory as the conceptual framework for the proposed study. Freeman developed the stakeholder theory in 1982 and argued that organizations can be sustainable and create long-term competitive advantage when leaders align the interests of all stakeholders with business goals. (Freeman, 2010; Sama-Lang & Zesung, 2016). Freeman (2010) also identified key constructs underlying the stakeholder theory including management, ethics, and firm performance. Because CSR may contribute towards a balance among stakeholders' interests, I chose the stakeholder theory to serve as an appropriate foundation to understand strategies small business leaders use to achieve CSR activities that result in profitability.

Operational Definitions

Corporate financial performance (CFP): A subjective measure of a firm's management's ability to generate revenue from the primary business activity (Garcia, Sousa-Filho, & Boaventura, 2018).

Corporate social performance: The principles and deliberate or unintended outcomes of interaction between businesses and society (Arnaud & Wasieleski, 2014).

Environmental supplier development: The purposeful development of manufacturing suppliers to meet green environmental performance targets (Agan et al., 2016).

Organizational citizenship behavior: Employee discretionary effort beyond what is required or described in the work function (Garcia et al., 2018).

Socioemotional wealth: A term used to refer to nonfinancial value of a firm such as family influence and family identity or dynasty (Piotr, 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs accepted as certain or true without question or proof (Nkwake & Morrow, 2016). The first assumption was that participants in the study would provide honest personal and knowledgeable answers to the research questions. The second assumption was that data gathered would be analyzed and reported without any bias. The third assumption was that the measurement instruments such as ROA would be adequate and represent a company's profitability. The fourth assumption was that the population would be a representative sample of typical small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the United States, and study results can translate to other dissimilar firms. I triangulated data to mitigate any risk from assumptions made.

Limitations

Limitations are instances of restrictions or boundaries, a cap or restricting ceiling (Byron & Thatcher, 2015). The first limitation was that the study findings may not be generalized to include CSR delivery strategies useful to all organizations because some data collected may be unique to SMEs. Overly limiting the breadth of concepts in a study may skew the results (Byron & Thatcher, 2015). I included data common to all company sizes when practical to mitigate the limitation. The second limitation was that the small targeted population and number of participants for the study may limit transferability. I elaborated on and thoroughly analyzed the sample and context of the study to allow other researchers to be well informed of the content. Future researchers could address the weaknesses identified in this section by including larger organizations and an increased number of participants.

Delimitations

Delimitations are a description of the bounds of a subject, a declaration of what is in or out of scope (Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2015). The first delimitation was that I conducted the study with a population of leaders from four organizations from Maryland and Virginia. The second delimitation was the population included a diverse set of companies that had no more than 500 employees to represent SMEs. Organizations considered as large, having over 500 employees, were not included in the study. The results of the study could also be of interest to the entire business community and future researchers could expand the scope of the research by focusing on different organizations and populations.

Significance of the Study

The study could be of value to business because the findings from the study could contribute to corporate strategies to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability. CSR activities have the potential to generate a positive impact on corporate financial performance in the long-term (Lankoski, Smith, & Van Wassenhove, 2016). Some other benefits of the study could be contributions to business practice and effecting positive social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

The study could be a contribution to the understanding and effective business practices of responsible leaders and also a set of strategic guides and responsible standards that improve business practice. Wang and Sarkis (2017) noted that multiple company leaders consider social and environmental factors when formulating business standards and strategy, a key approach to increase and sustain profitability. Responsible business practice could translate into other business benefits that include increased stakeholder trust, an enhanced corporate reputation, investor confidence, and a more respected brand (Del Brío & Lizarzaburu, 2017; Shah, 2017; Šontaitė-Petkevičienė, 2015; Singh, 2017).

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change included increased corporate philanthropic donations. According to Glavas and Mish (2015), business and community collaboration could result in improved community development and business practices that enhance efforts to preserve local environments. Philanthropic initiatives could improve the living conditions of local societies through increased community growth and development, increased benefits for the needy and less advantaged, and increased collaboration between local societies and industry. Specific examples of benefits to local communities could be the creation of more jobs, larger welfare budgets, and new businesses.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The literature review was a critical analysis of current and previous research pertaining to strategies small business leaders use to deliver CSR profitably. According to Tencati (2007), CSR in small businesses is increasingly impacting society, but is often considered a prerogative of large organizations, and most research addresses large firms rather SMEs. I used the following research question as a guide to provide a foundation for the topic of profitable CSR delivery:

> RQ: What strategies do small business leaders use to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability?

I expanded on the research question and organized the literature into four topical sections, (a) the conceptual framework, (b) themes, (c) CSR, and (d) CSR and corporate financial performance.

I compiled the information in the review from peer-reviewed journals, books, government agency databases, and from Walden DBA dissertations published after 2014. I retrieved articles from the Elton B. Stephens Co (EBSCO), Emerald, ERIC, ProQuest, and Sage Premier databases. I further confined the review to themes related directly to the stakeholder theory, which was my conceptual framework, ideas presented in the problem and purpose statements, and the research question of the doctoral study.

Search terms and themes used for database searches included: *corporate social responsibility, CSR evaluation methods, CSR strategies, primary and secondary stakeholders, ethics, qualitative research, CSR and financial results, stakeholder's theory*, and *corporate strategy*. To comply with the DBA doctoral study rubric requirements, I ensured that 85% of the total sources of my completed study had a publication date less than 5 years from the expected year of CAO approval. I also exceeded the minimum peer-reviewed source requirement of 60 sources. Table 1 is a summary of the types of sources used in the literature review.

Table 1

Literature Review Source Content

Reference type	Total	< 5 Years	> 5 Years	%Total < 5 Year
Peer-reviewed journals	153	131	22	86%
Dissertations	3	3	0	2%
Books	4	3	1	2%
Non-peer-reviewed journals	2	2	0	1%
Total	162	139	23	86%

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of my case study was to explore strategies small business leaders in Maryland and Virginia used to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability. I chose the stakeholder theory as the conceptual framework for my study because similar key constructs underlie both the notion of CSR and the stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory is a notable normative theory among many that pertain to business ethics and CSR (Sonenshein, 2016). Freeman (2010) introduced the stakeholder theory in 1982 and argued that all stakeholders provide critical support to businesses and share in risks, so they should also share in benefits. Looking through a relativistic and conditionality lens, Freeman argued that business profits come at the expense of other parties; that corporations only exist because of society, so owe *all* society some form of restitution. Freeman also posited that value creation is an entitlement, and organizations must consider all stakeholders that interact with the firm when creating value. Stakeholder theorists also focus activity in corporate governance on all identifiable stakeholders of the organization (Agudo-Valiente, Garces-Ayerbe, & Salvador-Figueras, 2015; Persic, Markic, & Persic, 2016;).

There are many classifications of stakeholders. Freeman (2010) identified stakeholders of an organization beyond just shareholders and classified them according to the effect the stakeholders had on the organization. Freeman's classification of stakeholders included employees, suppliers, customers, and the community (Persic et al., 2016). Stakeholders were further classified as direct or indirect, primary or secondary, and internal or external (Arnaud & Wasieleski, 2014; Vracheva & Mason, 2015). Employees, suppliers, customers, and shareholders were considered direct stakeholders because of their primary interactions with the organization. The press, special interest groups, the government, and the community were considered as indirect stakeholders because such entities may only have secondary transactions with the firm (Chabrak, 2015; Freeman, 2010; Vracheva & Mason, 2015). Direct stakeholders were considered critical to business operations and so more powerful than indirect stakeholders who only have secondary influence on the firm`s strategy and management's decision making. The categorization of stakeholders helped business leaders strategize on stakeholder engagement (Du, Swaen, Lindgreen, & Sen, 2013). With many different categories and groups come an interconnected and sometimes conflicting set of interests, goals, and demands.

Leaders need to carefully manage groups to avoid conflict. Interconnects between groups can make actions taken by an organization towards one stakeholder within a network adversely affect another (Joslin & Müller, 2016). The concept of shared value and equity is a main premise of CSR that has been captioned over its historic evolution under many names, including corporate citizenship and strategic philanthropy (Barsky & Dvorak, 2015; Joslin & Müller, 2016). Major management philosophies of the stakeholder theory regard maximizing the interests of all stakeholders (Van Der Linden & Freeman, 2017) as well as balancing the conflicting demands of an organization's various stakeholders by not having the interests of one group overshadow another (Cho, Laine, Roberts, & Rodrigue, 2015; Walliser, De Visser, & Shaw, 2016). For an organization to conform to the stakeholder's theory, all stakeholders are to receive the same attention from management, but according to Gregory, Tharyan, and Whittaker (2014), maximizing value for every stakeholder could be difficult, and a careful balance is needed. With many conflicting groups and interests, value distribution can be a major task for leaders to carefully navigate and implement for collective benefit.

The value, importance, worth, or usefulness of a thing or service may mean something different to different parties. Participants in an open market determine what is of value, what will be offered for such value, and what terms would be expected from an organization (Gregory et al., 2014). The interests of stakeholders are usually measured in perceived value received. To explain the concept, Lankoski et al. (2016) referenced the prospect theory showing that there are several alternative reference states examined over time with when and how stakeholders judge value. There is a broad range of reference state possibilities that may also be dependent on stakeholders' or leaders' perceptions.

Justice, fair treatment of stakeholders, and ethics, all concepts well engrained in the stakeholder theory, have been incorporated into the concept of CSR over time. Scholars and business practitioners have studied inclusion and fairness in CSR since the 1950s; in the United States, most Fortune 500 companies have engaged in recurring CSR activities (Sonenshein, 2016; Sony, Ferguson, & Beise-Zee, 2015). For instance, a sense of inclusion in a firm's affairs is also a direct result of fairness (Faldetta, 2016; Ko & Hur, 2014). Hemmati, Feiz, Jalilvand, and Kholghi (2016) and Marques-Mendes and Santos (2016) acknowledged that corporate leaders, especially those who subscribe to CSR, are encouraged to manage affairs fairly to enhance competitive advantage and also achieve superior long-term CFP. Some organizations have figured out how to both be responsible and to increase profitability with growing CSR popularity.

Critics of the stakeholder approach could argue that the effects of stakeholder equity will add cost to organizations. Advocates of the stakeholder's approach have argued, however, that treating all stakeholders fairly can boost a firm's performance and sustainability (Ali Koseoglu, Ross, & Okumus, 2016). In doing so, fairness is demonstrated as a concept of organizational justice that is characterized as distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Faldetta, 2016). Stakeholders perceive distributive justice when the outcome of organizational justice is seen to be fair to each stakeholder. Fairness of procedures regardless of outcome constitutes procedural justice, and treatment among stakeholders is referred to as interactional justice. CSR actions focusing on employee welfare also enhance perceived respect in addition to fair treatment (Farooq, Farooq, & Rupp, 2017). Bridoux and Stoelhorst (2016) also noted that stakeholders who perceive a sense of justice and fairness in interacting with a firm may accept receiving less value, an advantage for the firm. Furthermore, some stakeholders will forego some of their interests if there is a perception of future value for all stakeholders. Management is encouraged to approach stakeholders consistently in order to send a unifying message (Fish & Wood, 2017). Fairness and respect in a business setting may foster an environment that helps leaders approach goals of higher performance.

There can be drawbacks or counter arguments to distributing fair treatment to all stakeholders evenly. For instance, stakeholders who expect to receive value proportional to their bargaining power will feel shortchanged if all parties are treated equally (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2016). Stakeholders who feel cheated will not be concerned with distributive justice. Freidman’s shareholder theory is another contrasting view of the fair distribution of value. The Freidman doctrine emphasized priority on shareholder interests and contrasted with the stakeholder approach (Friedman, 1970). According to Mullins and Schoar (2016), the shareholder view is regarded as the classical view on CSR. Friedman’s doctrine also focused on corporate leaders’ dealings in the business environment (Qiu, Shaukat, & Tharyan, 2016). Mullins and Schoar (2016) agreed with a critical argument by Friedman that a company's only social responsibility is to increase profits for shareholders without breaching socially acceptable norms or engaging in deception or fraud. Huang and Watson (2015) concurred with Friedman that corporate executives are considered employees of the business owner and should choose to engage in philanthropic activities at their own expense as free individuals. The common theme in the contrasting theories is the stakeholder.

The Friedman doctrine, which is also referred to as the shareholders theory, indicated that the state is responsible for social issues. The theory also states that diverting resources towards any other activity including CSR would be a misuse of resources that could be unprofitable for the firm (Mullins & Schoar, 2016; Qiu et al., 2016). Freeman had a different argument from that introduced by Friedman. Freeman stating that not only did all stakeholder’s interests need to be addressed, but that taking care of every stakeholder was actually more beneficial to the organization (Adams, Font, & Stanford, 2017). Freeman also noted that the stakeholder approach does not mean that the organizations ignore pursuing business profits and wealth. Rather businesses should strike a balance between business profit and stakeholder interests (Chan, Watson, & Woodliff, 2014). According to Chan et al. (2014) and Kalargyrou and Costen (2017), management can help promote sustainability and the company’s survival as well as create value for stakeholders by adopting the stakeholder’s theory. The notion was that both goals are not exclusive and can be achieved concurrently.

One main challenge to businesses is how to align various goals. Researchers argued that organizations can be sustainable and create long-term competitive advantage when company leaders align business goals with stakeholders’ interests (Freeman, 2010; Głodziński & Marciniak, 2016; Sama-Lang & Zesung, 2016). Hildebrand, DeMotta, Sen, and Valenzuela (2017) further warned that leaders of for-profit companies depend on their communities to succeed and thus could face demise for failing to engage with the entire community as companies have influence on the lives of stakeholders. Hildebrand et al. (2017) agreed that communities in which businesses operate are integral parts of the businesses. The interdependence of communities and businesses means separating the interests of businesses from those of employees, regulators, customers, and other stakeholders will be difficult.

There are several overlaps and similarities between the stakeholder theory and CSR approaches to business. Hildebrand et al. (2017) noted that business and organizational engagement in communities is seen as an obligation to society in both doctrines and included stakeholder engagement and CSR obligations as necessary for an organization's success. The stakeholder theory is well defined and guided by a clear set of principles (Petro & Gardiner, 2015), while CSR on the other hand may be a broad concept with no clear embracing definition (Hildebrand et al., 2017). There may be several reasons for the lack of consensus on the definition of CSR, but over its history, scholars have attempted to approach CSR concepts by focusing on the goals and purpose of CSR and how it affects society (Diemont, Moore, & Soppe, 2016). For instance, Diemont et al. (2016) suggested that business leaders focus on the ultimate result of varying actions that produce a responsible result rather than focusing on a strict narrow definition of CSR. Further research may be needed to better define the concept of CSR.

Themes and Phenomena

Literature pertaining to CSR was the foundation of the study, so I provided supporting literature for the literature review from previous studies that included corporate ethics, responsibility, and accountability to society. The themes researched and presented were (a) CSR standards, (b) business financial impact, (c) delivery strategies, (d) ethical impact, and (e) benefits to society.

History of corporate social responsibility. CSR has a long history and has evolved over time. Murkherjee and Ghosh (2015) traced the evolution of CSR over 80 years and noted that from initial popularity in the early 1950s, CSR practice and research have transformed into many forms of general business practice. The definition and quantifying of CSR have also been challenging exercises over time. CSR, is a broad term that can cover social activities ranging from donating money to nonprofit groups to implementing environmentally-friendly workplace policies and is used to describe organizational efforts to improve society in some manner (Kim, Lee, & Fairhurst, 2017; Hildebrand et al., 2017). Many have attempted to define the concept of CSR over time, and others simply focused on some aspects of corporate responsibility.

Definitions of CSR cover a broad range of topics. The initial focus of CSR was on a public expectation that business leaders had a responsibility to do good deeds that benefit the communities in which the corporations operate (Dabic, Colovic, Lamotte, Painter-Morland, & Brozovic, 2016). Subsequently by applying the stakeholder’s theory as well as environmental and social issues to organizational strategy, some leaders made positive contributions to global sustainability (Hörisch, Freeman, & Schaltegger, 2014; Sama-Lang & Zesung, 2016). Ultimately, business is about stakeholder value creation, and leaders needed to ensure the survival of their organizations while still creating value for stakeholders (Chan et al., 2014; Hardy & Pearson, 2017; Hörisch et al., 2014;

Lankoski et al., 2016). Leaders needed to carefully apply the stakeholder approach considering the varied needs and associations of third parties with firms.

The actual direct relationships between firms and stakeholders needed to be analyzed. There was a tendency for firms and their stakeholders to focus on transactional relationships and social welfare issues, although there was still debate on the existence of created joint value (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, (2016). Paillé, Mejía-Morelos, Marché-Paillé, Chen and Chen (2016) also posited that company leaders ought to be responsible for their actions and need to have a genuine concern for the health, engagement, and safety of both employees and local communities. However, many organizational leaders voluntarily assumed social and political responsibilities beyond legal requirements (Kim, Park, & Wen, 2015). Santhosh and Baral (2015) advocated for the voluntary approach to business by arguing that enhancing positive attitudes among employees and promoting CSR are necessary for the success of an organization. Organizational citizenship behavior, job engagement, and other nonfinancial measures were seen to bring positive attitudes and positive corporate results (Santhosh & Baral, 2015). Other sustainability approaches beyond profit such as environmental and social benefits consequently contributed to the well-being of society (Becchetti, Solferino, & Tessitorey, 2016; Santhosh & Baral, 2015). The link between responsible corporate behavior and increased profitability begun to manifest in the late 1950s (Santhosh & Baral, 2015). The link between doing good and making money seemed in its infancy by the end of the 50s and may have been better defined in latter decades.

Changes in society may also influence attitudes towards CSR. In the 1960s, key social changes affected how people characterized CSR. New technology, more advanced business models, and stakeholder pressure for CSR compliance helped shape business leaders' strategies (Griffin, Bryant, & Koerber, 2015). Business leaders became more innovative in order to remain competitive in the market. Furthermore, firms also took advantage of their CSR commitment while achieving corporate financial goals (Bhattacharya, 2016). The new perception that a company could have both responsible and profitable goals created a need for more strategies for leading responsibly.

Business leaders had long standing strategies and methods that had worked over time that could not be abandoned completely. Leaders started integrating traditional management functions and corporate culture such as the triple bottom line and the balanced scorecard (BSC) into CSR during the 1970s (Bento et al., 2017). Because measurement promotes action, CSR measures in the BSC and other measurement tools were promising steps towards promoting CSR. BSC became the corporation's tool of choice for evaluating managers' performance and for motivation in pursuit of CSR goals (Bento et al., 2017). Despite BSC being an adequate tool for measuring performance, further research into cost-benefit analyses of the BSC is needed to understand the impacts of management skills, politics, culture, and public discourse (Lueg & Vu, 2015). Because business leaders usually deliver on CSR promises arbitrarily, Lueg and Vu (2015) noted that clear communication among leaders was also needed to help develop better CSR strategies. Business leaders and stakeholders were responsible for determining how much and to what extent CSR dialogue should take place.

Business and social interest groups became even more responsive to stakeholders' involvement with the advent of social media in the 1980s. Issues such as climate change, pollution, globalization, energy, and ethics were introduced into the debate (Becchetti et al., 2016). For example, ethics in CSR have profound implications for value generation; business leaders need processes that align with society's standards and norms to be able to deliver value (Horng, Hsu, & Tsai, 2017; Sonenshein, 2016). Horng et al. (2017) cited studies on media coverage of CFP that showed a correlation between such coverage and corporations' financial performance. Other studies showed that the number of news articles about organizational social activities were positively correlated with financial performance, showing that "doing good" translates to "doing well" (Becchetti et al., 2016). Public media raised awareness and further interest in how company leaders created stakeholder value responsibly.

The quest for legitimacy can also not be discounted as the reason for the spread of the CSR phenomenon. Institutional pressures explained by institutional theory could explain the actions of some corporate leaders because institutional pressures can significantly influence product-level CSR (Cruz, Boehe, & Ogasavara, 2015). Agan et al. (2016) suggested that business leaders often imitate or benchmark other leaders in their respective fields and succumb to peer pressures while also jostling for market share. Battling for market share coupled with public awareness helped advance CSR into the future according to Cruz et al. (2015). Sometimes surrendering to CSR is also a result of community expectations and pressure.

There were further changes to CSR in the 1990s. The visibility of CSR ushered in activists, civil society, and government regulations that played pivotal roles in shaping the CSR trend (Carroll, 2015). For instance, Japanese communities demanded that corporations become more responsible after social expenditures were cut during budget shortfalls (Eweje & Sakaki, 2015). The idea of CSR had become almost universally accepted by the 2000s; subsequently, CSR became a very important strategic component in corporate strategy and CSR strategy literature (Carroll, 2015; Moura-Leite & Padgett, 2011). The acceptance of CSR by most citizens meant that not participating in responsible business could be detrimental to a corporation.

Though there is a general consensus that CSR is generally good for business, scholars and practitioners may still have different approaches to CSR. Differing definitions and interpretations of CSR may make strategic planning challenging (Hörisch et al., 2014). Taghian, D'Souza, and Polonsky (2015) stated that companies need to understand attitudes towards CSR in order to embrace and integrate CSR into their strategies. Currently, as a result of regulations and public scrutiny, business practitioners who see value in CSR and wish to effectively deliver on CSR promises also have the challenge of employing models, standards, and evaluation methods to measure and evaluate CSR (Hörisch et al., 2014). Ocasio and Radoynovska (2016) encouraged organizations to concentrate on business models that measure how stakeholders view the organization. The many angles and lenses through which CSR is seen warrants a carefully measured approach by leaders to help execute CSR properly.

CSR concepts and standards. Many company leaders are eager to show their organizations' commitment to CSR because there is apparent value in doing so. The perception of good stewardship may positively influence the public perception and the reputation of a company (Del Brío, & Lizarzaburu, 2017; Kim, Song, Lee, & Lee, 2017). There is arguably inherent value to organizations that successfully claim and communicate CSR delivery (Carroll, 2015; Chabrak, 2015). Companies that are seen to be responsible may also be rewarded with an increased market share and improved stakeholder relations (Lars, 2017). With an increase in CSR awareness and public demand, an increasing number of corporations are developing CSR initiatives, but lack consistent accepted methods of measuring the contribution of CSR to corporate sustainability (Venturelli, Caputo, Leopizzi, Mastroleo, & Mio, 2017). Persic, et al. (2016) argued though that the perception of acting responsibly even in the absence of responsibility measuring tools can still give companies some benefit. Company leaders can gain the benefits of CSR by simply appearing responsible.

Organizational leaders can make CSR promises, substantiate CSR claims, and have a public perception that CSR promises are being kept. Not supporting claims however in a credible manner creates a risk of public skepticism (Chan & Hsu, 2016). Corporate leaders can choose from a range of global management standards varying in scope and nature to enhance the credibility of CSR delivery claims (Cheng, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014). Leaders can use universally recognized standards to demonstrated CSR commitment and aspirations and show a structured approach towards CSR delivery (Cheng et al., 2014). According to Chan and Hsu (2016), Adopting international CSR standards is one way to promote support and CSR credibility in a society. Public trust of an institution can be key to the institution's survival in a community. Leaders should strive to maintain community trust or risk their business' survival.

The standards that guide CSR provide business leaders with credibility but also tools and guides to effectively address social responsibilities that are relevant to their mission and vision. CSR rating agencies collaborated with governments and other stakeholders to develop trustworthy international guidelines and standards in an attempt to evaluate the value of utility provided to both leaders and stakeholders (Elbasha & Avetisyan, 2017). These standards may also include high-level overviews of key legal risk areas and mitigation strategies that leaders need to achieve overall anticipated business success (Fabricius & Büttgen, 2015; Stimson, Todesco, & Maginley, 2015). One such relevant global CSR standard based on quality management frameworks is (ISO) 26000 by the International Organization for Standardization (IOS).

Regulators coined international frameworks to assist and encourage organizations to contribute to sustainable development. Framers also designed ISO 26000 to go beyond legal compliance and duty (Lars, 2017). The ISO 2600 framework is intended as a supplement for social responsibility instruments, not a replacement (Lars, 2017). Standardization is also not completely void of challenges. Sama-Lang and Zesung (2016) noted that the many competing stakeholder's interests that companies need to address raise challenges to standardize or define CSR in the corporate arena. Different groups relate to corporations with varying needs, demands, and expectation (Goel, Sanghvi, & Dahiya, 2013; Sama-Lang & Zesung, 2016). Agreed upon measures to quantify the social or environmental return on investments on CSR are in line with corporate ethos.

To avoid confusion, standards need to be uniform. In an attempt to set universal standards to define CSR performance, the ISO creators encountered the same diverse interest groups and so lacked a homogenous base to choose from; ISO creators subsequently considered the interests of a small subset of stakeholders (Balzarova & Castka, 2016). Despite varying standards, organizations can mitigate consistency issues by employing multiple standards to attempt to gain legitimacy (Goel et al., 2013). Different needs may exist within subgroups. For instance, employees of a company may have varying medical, dietary, religious, or even entertainment needs that need to be addressed differently. Balzarova and Castka (2016) and Goel et al., (2013) do agree that standards are an attempt to provide some semblance of order and rules. Clear rules are good for business and are more sustainable.

Transparency is another important CSR requirement. Bellantuono, Pontrandolfo, and Scozzi (2016) suggested that a way to create transparency through sustainability reporting is to invite both skeptical and supportive stakeholders into the strategic CSR formulation process through dialogue. Engaging with multiple stakeholders and including them into corporate affairs such as standards formulation and assessing projects during the selection phase may lend further credibility to organizations (Balzarova & Castka, 2016; Bellantuono et al., 2016; Costantino, Di Gravio, & Nonino, 2015). Company leaders even take stakeholder engagement a step further and seamlessly integrate social and economic performance with standardized accounting reporting (Elkington & Zeitz, 2014; Nath & Ramanathan, 2016). Corporate books and reporting are excellent sources to judge corporate responsibility.

The net positive model is another measure that takes a holistic lens to CSR. Both positive and negative contributions are considered when measuring the impacts of CSR initiatives to society (Elkington & Zeitz, 2014). Elkington and Zeitz (2014) pointed out that measurements are made in multiple dimensions. For instance, a company that produces a clean carbon footprint will also be judged on the pollution intensive process imported to fuel its fleet. CSR is also no longer simply judged by how much money business' leaders give away, but also by how leaders earn (Gregory et al., 2014). The link between the financial performance of firms and the social impact are closely related to the premise of CSR (Elkington & Zeitz, 2014). The many facets that are used to measure CSR makes it difficult to forge or hide actual responsibility.

CSR and financial performance. Business leaders need to strategize with the main mandate of business in mind. Arguments outside the concept of stakeholder theory stipulate that the legal mandate of business leaders is to relentlessly create value for shareholders regardless of the harm caused to others in the process (Clifton & Friedman, 2016; Friedman, 1970). The doctrine of maximizing shareholder value has also been largely viewed as the definitive tool for measuring the performance of executives (Clifton & Friedman, 2016). These popular mantras can be hurdles in the paths of advocates for CSR. Further complications are introduced into the effort to justify CSR initiatives because researchers have failed to establish consistent results in attempts to examine the contribution of CSR to a firm's financial performance (Elkington & Zeitz, 2014; Gregory et al., 2014). Attempts at developing clear evidence of the benefits of CSR to a firm's competitive advantage have sometimes also been inconsistent (Skilton & Purdy, 2017).

Leaders need to carefully balance all aspects of business expectations even when there is no definitive evidence of one approach over another.

The many approaches to business practice do not have to be mutually exclusive. Scholars have made the argument that corporations that score high on CSR metrics enhance CFP by attracting resources through good will and thus also build competitive advantage (Gregory et al., 2014). Barsky and Dvorak (2015) suggested that CSR can actually be cost efficient to companies if implemented with well-formed strategies. Hee Sub, Ji Hye, and Kyung Suh (2015) also confirmed that CSR practices affect the profitability of companies whose leaders do not correctly implement CSR. Clifton and Friedman (2016) argued that maximizing corporate profits and CSR are not incompatible goals and also suggested that management performance not be measures of shareholder value. Mao, Pearce, and Wasson (2015) provided a similar economic rational to that of Clifton and Friedman (2016) concluding that hybrid firms that aimed at producing both private and philanthropic good can have higher profit margins than similar firms that are based solely on value creation. These higher margins could arise from complementary economies of scope because of shared inputs (Mao et al., 2015). Business leaders should aggressively pursue all avenues of business that may benefit the organization.

Some researchers have reached a different conclusion from the advantages of a dual mission firm. A minority have concluded that there is either no significant relationship (Aras, Aybars, & Kutlu, 2010), or that a negative relationship between CSR and CFP actually exists (Pecorino, 2016). Duran and Bajo (2014) predicted the financial impact of CSR based on a sample of 336 companies from 24 countries included in the

Dow Jones and FTSE4Good Emerging Indexes. FTSE4Good applies to the FTSE Emerging Indexes and covers over 20 emerging economies. The authors found that the CSR strategy among large multinational corporations is determined primarily by the degree of institutional development of the organization, the political makeup of the host country, or the industrial sector in which the corporations operate (Duran & Bajo, 2014). Financial and nonfinancial aspects of business contribute to different uncertainties and ambiguities (Ajagunna, Pinnock, & Amode, 2017; Laine, Korhonen, & Martinsuo, 2016). In light of unclear consensus on CSR CFP relations, further research is warranted in order to give corporate leaders adequate guides for developing strategy (Lueg & Vu, 2015). These researchers make the argument that the many variables associated with CSR CFP relations make absolutely conclusive predictions of outcomes unwise.

CSR from a leader's perspective. Company cultures can be influenced from the top of an organization. CSR delivery can be greatly influenced by the leaders an organization has (Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015). Corporate leaders are responsible for strategizing and setting goals for their companies, so can encourage, sustain or impede CSR delivery (Christensen, Mackey, & Whetten, 2014; Soltani, Syed, Liao, & Iqbal, 2015; Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015). A leader's personal affiliations, educational attainment, or even religious beliefs can mold the path that he or she leads a company on. Soltani et al. (2015) describe many incentives that can also influence the CSR decisions of leaders, these could include both financial and nonfinancial motivations. The ultimate CSR path of a company may be influenced more from within than from external pressures according to Zwikael and Smyrk (2015). Because leaders have a large influence on the direction of a company's CSR, it is prudent to focus CSR strategies on leader actions.

The traditional main purpose of business leaders is to create value for stakeholders whether there is deliver on CSR or not. The value creation mandate may be a heavy influence on the CSR decisions leaders make (Kopmann, Kock, Killen, & Gemünden, 2015). CSR actions that improve a company's economic standing will be more likely implemented over others. Attig and Cleary (2015) and Bhattacharya (2016) argued that CSR delivery that is seen as differentiating the company and thus giving a competitive advantage for instance will be an attractive proposition for leaders. Hildebrand et al. (2017) also concluded that even when actual value was similar, public reactions to CSR differ depending on the type of benefit. Reactions from the immediate community can also be a strong influence on leader's CSR delivery, especially in the absence of regulation. An executive will have an easier path to advocating for a responsible company culture if there is community support (Soltani et al., 2015). Decisions to be responsible stewards are easier for leaders when all stakeholders agree.

Leadership style can also influence CSR delivery. Transactional leaders for instance may not be open to CSR initiatives that may extend over long periods. These leaders could opt for short-term relationships compared to a transformational leader who may opt for longer more sustainable plans (McCleskey, 2014). Attig and Cleary (2015) also show that superior management quality practices can be a better explanation of CSR dimensions related directly to a firm's primary stakeholders. In 2012, over 3,500 companies issued more than 8000 CSR reports as part of a global reporting initiative, and the number has increased over time (Olsen, 2017). Although there was an increase in awareness and reporting, many organizational leaders did not have a strategic or commonly shared approach to CSR CFP delivery. Leaders instead practiced an ad-hog strategy that evolved over time with no concerted organized planning (Olsen, 2017). In spite of the many leadership styles and organizational structures, Balabanov, Balabanova, and Dudin (2015) referenced evidence that CSR is set to be a permanent fixture in modern culture. IF CSR is the future, leaders need effective strategies to guide consistent and reliable strategic planning.

CSR CFP delivery strategies. Executives oversee a variety of programs and social causes that may not directly align with or contribute to business goals, so delivering on CSR initiatives to stakeholders and the general public may be more difficult than anticipated. Voegtlin (2015) advocated for collective problem solving and shared responsibility instead of isolation of stakeholders. The challenge of reconciling, quantifying, and then gathering support for various CSR programs could be a daunting set of tasks according to Jones, Hillier, and Comfort (2017). Although challenges exist, meticulous initial planning is vital to developing a successful CSR strategy for companies (Gregory et al., 2014). Leaders need to carefully plan and strategize to meet or exceed CSR commitments made to society (Gregory et al., 2014). The reality of CSR under a shared value framework may be manifest differently for a majority of businesses. The CSR delivery effort would most likely be a combination of various scattered strategies that need to be coalesced into a coherent strategy.

Next to challenges to aligning CSR with varying business goals, leaders also face challenges of aligning programs that reflect a company's business values with social and environmental challenges. According to Bhattacharya (2016), business and social values can coexist. Companies can actively promote business value and also profit through such initiatives. The two are themes not necessarily incompatible (Bhattacharya, 2016; Clifton & Friedman, 2016). CSR can also be a source of competitive advantage through differentiation. Companies that focus on CSR have CSR initiatives close to the core businesses and align CSR with company values and principles (Mao et al., 2015). The CSR business alignment can leverage the company's core competencies and increase profitability, meaning CSR and CFP can actually promote each other (Bhattacharya, 2016; Krause, 2015; Mao et al., 2015; Rhou et al., 2016; Taghian et al., 2015). The complimentary effect of both CSR and CFP shows that companies can be profitable while being responsible.

A CSR strategy is not worth much if not sustainable. In the process of attempting to align CSR with business goals and values, and also deliver on CSR promises efficiently, strategies should foremost be acceptable to stakeholders in order to be sustainable (Taghian et al., 2015). Third party reporting and industry standards can be employed to help increase CSR acceptability and sustainability. The international standard ISO 26000 for instance has key principles advocating the roots of sustainable socially responsible behavior (Lars, 2017). The ISO 26000 standard contains several delivery suggestions to enhance CSR sustainability. ISO 26000 contains a set of tutorials on concepts and terms of CSR to encourage organizations to go beyond legal compliance, but notably has a listing of what ISO 26000 is not. ISO 26000 is not intended for certification, regulation, or contractual use (Balzarova & Castka, 2016; Lars, 2017). ISO

26000 is also not intended as a basis for legal actions in global proceeding especially in the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Lars, 2017). ISO 26000 should be regarded as a set of guides and should not be mischaracterized as a management system standard (Balzarova & Castka, 2016; Lars, 2017). The effort to implement CSR will be worthless to all stakeholders if not accepted by company leaders.

Next to being credible, acceptable, and sustainable, leaders need to ensure that CSR delivery needs are well structured. With careful analysis of the dizzying plurality of strategies presented to business leaders three theatres of CSR can be identified (a) activities primarily motivated by charity, (b) symbiotic activities that benefit both society and the company's bottom line, and (c) long term initiatives that fundamentally change the business's ecosystem but create societal value (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2016; Olsen, 2017). The third stage of CSR delivery, the logical path to a sustainable change in the eco-system with an emphasis on a projected path to profitability is well represented in the case of the Indian firm Ambuja Cements Limited. The organization's leaders set a goal to put more back into society, the environment and the global economy than the company takes out, a "net positive" approach to doing business. To achieve the net positive goal, the company launched a community water resource management program beyond what was mandated by law. As a result of the efforts of Ambuja's management, surrounding villages have potable water, plastic consumption has decreased significantly, and there has been a transformative ecosystem change (Smith, 2016). The Ambuja exercise is a good example of CSR implemented well and could be emulated in other areas.

It may neither be practical nor logical for all organizations to implement all theaters of CSR and thus practice the same exact brand of CSR. Maximizing effectiveness in whichever realm or stage is practical would be more prudent (King, 2017). For instance, market share can be affected by simple indirect factors such as the nature of the firm's sources or affiliations (Chen & Slotnick, 2015; Lin, 2016). These initiatives should be chosen based on the core competencies of the entity and the impact the activities may have on society at large (Bhattacharya, 2016). CSR delivery strategy is usually implemented in stages. These stages are critical because this is when opportunities are realized and ideas either utilized or missed all together (Bento et al., 2017). Lars (2017) described the typical initial auditing stage as when leaders classify and categorize any current initiatives or seek new opportunities. These opportunities are costed and then the likely benefits noted. The next stage is an editing stage when executives quantify the impacts of CSR efforts. These impacts may be reported as proof of results in annual sustainability reporting aimed at stakeholders and the general public (Lars, 2017). An example of proof of results is United Parcel Service (UPS) using a third-party auditor to analyze and report progress annually on carbon emission reduction goals (Bento et al., 2017). The transparent approach adds credibility to UPS's sustainability accounting and reporting.

Despite the new business requirements needed to meet CSR standards, business leaders have not abandoned traditional tools. On the contrary, leaders have found ways to incorporate CSR delivery methods into traditional frameworks such as the BSC methodology, agile, and the stage-gate procedure (Bento et al., 2017). Alpenberg, Alku, Rashiti, and Scarbrough (2016) describe how traditional simple budgets do not take enough business factors into consideration to affect long term goals. Tools which can be useful in harnessing a majority of business concerns sustainably are thus preferred (Lars, 2017). The growth of CSR has forced leaders to rethink daily operating methods while still considering long term implications for sustainability.

The BSC is a widely established management tool positioned to assist managers realize their values and visions. The Harvard Business Review editors selected the BSC as one of the most influential business ideas of the past 75 years, and over 50% of large United States firms have adopted BSC (Bento et al., 2017). BSC methodologies also have some overlaps with CSR. All of the four BSC points of view, financial, customer or stakeholder, internal process, and organizational capacity overlap with CSR and CFP initiatives. The BSC has actually emerged as the tool of choice for evaluating managers' CSR performance according to Bento et al. (2017). Motivation is also measured using the BSC tool. The tool seems to be used successfully to measure major facets of a business.

Over several years company leaders have been pressured to deliver increasingly higher financial returns to shareholders which may have resulted in breaches in social responsibility. The pressure to constantly increase value according to Huang and Coelho (2017) led to the 2008 financial crisis in the United States and the world at large. Stakeholders ignored many warning signs, and in the midst of company friendly regulations, little oversight, ambition, and greed, the financial system collapsed. With some obstacles in the way of migrating to a CSR environment removed, more company leaders are increasingly including CSR in their financial reports and also adopting international CSR standards (Casey & Grenier, 2015; Christensen et al., 2014). The business industry trend is arguably in the direction of adopting CSR. So, the question for business leaders is not if, but when and how to incorporate CSR into financial strategy while also considering the company's business values, legal, social, humanitarian, environmental challenges, and financial growth targets (Huang & Coelho, 2017). The subsequent shift of public sentiment towards more oversight and regulation of corporations resulting from lessons learned from the 2008 financial crisis may have been a positive development for CSR advocacy.

Pressure to enact CSR or not comes from various facets of society. One common misconception is that CSR delivery initiatives are only in response to pressure from shareholders advocating that CSR should be treated as an expense and is of little financial value to the corporation (Casey & Grenier, 2015). Bhattacharya (2016) differs with the shareholder's sentiment, positing that CSR is not necessarily detrimental to a company's financial health. Bhattacharya also argued that many organizational leaders voluntarily implement CSR efforts beyond what is required. Clifton and Friedman (2016) also reiterated that increased CFP and increased CSR are not mutually exclusive concepts. For instance, Wal-Mart reduced the amount of packaging used in products by 5% and also managed to cut 100 million miles off delivery routes, saving the company $200m in costs and simultaneously lowering carbon emissions (Smith, 2016). Garcia-Castro and Francoeur (2016) explored some of the theoretically and empirical costs and contingencies that were likely to arise in stakeholder management and concluded that more is not necessarily better. Sometimes doing less can be a good strategy for management to pursue.

The leaders of UPS, a global logistics company that is dependent on fuel to deliver almost 17 million packages daily led by example and showed that it is possible for business to do more for the environment, serve more customers, and add more value simultaneously. In the 2014 UPS12th annual sustainability report UPS (NYSE: UPS), the company met its 2016 goal of reducing its fleet's carbon intensity by 10 %, 3 years early. Thus, set a new 2020 goal of 20% carbon intensity reduction from transportation (Smith, 2016). These examples show a growing trend towards responsible corporate behavior that still results in increased profits. There is also increased research pertaining to CSR in the context of business ethics and insights into managerial decision making and the balance between profit making and corporate responsibility (Sonenshein, 2016). The UPS strategy is an example of implementing the right strategies to be socially responsible and still profitable.

CSR and ethics. CSR in business today is practiced as a subset of business ethics. The concept of business ethics covers morality, corporate governance, and codes of conduct (Goel et al., 2013). The stakeholder theory in CSR also draws its philosophy from ethics and states that the internal actions of organizations affect stakeholders thus need to be based on ethical and moral tenets separate from financial gain (Amin-Chaudhry, 2016; Hörisch et al., 2014). Judging business in the realm of what is morally acceptable or defensible may however deviate from the concept of business as efficient and effective, a notion that is held historically. On the other hand, Goel et al. point at the changing concept of ethics in an ever-changing globalized world. Dwindling resources, public awareness, big data, are contributing factors to the growing debate on the ethical duties of corporations (Del Brío & Lizarzaburu, 2017; Kim, Lee, & Fairhurst, 2017). The many stakeholders may sometimes make the CSR debate difficult.

Corporate social responsibility is seen as a requirement that businesses and their leaders be good corporate citizens. Organizations are seen as an integral part of the systems the entities operate in and which support their existence, thus leaders are expected to go beyond what is required by law to protect the environment and to contribute to social welfare (Goel et al., 2013; Kolk, & Perego, 2014). Unlike those that believe that the only duty to society is providing as much value as possible within the law, Euchner (2016), most in society believe that leaders should exhibit a deeper purpose beyond simple value creation (Kolk, & Perego, 2014). In a competitive environment though, adhering to ethical behavior may be a challenge for business leaders.

Ethics can be a very touchy subject and should be approached carefully because it is not always clearly defined. Demographic, cultural, generational, and other factors need to be considered when quantifying ethics. Business ethics and CSR especially can be relative, and be quantified differently depending on context (Ahen & Zettinig, 2015; Islam, Ahmed, Ali, & Sadiq, 2016). Di Norcia (1997) and McLeod, Payne, and Evert (2016) argued that ethical relativism should be factored into business ethics and research. Di Norcia posited that respecting another group’s culture or understanding it before passing premature judgement is a moral duty. Di Norcia further pointed out that ethical and cultural diversity in business should be the norm as opposed to universal morality and homogeneity that stifles evolution. For instance, in one country, getting rich at almost all costs may be ethical and celebrated as success while in another selflessness may be admired. Erecting one culture as superior over another violates fundamental ethical values, and the exchange and sharing of values enriches and strengthens the business experience. Di Norcia (1997) and Joslin and Müller (2016) concurred on the notion of diversity in business and ethics. Being ethical in one locale may not necessarily be the case in another culture or geographic region.

The regulatory approach to CSR ethics is one arm of a multifaceted effort to have companies deliver on CSR promises. A data driven approach spearheaded by groups such as the Corporate Responsibility Officers Association (CROA) who publish case studies in a magazine is also a viable means to normalizing CSR in society (Di Norcia, 1997). Making information of which companies deliver on CSR available to the general public can be a strong incentive to leaders to employ responsible initiatives (Eisenbeiss, Van Knippenberg, & Fahrbach, 2015). Business leaders who act unethically may generally be aware of their unsavory actions but may also act accordingly depending on the communities' acceptance of such behavior. Di Norcia (1997) noted that unethical business actions may not necessarily also be unlawful. Introducing regulations and deterring punishment may help encourage better ethics in business, but may be challenging in an environment of competition, fear, and greed. The deterrent approach can be akin to the war on drugs; where drug traffickers though facing the stiffest penalties and perils, are not deterred. The rewards in their opinion may far outweigh the risk or fear of punishment.

Ethical standards just as CSR initiatives are set from the top of an organization. Executives greatly influence the ethical culture of their organizations by the examples set. Wu, Kwan, Yim, Chiu, and He (2015) noted though that influence of executives on the ethical culture of a corporation is more prevalent in the SME sector where top management may be the founders with more discretion and influence. According to Sunghee and Heungjun (2016), personal philanthropic beliefs of company founders tend to be the focus of the organizations. The beliefs and influence of founders may also motivate more CSR acceptance and engagement among employees (Sunghee & Heungjun, 2016). SMEs are more imbedded in communities, and so the direct connection to stakeholders makes it more difficult for SME leaders to violate ethical expectations as compared to larger entities (Goel et al., 2013). Wu et al. (2015) noted that larger corporations may be less accessible to stakeholders thus may enjoy less scrutiny, but may also suffer more expectations. Some companies though may be classified as large corporations but the leaders may not exhibit expected behaviors. Chic fill-a is an example of a large company that has policies coined off its owners' religious beliefs by not opening for business on Sunday the Christian Sabbath.

Companies do not get any benefit from good deeds that are not known, so leaders strive to communicate these deeds with the public. Transparency and ethical CSR reporting go a long way to solidify the reputation and credibility of an organization (Christensen et al., 2014). An honor system also exists where omitting expected pertinent information can mar the trust society has in an organization (Devin, 2016; Pires, Pereira, & Moura-Leite, 2015). An example of CSR gone wrong was the case of Enron, once the seventh largest company in the United States. Enron was considered a major CSR proponent, so completely violated the public trust when regulators found public reports to be falsified in 2001. The shock of the Enron debacle and that of other companies such as the CSR award winning Indian company Satyam triggered a sense of skepticism and ushered in an enhanced CSR delivery verification culture (Goel et al., 2013). Some oversight movements include the Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (Dodd–Frank) legislation in the United States in 2010, the CORE coalition, and the international right to know campaign in the United Kingdom (Eisenbeiss et al., 2015). Such organizations helped shift the culture of voluntary CSR reporting purely based on trust to a more structured compulsory CSR delivery reporting system with the intent of providing benefits to society.

CSR benefits to society. The mention of CSR is usually in the context of organizations being better stewards of the environment, but CSR is a broad topic that ranges from philanthropic activities to workplace diversity, fair and equal pay, and workplace harassment. The concept of CSR rests on the ability of corporations to create private value for stakeholders and in turn create public value for society (Kalkan, 2017; Mao et al., 2015). Some of the major benefits of CSR to society also include the general wellbeing of citizens that can manifest in various ways (Hildebrand et al., 2017). The observed increase in the temperature of the earth's atmosphere has been attributed to the greenhouse effect. Also termed climate change or global warming, the warming effect has been a topic discussed in media in recent years and also been a main focus of CSR advocates (Mackay & Spencer, 2017). The adverse effect is believed to be caused by increased levels of carbon dioxide and other pollutants mainly from irresponsible corporate and general human behavior (Rockwood, 2009). A better world through a cleaner environment may be the benefit that most environmentalists tout.

Although some human activities are believed to cause damage either directly or indirectly to the environment including population growth, overconsumption, overexploitation, and pollution, corporate irresponsible behavior is believed to contribute a larger share of the damage. Pollutants from industry are known to greatly affect the health of society (Rockwood, 2009). Balanced ecosystems resulting from responsible corporate waste management would result in clean environments and a healthier global society. Benefits to the local community that a business operates in could manifest in many ways. Members of communities may benefit from the behaviors and standards exhibited by the local employers who as a result of peer relations engage in pro-environmental behaviors (Paillé et al., 2016). Corporate cultures may influence and shape the behaviors of not only employees, but those people that employees interact with (Sunghee & Heungjun, 2016). A company that promotes cleanliness for instance would more likely share similar values with both stakeholders and casual observers. Improved habits should improve the quality of life for residents.

Increased wealth and employment could be another positive contribution to a community. Employee value is another way business leaders can realize CSR value by focusing on the ability to attract and retain good talent (Goel et al., 2013). Capacity building creates employment that tends to increase wealth. For example, a Net Impact survey found that 53% of workers said that a job where employees can make an impact was important (Pecorino, 2016). Research has shown that engaging in meaning work increases personal motivation, engagement, empowerment, and personal achievement (Kolk & Perego, 2014). There is evidence of benefits to corporations and societies, but also empirical evidence on a link between CSR and competitiveness at the national level (Boulouta & Pitelas, 2014; Line & Wang, 2017). Boulouta and Pitelas (2014) suggested that CSR adoption can make a significantly positive contribution to a nation's competitiveness. Boulouta and Pitelas found that when using a measure of national living standards and implementing CSR-based strategies nationally, countries with a relatively low innovation record can benefit more than highly innovative countries. Preuss, Barkemeyer, and Glavas (2016) also noted that different country's leaders adopt CSR practices at different rates. Meaning corporations that invest in their communities as a gesture of responsibility would increase public well-being, but at varying rates and impacts.

Corporate Social Responsibility in the United States

Residents of the United States have increasingly been exposed to the concept of CSR, but attitudes towards the CSR concept differ depending on the views of individual Americans. Many demographic factors including age, religion, politics, and culture influence American's approach to CSR (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2016). The demographic makeup of the United States population tends to be a fair predictive vessel for the beliefs and attitudes towards CSR initiatives. Both sides of the political and ideological spectrum for instance have debated the merits of CSR. The politically liberal population of the United States may see CSR more as a necessary evil while their conservative counterparts may tend to see CSR as a burden on business and as anti-capitalist (Goel et al., 2013; Kilic & Kalkan, 2017). Other factors that contribute to CSR awareness in the United States could be general corporate strategy, the tools available, profitability goals, company size, and stakeholder pressure.

The United States government also plays a role in the rate of CSR adoption in companies. Regulation can force company leaders to deliver on CSR activity when leaders otherwise may not be inclined to. The United States governmental involvement in CSR is generally industry specific, and not targeted at the financial makeup of companies (Sinha, 2017). In India for instance, in an attempt to bridge the gap between rich corporations and the general population, the government passed an amendment to force CSR compliance tied to earnings. The Companies Bill 2011 passed in 2012 mandated that companies exceeding a set profit target were to spend 2% of profits on CSR initiatives (Sinha, 2017). Different countries the world over have varying approaches to CSR adoption and implementation.

CSR regulations in the United States are not tied to the earnings of corporations. Regulations are influenced by a mix of federal and state regulations and money indirectly through lobbying efforts (Kilic & Kalkan, 2017). For instance, the United States government in collaboration with the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) to regulate Native American commerce, depriving local governments of direct oversight into CSR in the gaming industry (National Indian Gaming Commission, 2015). However, the United States congress representatives included CSR mandates into laws pertaining to the construction and maintenance of tribal gaming facilities. CSR adoption in the United

States has increased and affects the average citizen, so further research is needed to supplement current CSR knowledge.

Additional Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Financial Performance Literature

Scholars have studied CSR in its entirety for decades, but have paid minimal attention to some sections for varied reasons. For instance, the notion of corporate credibility, though increasingly important has not attracted much attention from researchers and scholars (Lars, 2017). Researchers also mainly focus on the value companies create from CSR as the justification for implementing it in strategy, few researchers focus on the gain to society (Księżak, 2016). Measurement and reporting of CSR is also a topic that will benefit from more research. For instance, a wrong choice of accounting methods or auditing firms could skew any CSR survey or report if business leaders do not have the data to help make CSR decisions.

Additional research is needed especially in the SME sector where there is limited information on CSR delivery theory and strategy. Lin-Hi, Horisch, and Blumberg (2015) noted in a study that very little CSR information is available outside the corporate world of big business. Business regulators categorize SMEs by size, number of employees, and several other factors. In the United States, regulators set SME criteria based on industry, ownership structure, revenue, and the number of paid employees (Okpara, Ezirim, & Mohammed, 2017). Okpara et al. (2017) identified an SME as an organization that employs less than 500 employees, a typical global threshold. For the purpose of this study I adopted the SME definition of organizations with fewer than 500 employees.

There are several factors that contribute to a lack of information and understanding in the SME arena. First, there is a greater focus on CSR research for large - scale organizations, thus starving SMEs of needed research resources (Byron & Thatcher, 2015). Second, there is the belief that SMEs do not have enough resources and influence to significantly affect social issues. Third, the CSR effort over the years has been to simply encouraged SMEs to avoid irresponsible behavior and social activism (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2016). Data however shows that research resources would be better spent on SMEs because over 60% of United States employees are employed by SMEs that make up 95.3% of all United States businesses (United States Department of Commerce, 2018). A relatively small percentage 0.08% of companies employ over 1000 or more people (United States Department of Commerce, 2018). Consequently, research done on fewer larger companies may not translate well to SMEs where the majority of the population work, depriving SME managers of proven CSR delivery strategies (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2016). Additional research findings concerning CSR delivery strategy and theory especially in SMEs can enhance the quest to promote successful CSR strategies to business leaders.

Transition

In Section 1 I included a description of the background of the business problem, the purpose statement, the nature of the study, research questions, the conceptual framework, and a literature review. The general business problem identified was that leaders who fail to achieve CSR activities risk business profitability, and so there is a need for further research on profitable CSR strategies. In the literature review, I examined strategies leaders use to deliver on CSR while increasing profitability. The major review sections were the conceptual framework, CSR themes and phenomena, CSR in the United States, and current scholarly debates on CSR and CFP. In Section 2 I provided a comprehensive analysis of the process involved in conducting the study and include an explanation of data collection and analysis techniques.

Section 2: The Project

In Section 2, I present an overview of the methodology and describe the processes involved in conducting the study. I state the purpose of the study and describe my role as a researcher, participants of the study, the research method, and research design. I further describe population and sampling, ethical research, data collection techniques, data organization techniques, data analysis, and reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies small business leaders use to achieve CSR activities that can result in increased profitability. The targeted population was four small business leaders located in Maryland and Virginia who successfully implemented strategies to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability. The findings of the study may contribute to positive social change by increasing corporate philanthropic donations to communities. These philanthropic activities could improve the living conditions for citizens through local community growth and development, increased benefits for the needy and least advantaged, and increased collaboration between society and industry.

Role of the Researcher

I was the primary data collection instrument for this study and served in the role of researcher. The role of a researcher is to gain an understanding of underlying opinions and motivations of participants and to conduct in depth analysis based on a single case or multiple cases (Kavoura & Bitsani, 2014). Takyi (2015) described the research process primarily as (a) organizing data, (b) analyzing, (c) evaluating, (d) reviewing, and then (e) presenting the study findings. My role as a researcher was to explore literature from reliable academic sources, conduct interviews, and identify themes and meaning to answer the overarching research question.

I am familiar with the topic of CSR, a major concept of this study. I researched CSR to write papers for class projects. According to Mackay and Spencer (2017), members of public media outlets have increasingly exposed society to CSR over the last few decades. Increased media coverage of aspects of CSR including clean water goals, clean air initiatives, and fair employee treatment rules have increased the public’s awareness as well as my familiarity with CSR (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2016). I am further exposed to CSR at work in my role as a project engineer where I am tasked with making business decisions that are responsible and support CSR initiatives.

As the researcher, I used standards to ensure that the research process was transparent, ethical, and guided by the Belmont Report protocol and Walden University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Belmont Report is a set of ethical guidelines aimed at protecting human subjects in research (Cugini, 2015). Foundational principles for ethical research with human subjects are identified in the Belmont Report as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Schrems, 2014). Metcalf (2016) suggested that researchers meet core principles outlined in the Belmont Report prior to involving participants in studies. I followed ethical guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report and by the IRB prior to contact with participants and collection of data.

I selected potential organizations to participate in the study that rank well in publicly available online social ranking lists. Example websites included CSRHub.com, BBB.org, and Corp-research.org. I then selected a contact from the organization's online contact information, for instance a human resource representative. I e-mailed or called each contact person and requested they provide an e-mail contact list of potential participants that met the inclusion criteria. I then forwarded an e-mail invitation to all personnel in the organization who met the inclusion criteria. Interested participants were asked in the invitation letter to call or send me their intent to participate by personal e-mail. Interested participants were also asked to review a consent request and respond with the words "I consent" to indicate their consent.

It is important to mitigate bias and avoid viewing data through a personal lens in a qualitative study. Familiarity with the concept of CSR may be a source of personal bias and threaten the reliability, validity, and transferability of the study (Baille, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Sutton & Austin, 2015). I took measures to mitigate any personal biases by (a) journaling my thoughts on CSR to minimizing my personal opinions, (b) checking for alternate explanations to be open to evidence contrary to my personal beliefs, and (c) using multiple sources to triangulate data. Fusch and Ness (2015) stressed the need for member checking to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of a study. I allowed participants to analyze my interpretations of interviews by using member checking.

I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) for data collection to ensure structure and consistency of interviews. The interview protocol is a systematic guide for the interview that can ensure a structured procedure to the interview process (Chen & Mykletun, 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Vitak, Shilton, and Ashktorab (2016) also posited that using an interview protocol can increase data collection detail, consistency, and adherence to research standards. Key aspects of the interview protocol were to ensure consistency and validity of the data collection process.

Participants

Small business leaders in Maryland and Virginia who have successful used strategies to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability participated in this study. Business leaders are often directly involved with strategic decisions for the organization and influence corporate culture and employee behavior (Sunghee & Heungjun, 2016). I chose small business leaders because small businesses make up 95.3% of all U.S businesses (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2018), and so the findings will impact most business leaders' strategies. I chose participants who successfully implemented CSR strategies to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability. I ensured that each participant met the following eligibility criteria to participate in this study: (a) at least 18 years old, (b) an executive or strategy leader in the organization, (c) managed a small business in Maryland or Virginia, and (d) had experience implementing successful strategies to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability.

I first gained site authorization from potential organizations. I followed the Walden University IRB guidelines to recruit participants for the study. I began recruiting eligible participants for my study only after I received Walden University IRB approval. I initially compiled a list of local SMEs, companies with fewer than 500 employees as defined by Okpara et al. (2017). I placed initial calls explaining the goal of the study and arranged a personal meeting with eligible leaders of the business. I also made in-person visits to local small businesses and requested to speak with managers about participating in the study.

I followed the initial contact in the recruiting process with an e-mail providing (a) a formal introduction and invitation, (b) the purpose of the study, (c) the eligibility criteria, (d) an explanation of voluntary participation, and (d) sample questions. I also included a copy of an informed consent form that detailed (a) background information of the study, (b) study procedures, (c) the nature of the study, (d) risks and benefits in the study, (e) privacy details, and (f) contact information.

I elaborated on the purpose and objectives of the study and answered any questions from participants in order to establish a working relationship with participants throughout the research process. Clearly defining study goals and objectives is a way to encourage information sharing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I scheduled follow-up meetings with participants as needed to ensure interviewees had a clear understanding of the process and to also further develop rapport. A good working relationship is essential for the success of the research process (Wells, Gordon, Su, Plosker, & Quinn, 2015). I also communicated with participants by phone and follow up e-mails to build a relationship.

Research Method and Design

In the following subsections, I justify the choice of the method and design for the study in the research method and design section. I selected the qualitative method and a case study design for the study. I also elaborate on the process and reasons for selecting the method and design over other methods and designs.

Research Method

I considered three research methods for this study; qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. I chose the qualitative method over the quantitative and mixed methods because researchers use the qualitative method to gain an understanding of underlying motivations and insights into a problem (Clark, 2017). The qualitative method is appropriate to gain an understanding of human behaviors and inspirations of study participants through interviews, transcribing, and data analysis (Gray & Milne, 2015; Yin, 2018). The qualitative method is suitable for understanding strategies that business leaders use to deliver CSR promises that increase profitability. Researchers use the quantitative method to test hypotheses using statistical analyses (Clark, 2017). The quantitative method includes analysis of potential mathematical relationships through tests of hypotheses with numerical data (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015; Mertens et al., 2016). The quantitative method was appropriate for this study because the study involved exploring and understanding successful CSR strategies and not hypotheses testing and analysis of variables' relationships or differences. Researchers use the mixed method, which is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, to explore and examine data (Kong et al., 2016; Mertens et al., 2016; Moreno-Poyato et al., 2017). I did not test a hypothesis or analyze variables' relationships or differences. Yin (2018) also described the mixed methods as potentially more complicated and time consuming than other methods. Neither quantitative nor mixed methods were appropriate for the study because I was not testing a hypothesis.

Research Design

I selected the multiple case study design for the study. Researchers use the case study design to explore real-world contemporary bounded systems over time through varied and detailed sources of data collection (Yin, 2018). I selected a multiple case study design over a single case to explore strategies that business leaders use to achieve CSR activities because using multiple sources strengthens the quality and validity of a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Tran, 2016). Researchers use the phenomenology design to explore and understand a phenomenon in human nature through the lived experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenology design was not appropriate for this study because I did not seek to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Researchers use the ethnography design to study people and their behavior within a group's cultural setting (Edberg et al., 2015). The ethnography design was not appropriate because I did not explore a group's culture, and ethnographic studies tend to be immersive and lengthy (Morse, 2015).

The depth of the data in qualitative research is often critical, thus quality data are needed for a study. According to Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, and Hodder (2015), the point of saturation, which is when enough information relevant to the research has been gathered, can be difficult to define. Saturation in qualitative research is associated with the point when there is enough data to ensure the research questions can be answered (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Oberoi et al. (2015) and Orri, Revah-Levy, and Farges (2015) also described data saturation as when additional information becomes repetitive, so I continually checked for duplicate data throughout data collection and analysis. I continued interviews until I reached data saturation in order to ensure that adequate and quality data were collected to support the study.

Population and Sampling

Researchers may seldom have the luxury of time, money, or the logistics to access a total population, so may have to make compromises when choosing a sampling method. Fusch and Ness (2015) stressed that it is important to identify an adequate sampling method and also justify the number of participants during a sampling process. The study participants selected were able to provide insight into the research question. According to Imran and Yusoff (2015), data saturation is necessary to ensure there is enough data to continue the analyzation process. I continued interviewing and analyzing data until there were no new findings and reached data saturation after 4 interviews. The target population consisted of small business leaders in Maryland and Virginia who successfully implemented strategies to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability.

I used purposeful sampling to screen and select participants who have insight into CSR strategies that increase profitability to answer the overarching research question. Bryman and Bell (2015) described purposeful sampling as a technique used to give in depth insight into qualitative research; a method where cases are identified and selected that relate to the phenomenon of interest and not randomly sampled. According to Englander (2016), the population under study should also be well represented by the sample size. The sample consisted of one leader from each of four SMEs in Maryland and Virginia. A large population size may bring credibility to a study; however, a small population size can be good for conducting in depth interviews, finding detail, and for data depth (Bryman, & Bell, 2015). Yin (2018) recommended that researchers use a two to three case sample in a multiple case study, and Harf et al. (2015) suggested a three to six case sample size. I added additional SMEs to the population as needed until I achieved data saturation.

Fehr, Solberg, and Bruun (2016) posited that a researcher may be approaching data saturation at the moment where no new insights are realized by analyzing additional data sources and the same themes recur. Another consideration of saturation is when there is no new information discovered in data analysis to answer the research question (Bryman, & Bell, 2015). The researcher should continue data collection until no new information is collected and the responses become repetitive (Orri et al., 2015). I sent out 40 invitations by e-mail to recruit new participants and interviewed participants in the order in which I received consent. I followed data saturation guidelines and continued the interview process. I achieved data saturation after 4 interviews when there were no new information or themes during data analysis.

The criteria I used to select study participants were (a) at least 18 years old, (b) an executive or strategy leader in the organization, (c) a manager of a small business in Maryland or Virginia, and (d) experienced in successfully implementing strategies to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability. To compile a list of possible small businesses to include in the study, I used online databases such as CSRHub and

Datastream that have ratings for corporate governance and responsibility. These data were helpful in identifying leaders who have successfully implemented profitable CSR strategies. I then sent an e-mail invitation explaining the study to each prospective participating SME leader. Imran and Yusoff (2015) suggested that the interview is conducted in a comfortable quiet secure location of the participant's choosing. After receiving consent from willing SME leaders, I had each leader select a comfortable convenient interview setting with minimal distractions that was also quiet enough for audio recording.

Ethical Research

The purpose of ethical guidelines in research is to protect the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants (Bowser & Wiggins, 2015). Prior to participating in the study, the Walden University IRB requires all willing participants to sign an informed consent form that outlines the purpose, procedures, nature, and privacy structure of the study. I began the interview process only after receiving Walden University IRB approval and site authorization from the participating SME owners. The Walden University IRB approval number for this study is 08-15-19-0676305. To be compliant with ethical research standards outlined by Walden University, I e-mailed the consent form to each participant to review and return a signed copy by e-mail. I provided participants with a copy of the signed form at the interview site before starting the interview.

I reminded study participants prior to the interview that participation in the study was voluntary and each may withdraw from the study at any point in the process as stipulated in the informed consent agreement. Patton (2015) and Obenchain and Ives

(2015) stressed that it is important that participants are explicitly informed of voluntary participation in a study. I informed participants that withdrawal could be by the most convenient method to include in person, by phone, via e-mail, or by postal mail. However, no participant chose to withdraw from the study. I did not offer any incentives to participate in the study.

I took measures to ensure that the ethical protection of participants was adequate by keeping all data on password protected personal storage media and worked on a personal computer that was not shared. I assigned each participant a unique numeric identifier to ensure confidentiality, for instance P1 represented the first participant, P2 the second, and so forth. I took these steps to protect data in order to maintain privacy. Cairney and St Denny (2015) stressed the need to protect research data. I will securely store data collected from all participants in a locked safe at my home for 5 years and then have all data destroyed to protect the confidentiality of participants and their organization. I will destroy data by cross shredding all hardcopies and permanently delete all softcopies. I started data collection for my study after receiving approval from the Walden University IRB (Approval Number 08-15-19-0676305) to protect the rights of participants.

Data Collection Instruments

As the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative case study, I gathered, collected, analyzed, and interpreted data using a semistructured interview protocol available in the appendix. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), valuable feedback can be translated through body language and the participant’s tone in face-to-face interviews. Sutton and Austin (2015) also noted an advantage of first-hand interviews as a means for researchers to focus on information specific to the study. In addition to collecting data from interviewing, I also used secondary data with permission that pertained to the research topic. Secondary sources may be beneficial for further research because the data may have been analyzed in previous research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I collected secondary data pertaining to the companies' CSR initiatives from the company's human resource handbooks and employee handbook.

A guide, formal structure, or protocol is essential to complete a qualitative research project successfully. An interview is an introduction of the study, the interview process, and questions that can be used to facilitate and guide semistructured open-ended interviews (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In order to ensure adherence to the methods and study boundaries, I used a protocol available in the appendix to outline the interview procedures and methods. The interview protocol is an outline of the interview process, it includes a sequential list of what was completed and a script of what questions I asked.

I outlined the interview process and clarified the purpose and structure of the interview with each participant before the interview begun. I followed the interview protocol and asked each participant the same set of questions to ensure research consistency. I shared with participants that their identities will be protected by using a unique identifier such as P01, P02, etc. I also informed participants that data received will be confidential, that participation was voluntarily, and that the interview would be audio recorded. There are numerous measures to assess the validity of research instruments including using an expert panel (Oates, 2015). I did not conduct a pilot test because I used an expert panel of Walden faculty to validate my interview protocol and research questions for the semistructured interviews. Baille (2015) argued that data credibility can be enhanced through member checking. I visited each participant after transcribing each interview and provided a copy of my interpretations. Each participant verified the accuracy of the information.

Data Collection Technique

I chose onsite audio recorded semistructured interviews as the technique to collect data for this study. I recorded interviews with a Pixnor audio device and a Microsoft Surface Pro tablet. I saved the audio recorded data on a password protected flash drive and detachable hard disk drive. I used the same interview protocol (see Appendix) throughout each interview to ensure consistency as advocated by McCusker and Gunaydin (2015). Initial contact with participants occurred only after IRB approval. For the purpose of my study, the interview protocol consisted of 6 initial open-ended questions pertaining to profitable CSR strategies and follow up probing questions to gain more in-depth data.

Semistructured interviews may have some advantages over other techniques. Moonaghi, Ranjbar, Heydari, and Scurlock-Evans (2015) noted the advantages of semistructured interviews as (a) allowing the interviewer time for adequate preparation, (b) portraying competence because the interview will be structured, (c) allowing participants to express views in their own terms via open-ended questioning, and (d) providing reliable qualitative data. In semistructured interviews researchers also gain an in depth understanding of the participant’s views (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Oates (2015) also posited that semistructured interviewing may enhance triangulation especially when multiple interviews are conducted. I used interview questions to capture participants' perspectives on strategies used to successfully implement CSR profitably.

Semistructured interviews may have some disadvantages. For instance, the researcher could exert personal influence into the process thus lead to biased analysis. Baille (2015) noted that in social interactions such as interviews, unconscious biases may be introduced into the equation and thus negatively influencing a final evaluation. I journaled interview observations and my thoughts on the topic of CSR to mitigate any bias. I established rapport with participants to encourage a natural interview experience by engaging in natural conversation during my observation. I wrote down my understanding of CSR as a voluntary business model that leaders use to be socially accountable to stakeholders and to be good corporate citizens. I verified with participants that they understood the concept of CSR and how it pertained to their industry. I used an expert panel to validate my 3 data collection instruments, the interview, observational, and document analysis protocols, because poorly formulated instruments can be a source of poor data collection. To ensure rich thick data collection, I formulated interview questions after a thorough comprehensive review of the literature on CSR strategies and profitability.

After I gained IRB approval, I sought site authorization from the owners of the SMEs who also opted to be the participants. I arranged to conduct face-to-face interviews at convenient locations chosen by the participants. Researchers can use face-to-face interviews to interact, ask questions, and build a rapport with participants (Miller, 2016).

I audio recorded each interview with two suitable recording devices, a Pixnor audio recording device as a primary device and the Surface tablet as a backup in case of any mishaps. I also kept a reflective journal to document observations from the interview. I requested secondary data relevant to the study that participants were willing to provide; all four participants opted to provide a copy of company CSR guides and allowed me to visually examine the profit and loss from business section of their 2018 tax statements. Baille (2015) noted that member checking enhances accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of a study. I arranged for a follow up meeting to allow participants to review and verify my interpretation of the data. By using member checking I also ensured that I represented participants' perspectives accurately.

Data Organization Technique

Planning the organization of data before research begins avoids confusion during research and data analysis. Data organization and documentation should ensure the replicability, integrity and accessibility of data files and also prevent loss or misplacement (Brandt et al., 2014). I used audio recording, research logs, reflective journals, and a labeling system for keeping track of data. I recorded each interview with a Pixnor audio recording device as well as a Surface laptop as a backup system. Express Scribe is an audio player software designed to help transcribe audio recordings. Hard copy data were cataloged and stored in a locked file cabinet and electronic data in an encrypted Excel virtual filing system for ease of access. I used Express Scribe to transcribe the recordings from all interviews, then cross checked recordings with my written notes for accuracy.

I used Microsoft Excel to organize and Microsoft Word to code and analyze data collected from the interviews. I used a reflective journal to take notes of time, date, location, and any observations during the interviews. Reflective journals and research logs can be helpful tools in a qualitative study to help reduce bias (Young & MacPhail, 2015). Cairney and St Denny (2015) suggested that qualitative researchers use coding procedures to identify and categorize raw data and interpret interview responses. The use of identifiers as opposed to individual names conceals participant's identities and safeguard confidentiality (Rashid, Caine, & Goetz, 2015; Morse, 2015). Participant's privacy was essential to this study. I used the following alpha-numeric coding system in all journals to identify each participant: P1, P2, P3, and P4 represented a leader from each of four SMEs. These participants were sufficient to reach data saturation.

Obenchain and Ives (2015) and Rashid et al. (2015) stressed the need to keep participant data confidential and secure during the research process. I used a personal laptop backed up to an external hard drive throughout the research process. All original recordings, journals, and transcriptions were stored on the external hard drive. The laptop and drive were password protected and the drive secured in a locked safe. Organization software can be useful to researchers to identify themes in data (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). All raw data collected during the study will be stored securely for 5 years in a safe at my home, then afterwards disposed of permanently per the Walden University requirement.

Data Analysis

I used a thematic analysis sequence for data analysis. I used an analysis sequence suggested by Yin (2018). After all data were collected, I (a) critically reviewed all data to understand context by listening to audio answers, reading my notes, and reviewing all documents, (b) organized data by grouping, (c) organized data by theme, (d) evaluated the data to identify any emerging themes, and (e) repeated the process to identify further emerging patterns or repetitive themes. I aimed to identify themes that relate to strategies business leaders use to achieve CSR activities profitably.

I used methodological triangulation in this case study by combining three data collection methods, interviews, observations, and document examination. Tran (2016) found that using multiple sources of data increases the transferability of research findings because this method reveals rich thick data and themes across cases. I collected data that included interview responses and requested other data participants had that pertained to CSR and the organization's leader's profitability strategies.

I used Microsoft Excel to code, map, and identify themes. Microsoft Excel is a spreadsheet software tool that also features calculation and graphing tools and a macro programming language that were helpful in detecting word frequencies and themes. Adopting a coding system for semistructured interviews enhances validity and reliability of the findings (Morse, 2015; Rashid et al., 2015). After examining participants' responses to interview questions, interview notes, and document review, I coded by categorizing text segments to include keywords that signaled specific information. The main codes for this study included small business, strategies, leaders, CSR, profitable, responsible, and performance. I used Excel to identify word and phrase frequency which signaled emerging themes in the data. I then organized the data by grouping thematic findings and repeated the process to identify further emerging patterns or repetitive themes.

I focused on the key themes pertaining to CSR and corporate profitability that emerged from data analysis and correlated the themes with established literature. I also compared the data from the study participants to new studies published since writing my proposal and conceptual framework. A key objective of qualitative analysis is to identify patterns that lead to an answer to the research question (Beekhuyzen, Nielsen, & Von Hellens, 2010). I compared data during my analysis and identified and grouped important constructs into themes.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

It is important for a study to be reliable and valid. A measure of research reliability is how well a study can be replicated or successfully repeated rigorously (Morse, 2015; Pocock, 2015). Qualitative researchers can gain research rigor and validity by using trustworthy designs and strategies (Pocock, 2015). Allowing participants to review, give feedback, and validate findings by member checking lends trust and credibility to the process. (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Documentation and member checking are essential to minimizing errors in research (Yin, 2018). I asked participants to review, give feedback, and validate my findings by member checking which should ensure reliability and credibility to the results. I used my chosen research strategies and protocol consistently throughout the study to minimize bias and errors as noted by Oberoi et al. (2015). Morse (2015) suggested using a detailed documentation process to ensure the quality of the collected data. I documented the data collection process to ensure that other researchers can replicate my findings.

I used methodological triangulation to improve the reliability of the results from this research study. The methods included interviews, observations, and document searches to gather data. Researchers who use multiple sources of data or evidence in a case study improve reliability (Archibald, 2015). I also used member checking to enhance the reliability and accuracy of the study results. After reviewing and analyzing transcribed data, I returned data to participants for review and feedback on accuracy. Participants had a chance to review my interpretations from the reviews and also make corrections. Sharing my interpretations of the data with each participant allowed for transparency and feedback that enhanced the dependability of the study results.

Before starting the study, I meticulously documented all the research procedures. Preplanning research procedures is critical (Morse, 2015). I conducted and organized the study in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with macros to track participants and themes. Field notes and other documents were also organized in a database using Excel Visual Basic scripts. I used an interview protocol that outlined the process and a list of relevant questions as a guide during the interview. The interview protocol was also used consistently across all interviews as suggested by Oberoi et al. (2015). Advantages of using a protocol are ensuring dependability by allowing the researcher to focus and giving future researchers a guide to replicate the study (Noble & Smith, 2015). I did not use pilot tests; I extensively rehearse the interview process with a stand in before attempting the first interview after IRB approval.

Validity

Research validity refers to how well a researcher represents what was intended in a study. Research validity is also how accurately the researcher reflects the reality of a social phenomenon the researcher claims to represent (Harvey, 2015). Validity in research represents the credibility, transferability, and confirmability of the findings of a study (Archibald, 2015; Harvey, 2015). Data saturation and avoiding bias are critical for a study to be valid (Oberoi et al., 2015; Tindall, MacDonald, Carrol, & Moody, 2015) Marshall and Rossman (2016) posited that credibility, transferability and confirmability cannot be measured in qualitative research. However, qualitative methods and strategies can be employed to established credibility, transferability, and confirmability criteria that are necessary for a study to be valid. Well employed strategies can be used to ensure that participant's views are accurately recorded, assessed and represented.

Credibility of qualitative research involves establishing that the results and conclusions of the study are believable from the participant's perspective. The credibility of the results should be judged through the participants lens because qualitative research involves understanding phenomena from the participant's perspective (Baille, 2015). I adhered to guidance by Marshall and Rossman (2016) to address credibility of the research by member checking of the data interpretation. I gave a detailed description of the interview process to participants and arranged a follow up to check and ensure data accuracy. Morse (2015) stressed the need for respondent validation to help improve the accuracy and credibility of a study. Study participants review, verify, and validate the researcher's interpretations of the study during member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I also employed methodological triangulation by using multiple methods including interviews, observations, and document searches to gather data.

Transferability of qualitative research is the degree to which the study can be represented in other contexts. The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability of the research by thoroughly describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research (Baille, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I carefully and precisely documented each step of the research and data collection process to ensure replicability. I added additional notes to the interview protocol during each step of the process to document actual occurrences. Notes included clarifications of steps, observations, and ideas to improve the process. I ensured that procedures used for my research are easily understood and consistent so that future researchers can easily replicate the study.

Confirmability of research is the extent to which the study results could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Noble & Smith, 2015). I addressed confirmability of the research by maintaining detailed documentation of the procedures and also audited and rechecked often as advocated by Kihn and Ihantola (2015). Baille (2015) advised researchers to take clear concise notes to facilitate future replication of the study. Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that a researcher reaches data saturation when there is sufficient data to replicate the study and further coding may no longer be feasible. Data saturation in research is reached when no new themes or information emerge from data collection (Oberoi et al., 2015). I continued interviewing new participants and collecting data while checking for duplicate data until I reached data saturation.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I thoroughly described my role as the researcher, the study participants, the research method, the design utilized, the study population and sample, ethical research standards, the data collection instruments, collection, and analysis technique, and finally the reliability and validity of the research. In Section 3, I presented the findings of the research and conclusions resulting from analysis of the collected data. I further discussed the application of my findings to professional business practice, the implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research. I concluded section 3 with reflections of the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies four small business leaders used to achieve CSR activities that resulted in increased profitability. I conducted four semistructured interviews with business leaders from SMEs in Maryland and Virginia. I also gathered data from participants to gain further insight and an in-depth understanding of the study subject. I used an interview protocol (see Appendix) for each participant as a guide to ensure consistency. I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed each interview thematically with the stakeholder theory as a conceptual framework. I analyzed the recorded interviews and transcripts using macros in Microsoft's Excel software. The findings of the study showed strategies that leaders used to plan and implement CSR activities while also achieving and increasing financial goals. Three themes and subthemes emerged from the study. The themes were responsible employee engagement improved profitability, responsible governance improved profitability, and increased transparency enhanced profitability.

In Section 3, I present the findings of the study to explore strategies leaders of SMEs use to achieve CSR profitably. I present applications to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action. I also make recommendations for further research and reflections and provide a conclusion.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this study was:

RQ: What strategies do small business leaders use to fulfill CSR activities that result in increased profitability?

I conducted a multiple case study to answer the research question. I recorded and transcribed interview data, reviewed human resource employee handbooks for CSR strategies and examined profit and loss statements from each of the four participants. I used MS Excel macros to organize and review the collected data. After analyzing the data, three major themes and subthemes emerged (Table 2).

Table 2

Major Emergent Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1: Responsible employee engagement improved profitability • Positive work environment. • Effective communication. • Employee inclusion. • Fair employee compensation.
Theme 2: Responsible governance improved profitability. • Good leadership. • Ethical culture.
Theme 3: Increased transparency enhanced profitability. • Word of mouth. • Stakeholder engagement. • Customer loyalty.

I describe the sample, reviewed documents, collected data, and analyzed thematic findings in the following subsections. I describe ways my findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge in CSR strategies by comparing the findings with other peer-reviewed studies from the literature review. I include literature added since writing the proposal that are tied the findings to the stakeholder theory and to existing literature on responsible and profitable business practice.

Description of the Sample

The participants in my study were business leaders from small businesses in Maryland and Virginia. There were four participants, one from each of the four small businesses who have delivered on CSR promises profitably. All four SMEs were selected from a listing of top sustainable companies in Virginia by L'Autre Couleur, a sustainability marketing company (Claude-Lamoureux, 2017). This listing was an indication that all four companies were responsible and still competitive. Interviews were conducted in person at convenient premises selected by the participants. I used mnemonic codes instead of personal identifiers to conceal the participants’ identities and to maintain confidentiality. P1, P2, P3, and P4 represented the first through fourth participants in the order of interviews. All participants voluntarily participated in the interviews and discussed strategies used to deliver CSR profitably. All participants in the study met each eligibility criteria: (a) at least 18 years old, (b) an executive or strategy leader in the organization, (c) managed a small business in Maryland or Virginia, and (d) had experience implementing successful strategies to fulfill CSR activities that resulted in increasing profitability. The number of combined years of participants in each eligibility criteria was important to establish credibility of data. Each participant indicated the numbers of years in each category (Table 3).

Table 3

Participant Years in Eligibility Criteria

Participant	Strategy leader (years)	Managed SME (years)	CSR experience (years)
P1	10	4	4
P2	5	5	5
P3	7	15	6
P4	7	7	7

Documents Received

Each of the four study participants provided company documents helpful for analyzing the organizations' existing CSR strategies and profitability. I reviewed employee handbooks from all four companies to analyze operational strategies. The employee handbooks all clearly had outlines of benefits available to employees and codes of conduct. P1 indicated that "a hard copy of the employee handbook is provided to each employee on the first day of onboarding orientation." P2 said, "Reference to an electronic copy of the handbook is available to employees before the first day of work." P3 and P4 made similar assertions. The handbook from P2 had an outline of the eligibility for and availability of employee training and development. All employee handbooks had outlines of ethics and employee conduct expectations. The handbook from P4 included further guidance on expectations for company equipment use, privacy, and corporate security. The availability of these documents to employees showed a desire by all leaders to inform employees of adequate compensation and benefits provided to them, diversity sensitivity, labor rights, training, and safety protocols.

All participants were private SME owners who do not report earnings publicly. All four opted not to provide a hard copy of financial information; however, they allowed a visual examination of the profit or loss from each business (Schedule C), a part of the individual income tax return IRS Form 1040 that shows income from business (Internal Revenue Service, 2019). I visually examined the Schedule C section of all participants' tax year 2018 statements and used notes from the financial documents to triangulate with verbal statements from participants to determine profitability. I subtracted total expenses from revenue to calculate profit margins and to determine the net income of participant's businesses. All four SMEs were profitable in 2018. P3 anticipated a "significantly" more profitable 2019 income statement and the other participants expected at least a moderate increase in profitability in 2019.

Thematic Findings

The major subcategories of CSR include (a) community citizenship, development, and relations between organizations and their operating communities; (b) employee relations that include fair compensation, labor rights, and safety; (c) environmental stewardship including efficient energy use and climate change mitigation strategies; and (d) good governance, the ability of leaders to adopt best business strategies and practices. Wu et al. (2015) posited that most large company leaders focus more CSR resources on community citizenship and environmental stewardship while smaller corporate leaders concentrate scarce resources on employee relations and good governance. A strategic focus on employee relations and good governance was evident in the study thematic findings. All four participants reported doing their fair share for their communities and the environment, but concentrated CSR strategies and resources on employees and good governance. Themes that emerged from the interviews were self-evident; responsible employee engagement improved profitability, responsible governance improved profitability, and increased transparency and reporting enhanced profitability.

Theme 1: Responsible Employee Engagement Improved Profitability.

Responsible employee engagement emerged as the first recurring theme from the data analysis. All four participants stressed the need to engage with employees responsibly and to provide a positive work environment, which is an effective strategy that increases profitability by motivating employees to be more productive. P1 said, “Treating my workforce well certainly has its benefits.” P2 mentioned “a welcoming work environment leads to increased productivity.” Sankar (2015) and Gartenberg and Serafeim (2019) stated that employees who perceived they were treated responsibly were motivated, more energized and productive, satisfied with their jobs, and inclined to stay with the company. Productivity and profitability are enhanced by high employee retention rates resulting from satisfied workers, according to Terera and Ngirande (2014). Employee departures can incur losses for a company that include severances paid and retraining costs, but they also affect team morale that can also cause unnecessary burnout (Prince, Nagar, & Chacko, 2017). Business leaders who ignore stakeholder engagement risk compromising profitability.

Three study participants expressed similar sentiments of the adverse effects of employee turnover to profitability. P1 noted, “Turnover happens to be the costliest aspect of our business.” P3 stated, “Constant turnover can really affect the bottom line,” and P4 concluded that “I sometimes keep average employees because retraining new staff can get expensive.” Organizations that lose trained employees to competitors may risk compromising profitability (Zhao & Zhou, 2019). Organizational leaders who lack effective employee motivational and retention strategies may lose employees and institutional knowledge, negatively impacting the reputation and ultimately the financial standing of the company.

In order to quantify the effects of CSR to business profitability, leaders need proven effective tools and strategies. Leaders use the BSC strategic planning and management tool to articulate what they plan to accomplish, align day-to-day work, prioritize projects, and deliver services (Pecorino, 2016). According to Bento et al. (2017), BSC is one of the most influential business ideas used by over half of large U.S. firms. Bento et al. (2017) showed that the BSC methodologies, CSR, and the stakeholder theory have several overlaps that include financial, stakeholder, and internal processes. The ability to adequately measure results is important for an organization to quantify the effects of strategy implementation.

Business leaders can use the BSC tool to measure employee motivation. P3 said, “I actually cannot exactly measure it per se, but I can tell that my happier employees certainly are more productive, and that goes directly to our bottom line.” P1, P2, and P4 used some aspects of the BSC to document the effects of CSR on profitability. The vision to be responsible companies was evident in the description of inclusive business processes, profit sharing schemes, and a focus on customer needs. The four main perspectives of BSC are business process, financial, customer, and learning and growth

(Bento et al., 2017). Business leaders who understand the many facets of responsible engagement could potentially assess the results of CSR efforts.

Leader actions that foster a sense of employee appreciation are an example of responsible employee engagement. P1 described responsible employee engagement as multi-faceted and included "effective communication with staff, employee inclusion in decision making, and fair employee compensation." Over 200 leading CEOs joined together in 2019 to argue that prioritizing all stakeholders instead of just shareholders will lead to better business and a healthier economy, consistent with the stakeholder theory (Morgan, 2019). Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra (2014) defined communication in a workplace as a way to share information to work efficiently. Previously published findings found communication critical in improving employee retention, which is consistent with the employee engagement thematic finding (Osman, Noordin, Daud, & Othman, 2016; Reynolds, 2019). Leaders who include and appreciate employees and other stakeholders in a company's affairs may likely gain and retain loyalty.

All four participants mentioned effective communication as an effective strategy for achieving CSR and also thought good communication made the entire team more profitable. Reynolds (2019) found clear communication among leaders was needed to help develop better CSR strategies. P1 engages employees in "a daily communications session that is not structured and is open to any relevant topic." P1 said, "I do this to increase rapport, but also to assess the state of mind and wellbeing of my employees … I get good feedback this way". Open-door policies are good for businesses because the entire company benefits when employees are comfortable and able to communicate without fear of reprimand (Soltani et al., 2015). The open-door policy strategy aligned with responses from P2, P3, and P4. Good frequent and free communication in an organization is an effective CSR strategy that could create a productive work environment.

Employee inclusion was the next subtheme that emerged from data analysis. Inclusion helps boost employee awareness and understanding, and also inspires employees to have deeper commitments to positive change and work attitudes (Tan, Loi, Lam, & Zhang, 2019). This inclusion thematic finding is consistent with previously published research that found that including employees in decision making and company activities attracts loyal productive employees (Prince et al., 2017). P1 indicated, “We always see attitudes improve when everyone is part of the process of creating the big picture.” P3 further elaborated, “Employees that feel a part of the team are more willing to give their best effort to achieve the company vision and goals.” P4 also added, “Management needs to take employees’ needs and wants into account.” P4 further recognized “a need to build very strong leader employee professional relationships.” P1 specified, “It’s as simple as this, any employee in my opinion would want to give her best to a company that interacts and engages daily, and best of all makes her feels like an owner.” Employees that are happy and feel like family are more likely to stay with and work harder for the organization (Hakanen, Peeters, & Schaufeli, 2017). P1 holds daily company meeting and believes “meetings are critical opportunities to deliver meaningful content that inform, engage, motivate, and inspire employees.” A basic tenet of the stakeholder theory is the need for interconnected relationships between a business and its stakeholders which includes employees. Employee inclusion can have a direct effect on a company's financial stability by either increasing or hindering employees' sense of belonging to the company as a whole.

Marginalized disengaged employees may have a negative influence over other workers and the entire organization. Harshitha (2016) found that the disruptive attitudes of a single alienated or excluded employee can easily begin to be manifested in others in the same organization if not addressed promptly. According to P3, "An unhappy employee is likely to be disruptive." P3 further stated, "It is management's responsibility to support and empower employees else they will become disengaged and likely disruptive to the organization." All participants stressed the need to continually communicate to determine which staff may be overly unhappy with work in order to address the situation as early as possible. Addressing employee discontent early may save on the cost of work wide disengaged employees that negatively affect the entire organization.

A report by Gallup, a global analytics and advice organization that helps leaders solve pressing problems, provides insights into strategies that leaders can adopt to improve employee engagement and performance. Gallup (2017) reports that disengaged employees can be costly to the average organization; they are absent 37% more times, produce 18% less, and are 15% less profitable. Translating this cost to dollars is about a third of a disengaged employee's annual salary, $3,400 for every $10,000 made. The consensus of all interview participants was that it may not be worth the effort and cost to attempt to please repeatedly disgruntled employees regardless of their skillset; the better course of action would be to replace them. Freeman (2010) published a principle reflecting a new trend in stakeholder theory in which in his opinion the stakeholders' perspectives should be considered and are important in the management of companies. Freeman states "The principle of stakeholder recourse. Stakeholders may bring an action against the directors for failure to perform the required duty of care". Employees who are not empowered may be resentful towards the organization, disrupt processes, affect other employees' attitudes and productivity, and eventually negatively affect company profitability.

Ensuring fair employee compensation was the final subtheme to responsible employee engagement. Employee compensation for this study refers to cash benefits, vacation, and other incentives that employees receive in exchange for services to their employer. P1 pointed out that "employee compensation is one of the largest costs for an organization." Fair compensation was cited by all participants as the primary strategy that motivates employees and increases productivity. Prince et al. (2017) found a positive correlation between compensation and employee work output, aligning with responses from P2 and P4. P3 believes that "work output and employee attitudes are not negatively affected when employees are compensated well." P3 further posited, "Inadequate compensation *will* increase employee turnover which in turn is costly to the organization". P1 indicated, "*Of course*! More money always makes them happier". P1 further cautioned that "in industries like mine where wages are low, there should be a careful benefit balance and less emphasis on wages." P1 said, "I offer a comparatively flexible schedule as an incentive to prevent workers from defecting to Home depot."

Other research supports P1's strategy, Del Brío and Lizarzaburu (2017) found that 65% of people may prefer a good boss to a better pay package, and money was not always the primary employee motivating factor. Although a paycheck immediately comes to mind when compensation is mentioned, other incentives should be factored into compensation strategy because many employees are incentivized differently.

Employees find value differently in different forms of compensation. A retail sector study conducted by De Mesquita and De Aquino Almeida (2015) concluded that other human resource practices other than cash compensation such as employee training, recognition, and rewards affect employee loyalty and turnover. P4 is a strong advocate for fair monetary compensation; however, believes money alone cannot guarantee a productive workforce. Reynolds (2019) and P2 said that "monetary compensation has a positive impact on job satisfaction and profitability." Whereas, P4 indicated, "Monetary compensation may actually be the least effective CSR profitability strategy." P4 explained that "Employees in my industry who mostly have young families prefer a good work-life balance and good healthcare to just a larger paycheck... employees have different priorities." Despite the demand for good healthcare, the percentage of people without health insurance rose from 7.9% to 8.5% in the United States from 2017 to 2018 (Census.gov, 2019). P4 concurred with P1, P2, and P3 who weighed the cost of large paychecks against less costly benefits like flexible time and working remotely. P4 stated, "Large paychecks may be costly to the firm, but may sometimes be worth it in the long run to attract and retain certain critical talent." Jadon and Upadhyay (2018) noted that competitive labor markets are a reason for a talent shortage making top talent difficult to attract and retain. CSR is a broad field, so leaders need to explore and include many facets into strategy in order to realize the most benefit for their institutions.

According to CSR principles and stakeholder theory it is important to build relationships and create value for all stakeholders including every individual in each stakeholder group. P2 agreed with P3 who stated that “many employees opted out of pay increases in order to keep other benefits.” This thematic finding is consistent with previously published findings that found compensation is relative, and different people perceive value differently (Kim, Song et al., 2017). According to Bennett and Levinthal (2017), incentives beyond a base salary encourage employees to work harder, and unique benefits may serve as a competitive advantage. “Employees sometimes see salary as earned but other bonusses as extra additions that need to be earned” according to P2 and echoed by P4. The positive correlation between an effective rewards system and employee retention leads to profitability. All employee handbooks received from participants outlined alternate benefit schemes that align with the strategy of broad responsible compensation. Employees are a major resource of companies and taking good care of a major resource should give a good return on investment. Although regular employees are a major contributor to the wellbeing and profitability of an organization, leaders also play a critical role.

Theme 2: Responsible Governance Improved Profitability.

Responsible governance was the second theme that emerged from the data analysis. Because leaders set corporate initiatives, it is important for business leaders to set an example of responsible ethical leadership. P4 said, “I don’t expect much more from my employees than I am prepared to do myself". An example of responsible corporate leadership was from the leaders of UPS who led by example and showed that it is possible for business to do more for the environment while serving more customers and adding value simultaneously (Smith, 2016). UPS met its 2016 goal of reducing its fleet's carbon intensity by 10 %, 3 years early and so set a new 2020 goal of 20% carbon intensity reduction (Smith, 2016). In August of 2019 Jeff Bezos of Amazon and Tim Cook of Apple joined an assembly of 181 CEOs of top U.S. corporations to sign and issue this statement "Americans deserve an economy that allows each person to succeed through hard work and creativity and to lead a life of meaning and dignity." the leaders asserting that CSR should be prioritized at or above shareholder value when making corporate decisions (Gartenberg & Serafeim, 2019, p. 1). As P3 stated, "large company leaders may have the resources to implement ambitious CSR targets, however, these lessons translate to SMEs on a smaller scale, so SME leaders need to mimic good stewardship". Šontaitė-Petkevičienė (2015) posited that business leaders who fail to engage in CSR also compromise organizational profitability. Employees follow the lead of top management, so leaders need to set an example of being responsible in order to maintain a profitable CSR strategy, and not forfeit the benefits of responsible leadership.

Leaders set the path in organizations and greatly effect culture, so it is important to have responsible leaders in order to achieve CSR. Ethical standards and CSR initiatives come from the top of an organization, and leaders influence the ethical culture of their organizations by examples (Lo & Fu, 2016). P1 stated that "employees are always following the leader's example, and many will also copy irresponsible actions."

P2 also added that because leaders set policy in organizations, “an irresponsible leader would likely not introduce responsible policies.” Influence of leaders on the ethical culture of a corporation is more prevalent in SMEs where leaders may also be founders with more discretion and influence (Wu et al., 2015). P1 founded the organization with their spouse and they make major final CSR decisions. Sunghee and Heungjun (2016) stated that personal philanthropic beliefs of company founders tend to be the focus of organizations and motivate CSR acceptance and engagement among employees. All participants indicated that they drive the CSR strategy in their companies. The leaders of SMEs have great influence on the structure and culture of the organization so needs to set responsible processes in order to achieve CSR goals that lead to profitability.

An ethical culture is important for any organization. Freeman (2010) identified ethics as one of the key constructs underlying the stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory also serves as the foundation of this study to understand strategies small business leaders use to fulfill CSR activities that result in profitability. The concept of business ethics covers morality, corporate governance, and business codes of conduct (Goel et al., 2013). Ethics in CSR has implications for value generation because leaders need to employ processes that align with society's standards to deliver value (Dhanpat, Madou, Lugisani, Mabojane, & Phiri, 2018); Horng et al., 2017). P3 and P4 stressed the need to set ethical guidelines for their organizations. P4 further added that “In a small company, everyone knows everyone, so it is very important for managers to put their best foot forward”. It is important for leaders to include ethics as a key component in planning a CSR strategy.

In pursuing ethical guidelines, leaders need to also be conscious of diversity. Ahen and Zettinig (2015) cautioned that business ethics and CSR can be relative and quantified differently depending on context, so leaders should be careful when approaching ethics strategy. Di Norcia (1997) pointed out that it is a moral duty to respect another group's culture before passing premature judgement. P1 voiced a similar cautious sentiment, "with a diverse workforce of 70 plus people, I am careful when setting ethical standards and rules in order not to fringe on anyone's core beliefs". P2 and P3 also both mentioned diversity in the workplace as an "important consideration" during CSR strategy sessions. Employees follow the lead of top management, so leaders need to set an ethical example in order to maintain a CSR culture while pursuing profitability, however the need to be cautious should not intrude on individual beliefs and rights. These efforts though laudable will yield little value if kept secret. A transparent system should help highlight the good deeds of an organization.

Theme 3: Increased Transparency Enhanced Profitability.

Increased transparency was the third theme that emerged from the data analysis. CSR practices need to be transparent to all stakeholders. Garcia et al. (2018) found corporate social disclosure is consistent with the stakeholder theory and is also expected by certification boards and reporting agencies. Large corporations advertise their responsible behavior in order to reap the benefits of greater patronage, brand loyalty, and to gain a competitive advantage (Del Brío & Lizarzaburu, 2017; Guo, Xu, & Chen, 2019). SMEs on the other hand may not have the resources to gain certifications such as leadership in energy and environmental design (LEED) so may use other more cost-effective methods to advertise good deeds. All participants relied heavily on word of mouth to advertise their good deeds. P3 had also participated in an interview that listed the company in a publication as one of the top 20 sustainable small businesses in Virginia. P1 said, “I don’t exactly measure the results of word of mouth, however most new customers who call mention being referred to us because of another customer’s good experience. A company that implements a CSR strategy needs to get the word out to reap the financial rewards.

Executive compensation has become a topic in CSR discussions. Executives of large organizations have been receiving larger and larger compensation packages with the stated purpose of aligning the goals of executives and stakeholders. Stakeholders have begun to criticize excessive compensation especially when it is perceived that leaders are taking advantage of their positions to increase personal wealth while other workers’ salaries stay stagnant (Prince et al., 2017). Medium household incomes and supplemental poverty in the United States remained the same from 2017 to 2018 while the percentage of people without health insurance rose (Census.gov, 2019). Transparency in the compensation process is paramount to gaining public trust. SMEs are generally private entities that do not report to listing bodies so do not face this issue of compensation scrutiny. All participants are leaders of private companies and have not needed to disclose their compensation publicly. Transparency is essential to portraying a sense of responsibility.

The main tenet of the stakeholder theory is to engage and provide value to *all* stakeholders. Freeman argued that organizations can be sustainable and also create long-term competitive advantage when their leaders align the interests of all stakeholders with business goals (Freeman, 2010). All study participants stressed the importance of treating every stakeholder well by including them in company affairs and maintaining a transparent culture. P2 stated that “the goodwill generated by the feeling of belonging among all entities that interact with the organization results in a welcoming work environment which then leads to increased productivity.” Persic et al. (2016) included shareholders, employees, suppliers, customers, and the community as stakeholders of an organization. The first theme identified in the study, responsible employee engagement improved profitability, related to three stakeholders; management, employees, and shareholders. The first theme finding highlighted strategies to engage all three stakeholders to satisfy organizational goals.

The second theme, responsible governance improved profitability, interconnected managers, employees, and shareholders, three major stakeholders identified in the stakeholder theory. The third theme, increased transparency and reporting enhanced profitability, tied managerial strategies to value created for customers and the community. Christensen et al. (2014) stated that leaders who are transparent and engage stakeholders by reporting CSR activities enhance the reputation and credibility of their organizations. Customer loyalty is also maintained when a company is perceived as being transparent and honest (Bento et al., 2017; Guo et al., 2019). There is a tendency of consumers to continuously purchase one brand from a company that has fostered a trusting open relationship over buying from others (Prince et al., 2017). P4 said, “I have an open door, and so they walk in…”. Great products or services may not be enough, transparency is needed to create trust by helping to eliminate any suspicions or anxieties customers might have about the value of an offering.

Ties Between Study Findings, Literature Review, and Theory.

The findings of this study show that leaders can increase profitability by adopting CSR strategies adequate for their company's sector. For SMEs, responsible employee engagement, responsible governance, and increased transparency help increase profitability. Du et al. (2013), Gartenberg and Serafeim (2019), and Sankar (2015) agreed that employees are more productive and profitable when engaged with the organization and treated well. Tan et al. (2019) added that engaging employees responsibly improved employee loyalty and retention. Previously published findings by Osman et al. (2016) are in agreement with Reynolds (2019) who found that employee engagement was necessary to help develop better CSR strategies that help retain productive employees. Gartenberg and Serafeim (2019), Reynolds (2019), and Sankar (2015) stated that employees are motivated and productive when they perceive responsible governance. Dhanpat et al. (2018) and Horng et al. (2017) stressed on the need for leader ethics and responsible governance for increased productivity. Guo et al. (2019) agreed with Del Brío and Lizarzaburu (2017) that company leaders that are transparent and advertise responsible behavior attract brand loyalty, gain a competitive advantage, and increase profitability. Customer loyalty is maintained when a company is perceived as being transparent and honest (Bento et al., 2017; Eisenbeiss et al., 2015; Guo et al., 2019). Previous and current research findings concur on the need for responsible strategies that lead to profitability.

The main tenet of the stakeholder theory ties into all three study themes. A recent push by 200 leading CEOs to prioritize all stakeholders in the pursuit of business goals shows a trend to sustainability in business (Morgan, 2019). Previous and current research findings are in agreement with the need for strategies that align with the themes that emerged from this study. Companies need to implement these strategies profitably. Increased profitability was difficult to quantify. SMEs are generally private entities that do not report to listing bodies so financial records would need to be voluntarily supplied to a researcher. All participants opted not to share financial documents but described how they quantified increased profitability. P1 cited an increase in business and thus profitability resulting from increased transparency by positing that, "… most new customers who call mention being referred to us because of another customer's good experience. P2 cited increased productivity and consequently profitability by stating that "the goodwill generated by the feeling of belonging … leads to increased productivity." Zhao and Zhou (2019) stressed how employee turnover risks profitability and P1 agreed by saying, "turnover happens to be the costliest aspect of our business." P3 stated, "constant turnover can really affect the bottom line", and P4 concluded that "I sometimes keep average employees because retraining new staff can get expensive." These statements show alternate methods participants use to estimate changes in profitability resulting from strategies.

The success of an organization can be estimated from third party reports. All four SMEs were featured in a publication of the top sustainable companies in Virginia by L'autre couleur, a sustainability marketing company (Claude-Lamoureux, 2017) showing that the strategies implemented by leaders of the participating SMEs result in increased profitability. According to Reynolds (2019), effective best practice strategy can help business leaders to become more competitive, develop new markets, reduce costs, and become more efficient. Other benefits of effective best practice strategy include improved workforce skills, reduced waste, and improved quality (Bento et al., 2017). These findings on strategies for profitable CSR extend knowledge in effective business administration by availing SME leaders of targeted strategies that help leaders achieve both CSR and increased profitability goals.

Applications to Professional Practice

Society defines CSR broadly. CSR is associated in popular media with an organization's effect on the environment; to include energy use and climate change, environmental and policy reporting, and resource management (Tian & Robertson, 2019). Jones et al. (2016) included many more often overlooked categories into the CSR definition. Apart from the environmental impact of corporations, CSR also includes organizational leaders' relations with the community, employees, and responsibly governance (Griffin et al., 2015; Hee Sub et al., 2015; & Jones et al., 2016). Two CSR categories that apply to professional practice are employee relations and corporate governance (Prince et al., 2017). Employee relations may include compensation and benefits, diversity and labor rights, and health training and safety (Prince et al., 2017). Jones et al. (2016) described governance to include the choice of board members, leadership ethics, and transparency and reporting. CSR relates to many sectors of society.

The findings of the study may be applicable to the professional practice of business by providing organizational leaders with effective insights and references to profitable CSR strategies that cover all aspects of corporate responsibility. According to Balzarova and Castka (2016), certification agencies stated that businesses can gain the trust and patronage of consumers when leaders follow accepted CSR practices necessary for third party certification. Until the early 2000s, business leaders spent a considerable amount of time and money attempting to become more environmentally responsible only to receive a minimal return on investment (Huang & Coelho, 2017). The availability of profitable CSR strategies could help corporate leaders plan and make more informed decisions on their CSR initiatives as well as save on internal CSR research funding.

Corporate social responsibility practices have traditionally been pursued and promoted by the largest and most profitable companies in every industry. Some SMEs may still think that CSR is only relevant to larger organizations because of their higher profiles, media attention and a need to protect or enhance their reputations (Christensen et al., 2014). Large companies also often have more resourced and are able to invest in CSR. SMEs account for 99 % of all businesses in the United States, create most employment, and are responsible for most private sector gross domestic product in the United States economy so can affect socially responsible change (United States Department of Commerce, 2018). SMEs could arguably have a larger impact on CSR than larger companies by having a larger presence in society.

Study participants described strategies that were mainly tailored to and available to larger organizations that were modified for SMEs to use to deliver on CSR profitably.

SME leaders who have struggled to find or fund effective CSR initiatives can refer to the identified themes to enhance their CSR performance while also increasing profitability. According to participants in this study, (a) responsible employee engagement improved profitability, (b) responsible governance improved profitability, and (c) increased transparency enhanced profitability. The findings in this study could result in SME leaders understanding and implementing appropriate and proven profitable CSR strategies. Valuable resources needed for CSR research could be used elsewhere in the organizations to also improve on profitability.

Implications for Social Change

Although 2 CSR categories, employee relations and corporate governance especially apply to small business professional practice, all CSR including community and environmental relations have implications for social change. Improved employee relations could include better compensation and benefits that attract loyal productive employees (Prince et al., 2017). P1 said, “treating my workforce well certainly has its benefits”. Employee relations also translate to better diversity and labor rights and a healthy and safe work environment (Markey, Ravenswood, & Webber, 2015). Improved corporate governance could improve leader ethics that affect all stakeholders including investors, customers, regulators, and communities. Better community engagement could improve development, better products, and respect for human rights. Environmental stewardship, the most widely known CSR trait could improve air and water quality for all society and preserve communal resources. The results of the study could contribute to positive social change in SMEs and create awareness of factors that affect corporate responsibility and profitability. The themes identified, responsible employee engagement improved profitability, responsible governance improved profitability, and increased transparency enhanced profitability could foster tangible improvements to individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, or societies.

The findings from this study could potentially help SMEs in Maryland and Virginia improve on CSR initiatives, however, benefits could translate to a broader audience to include nongovernmental organizations and even large companies. SME leaders may be able to adopt and implement effective CSR strategies that potentially contribute to positive social change by increasing corporate philanthropic activities in communities. Philanthropic activities such as charitable donations and increased collaboration between society and industry could improve the living conditions for citizens through increasing local community growth and development. Collaborations could increase benefits for the needy and less advantaged. Better corporate governance could also improve employee relations, retention, and wellbeing.

Recommendations for Action

The results of this study could help organizational leaders develop and implement strategic CSR strategies that are profitable and serve their business goals. P2 stated, “I take CSR cues from many varying sources and fit them to my organization’s needs”. Existing strategies have mainly been modeled for and available to large organizations, so this research can provide strategies tailored for SMEs to deliver on CSR profitably. Using strategies meant for structurally different organizations may have a negative effect on profitability. Organizational leaders need to assess their CSR goals and choose strategies that best fit their organizational structure. I have determined four recommendations for action for profitable CSR in SMEs based on the answers from participants' responses and literature pertaining to CSR strategies,

The first recommendation, business leaders should first seek strategies specifically modeled for their industry and corporate structure. CSR strategy can be ported across different industries; however, leaders should be careful and selective because some strategies may not be suited for their organization and may rather be harmful. The second recommendation is to ensure that all stakeholders are included in or at a minimum informed of planning and implementing a CSR strategy. Create a sense of inclusion to gain support for the strategy. The third recommendation is to develop a way to quantify or measure results of the CSR strategies. Use or develop a management system to focus on the big-picture strategic goals. A focus on both high-level strategy and low-level measures will help achieve better results and select best practices.

The fourth recommendation is to ensure good deeds are known. Increased profitability resulting from corporate responsibility mainly depends on stakeholders being informed of the organizations efforts. SMEs can get the word out in cost effective ways like volunteering for CSR interviews and encouraging word of mouth promotions through feedback surveys. Organizational leaders, especially SME managers, need all or a combination of the four strategy recommendations to achieve CSR goals profitably. Although the recommendations are aimed at SMEs, carful study and implementation of the four tailored strategies should help leaders of all company sizes achieve CSR goals.

I will provide a short summary of this report to all participants, and a copy of the entire final publication if requested. I will seek to publish this study in the ProQuest/UMI dissertations database to be available to other researchers and attempt to publish in other scholarly journals. I will also seek to present the findings of this study to leaders of SMEs and all other stakeholders.

Recommendations for Further Research

The limitations of this study may result in boundaries or a restricting cap or ceiling on the study. I restricted study participation to four leaders from SMEs that have successfully implemented CSR strategies in Maryland and Virginia. Because this study focused on CSR delivery strategies for SMEs, future researchers could expand the breadth of their research by increasing the population to include large organizations. To address the small targeted population and number of participants, I would recommend that future researchers build on the findings of the research pertaining to profitable CSR by selecting different industries and different geographic locations. For future research I will also recommend that researchers consider factors beyond profitability to include sustainability of CSR strategies and CSR in nongovernmental organizations.

Reflections

I started my DBA journey with the sole goal of simply attaining a Doctorate. My background is in engineering, so I assumed a degree in project management would complement my position as a project engineer. I had expected the DBA program to be an application of business, particularly where business management tools and practices would be taught. I realized that the program was less practical and more theory and application. After completing my required courses, I started to research on the topic of corporate responsibility for my dissertation. I quickly realized how narrow my knowledge of the breadth of the topics and nuances of CSR were. I realized that CSR included known issues like pollution and accountability but also included fewer known issues like pay equity and religious tolerance. Because I conducted thorough research and used an interview protocol, I am confident my initial biases had little effect on the participants of the study. I am glad I took this journey of attaining the highest form of scholarship. I always felt I had a goal I had not accomplished. The next chapter after my Doctorate will be to apply what I learned through this journey. I will look at business problems from a different perspective, and in the spirit of a DBA will concentrate on applied solutions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies that small business leaders use to achieve CSR activities that increase profitability. Boulouta and Pitelas (2014) posited that successful CSR strategies increase a company's competitiveness and have a positive influence on the profitability and competitive advantage of firms. Furthermore, business leaders who lacked strategies to engage in CSR compromise organizational profitability (Šontaitė-Petkevičienė, 2015). I used the qualitative method and conducted semistructured interviews with one business leader from each of four SMEs in Maryland and Virginia. I asked open-ended questions to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategy's leaders used to achieve CSR activities that increase profitability. Three themes emerged from the study, (a) responsible employee engagement improved profitability, (b) responsible governance improved profitability, and (c) increased transparency enhanced profitability. The findings from the study can be applied by business leaders both within and outside the study population that need strategies to achieve CSR activities that result in increased profitability. Business leaders of large organizations as well as SMEs can incorporate the findings of this study into their portfolios to achieve CSR and increased profitability goals.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Part A.

1. Prior to the scheduled interview, a signed voluntary informed consent form will be obtained from interview participants.

2. The interview participant will be sent the list of questions that will be asked.

3. The interview will be conducted in a quiet location of the participant's choosing.

4. The interview will start with the researcher following the script in part B of this protocol. The script includes (a) a rapport building introduction, (c) an overview of the research topic, and (d) information on informed consent and privacy.

5. The researcher will ask the prepared interview questions.

6. After the researcher has asked all of the interview questions and any relevant follow-up questions, the participant will be thanked.

7. The researcher will arrange for a follow-up meeting to review the interview transcription.

7. The researcher will return to conduct a follow-up member checking meeting in which the interview participant will review the transcribed interview with the researcher to ensure accuracy and clarity.

8. The researcher will note any clarify information provided by the interviewee.

9. Finally, the researcher will send a thank you note to the participant that will also be a reminder that the data collected will remain safely locked for 5 years and then destroyed.

Part B.

Estimated time	Interview Script

Introduction (5 minutes)	Thank you for meeting with me. I’m Franklyn Abraham, a doctoral candidate from Walden University. I am conducting a research study about successful strategies employed by small business leaders to fulfill CSR profitably. I would like to discuss the CSR strategies you and your organization use to fulfil CSR promises profitably. I will like to inform you that the interview will be recorded. I will treat your answers confidentially and not include your name or any other identifying information in reports in order to maintain your anonymity. I will safely store the notes and audio recordings for 5 years after the study is complete in accordance with Walden University’s research policy. All notes and audio recordings will be destroyed after the five-year storage period. Do you have any questions for me regarding the study?
Basic rapport. (5 minutes)	What is your professional background? How long have you worked as a leader in this industry? Is there anything that you would like to share about your background in CSR and corporate profitability?
Questionnaire (45 minutes)	1. What strategies did you use to fulfill CSR activities that resulted in increasing profitability?

	2. What strategy did you find worked best to fulfill CSR activities that contribute to increasing profitability? 3. How did employees contribute to different strategies to fulfill CSR activities that resulted in increasing profitability? 4. What strategies were least effective in fulfilling CSR activities resulting in increasing profitability? 5. What modifications did you apply to any strategy to improve CSR fulfillment and increasing profitability? 6. What else would you like to discuss that you did not address about fulfilling CSR activities that resulted in increasing profitability?
Final thoughts (10 minutes)	I have asked all the questions I had and will end the interview. Would you like to share any thoughts regarding CSR delivery? After transcribing this interview, I will arrange a follow-up meeting to review data for context and for accuracy. Thanks for affording me the time. I will return for the follow up meeting.